

## Resolved for 2008: Less mess

### Experts tell how to clear clutter, get organized

*By Andy Rathbun, Herald Writer*

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Linda Rosander can't handle the guilt.

"It wears on you, having things in there that other people can use," she said. "Emotionally, it wears on you."

Yes, that's right: The Marysville resident needs to clean out her garage.

The space could house a car but instead has become a makeshift storage unit for everything from diving equipment to an overturned couch. Now that the new year is here, Rosander plans to work on organizing the clutter.

Rosander's not alone in her plight. A poll by the effectiveness-training firm FranklinCovey found that "get organized" was among the top five New Year's resolutions for 2008. While some might think the first step should be picking up tools from the store, professional organizers in the area discouraged that path.

"That's the last thing that I do in the process because I have found with the majority of my clients, once we get rid of a lot of stuff, we don't need that many organizational products," said Snohomish County-based organizer Meagan Farrell of Clear the Clutter.

To get started Farrell recommends simply making three piles: Stuff to keep, stuff to pitch and stuff to give away or sell.

Laura Leist, an organizer in Snohomish, also is a fan of the trash bin approach. One of her mottoes is "You can't take it with you," and so she urges people to throw out items.

"You won't miss it," she said. "Try it."

Granted, some tools come in handy. Leist, who runs Eliminate Chaos, recommended getting a calendar and drafting a schedule. Other tools should be customized to the project at hand: A file cabinet for the home office, drawer dividers in the kitchen or hooks to hang up tools in the garage.

Many things can contribute to a cluttered household, Leist said, from lengthy hours at work infringing on cleaning time to momentous events such as a death or birth, which can come with an influx of inherited items or gifts.

Christmas itself can bring a new wave of items that, when followed by the New Year, can call to mind a need to clean.

"It's more cluttered than before," Farrell said. "The combo just sort of inspires."

Leist emphasized that people shouldn't beat themselves up over their messes, nor should they live or die by a New Year's resolution. After all, according to that FranklinCovey survey, 35 percent of people break a resolution by Feb. 1. Leist recommended using the word "intention" instead.

"A resolution is so much stronger and harsh for people, which is why people don't stick with it," she said, "but if their intention is they want to live more organized, then there are baby steps they can take along the way."

That may be good advice for Rosander, who has her work cut out for her. She runs Linda's Adult Family Home in Marysville, and has taken on a glut of objects as a result.

After a resident dies, families sometime donate items to her. It may take a couple weeks to clear out her garage, she said, but she's ready to tackle the task. As a society, we're hoarders, she said. She's ready to break the cycle, and donate unused leftovers.

Really, she's looking forward to it.

"It's fun getting rid of things you don't need," she said.

## Helpful gadgets

Try these items, from the affordable to the extravagant, available from [www.cableorganizer.com](http://www.cableorganizer.com).

Flexible cord tower: The tower helps manage a rats nest of wires strung in the home office or behind the entertainment center, and costs \$19.

K-Sun Bee 3 portable label maker: With more than 60 different size and color options, this label maker is like the Rolls Royce of its field and costs \$88.

Klein Tools 5-drawer rolling tool cabinet: A cluttered workspace can be brought into sharp order with a rolling tool cabinet, perfect to help transport items around your work area. Drawers roll out to expose their entire contents. The cabinet costs \$650.

## 10 cleanup tips

In her book "Eliminate Chaos," Laura Leist walks through the steps to organize a home's cluttered hot spots. Here are the 10 main steps, which in her book she customizes to specific rooms.

1. Dedicate time on a calendar to organize
2. Gather basic supplies — cardboard boxes, garbage bags, a shredder — suited to the task; this should not involve much, if any, shopping
3. Establish a staging area where you can place and sort clutter
4. Sort through belongings
5. Purge items you no longer use or need
6. Group together like items that are being saved
7. Map out your space, thinking outside the box before putting things away
8. Shop for additional tools you may need to get the remaining items in order
9. Install the new organizational tools you've purchased
10. Maintain the area by scheduling a regular time to clean it up