

The London Free Press Saturday, December 31, 2005

section **H**

HOMES

Homes Editor Clare Dear 667-4576 cdear@lfpres.com



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Pat Brown
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MORTGAGES

OAC: See registered branches of Ontario Mortgage Lenders (Ontario Ltd. #10, see lender's list S. L200707)

CJ027DQW

Living Tips



SUE REEVE The London Free Press

GETTING ORGANIZED: Consultant Bobbi Hoffman recommends using a storage container for Christmas wrap and a separate one for regular gift wrap so the Christmas materials can be put away with the holiday season's decorations.

As we head into the new year, why not resolve to improve living conditions in your home? For tips, see Page H4.

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Homing instinct

Improving conditions at home, whether it's clearing clutter or building a pool, could make for a happier new year.

BY SHANNON WILSON
Special to The Free Press

Admit it — you've done it. We've all made impossible New Year's resolutions. Maybe it's the optimism of the season, the prospect of a fresh start in the year ahead, or perhaps just one too many glasses of bubbly, but we all convince ourselves that in the next 12 months we're somehow going to develop the willpower that has eluded us in past years. Be thinner, get fitter, start something, quit something, make better use of time and reduce stress.

This year, make a resolution you can keep — to improve your

home, and your life, and have fun doing it!

Get organized

Along with losing weight or quitting smoking, getting organized is near the top of the list of resolutions. Fear not. Unlike quitting snacking or cigarettes, this one is actually easy to achieve, without hypnotism or a 12-step program.

Organizing consultant Bobbi Hoffman, owner of Clear the Way, is a professional organizer with some great advice for struggling pack-rats.

"People tend to expect too much of themselves when they

start," she says. "Take baby steps. Start with an hour in the room or area that you use the most."

Don't expect to get the whole house done in one mad-dash weekend. Plan to tackle one project at a time and stick with it. Clear your time and avoid distractions; you'll need to focus on the task at hand.

Don't veer off from your planned project. If your plan is to organize the pantry, stay in the pantry. Otherwise, you'll end up with a house-wide chaotic mess and will have achieved nothing for your time.

For example, you find your green Robertson screwdriver in

the pantry from when you tightened the door hinge, so you bring it down to the utility room to put it away, but find the workbench is buried under a post-holiday mess. So you move everything off of the shelves to make room for the tools, which means you'll have to move the Christmas decorations back out to the garage, so you might as well sort and repack them in new tote boxes. So you'll need to buy some new tote boxes, as well as a shelving unit for the garage, but once you get out to the garage, you realize you'll need better light and your green Robertson screwdriver to assemble the new shelves. But you have no idea where you left the screwdriver and the light bulbs are in the pantry and, geez! That pantry is a mess — you really ought to find some time to organize it.

Hoffman also warns not to stock up on organizing systems before you know what your needs are. Just because the post-Boxing Day sales have lidded tote boxes for half-price doesn't mean you should buy 20 of them. If you have papers or small items that need to be organized, those deep totes aren't going to help. And now you have 20 large plastic bins to find a home for. (Do you stack them in the garage or try shoving them in the closet? Hmmm. This seems counterproductive.)

Start by sorting and purging so you can see more clearly what needs to be done with what's left. You can then figure out what organizing systems are going to work for the problems you've identified.

Yes, purge. That means getting rid of things. Clothing, toys and household items can be donated and will be used and appreciated by someone else. Papers can be shredded and recycled. Junk can be thrown out.

If you find yourself weeping on the floor in frustration, surrounded by sentimental kitsch you can't part with, chances are you need some professional help. A professional organizer, that is.

The association of Professional Organizers in Canada (POC) offers great resources to put you in touch with a pro. Check out their website (www.organizersin-canada.com) for a listing of professional organizers in your area, as well as pointers on how to hire one, what questions to ask and what to expect.



If your closet looks like this, it's a good place to begin getting organized.



This maze of cables can be untangled, then neatly bundled with wire ties.



Tidy up a closet by purging old boxes and other items you never use.



Organizing a cluttered work station leads to better productivity.