

**January is Get Organized Month – GO for it!**

Happy New Year to you from Clearing House! Who *isn't* motivated for change at the start of a new year? January is National Get Organized Month and heralds an opportunity to think about projects and goals to embrace this year. As you review your accomplishments from the past year, and consider goals for 2008, take a moment to list (by hand) your Top 3 goals and post them in a place where you can view them regularly (i.e., bathroom wall, above desk, computer monitor, refrigerator). It's important to be reminded of what we are working towards. This bold (think color!), physical, personal reminder will serve as our cue to make decisions and perform actions that help us to stay on course. If one of your goals this year is to become more organized in your workplace, home or personal time, remind yourself of the many benefits of doing this. These benefits include, among others: focused actions, more time for enjoyable pursuits, increased productivity, money saved, improved relationships, and the development of effective habits. Share your goals with a friend or family member and be proud of the efforts you undertake!

**Other Topics in this Issue:**

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- ❑ Earn Free Organizing Hours from Clearing House!
- ❑ New! 10-15% Discount on Pre-paid Organizing Packages

**Organize Smart! How to Get Going Without Getting Overwhelmed**

**1. Set up a Plan for Your Space.** Plan each area to be organized for how you use it.

- ❑ Write down what functions you want the space to support, to reflect how you live your life now.
- ❑ Consider all the activities that you do in each space, and look for obvious conflicts to what you want. Is too much going on? Simplify your plan based on your goals.
- ❑ Take note of items that don't support your current needs.
- ❑ Assess each space based on who uses the space and each person's needs.

2. **Take Action on One Area at a Time.** Schedule time on your calendar to organize and honor it.
  - ❑ Start with a 15-minute block of time, and add more as time and attention permits.
  - ❑ Pick a time when you have the most energy and are least likely to be distracted (i.e., no phone calls).
  - ❑ Start with a small task such as weeding out mail, sorting a desk drawer, or organizing one kitchen shelf or bookshelf.
  - ❑ Stay put while you work, to avoid “zig-zag” organizing. This is the least productive way to work and wastes time. Staying in one room keeps you focused and you get more done.
  - ❑ Enlist help. Friends, family or a helpful professional can offer encouragement, motivation and an extra pair of hands to speed tasks along.
  
3. **Sort Everything by Category.** As you sort, keep like items together.
  - ❑ Use separate containers for items that go in another room, can be donated, or discarded.
  - ❑ Weed and purge items as you sort, and be ruthless, especially if you have limited storage.
  - ❑ Keep only what supports your goals for the space, such as items that directly relate to a planned use.
  - ❑ Remove items for donation or trash as soon as possible, to realize your “found” space.
  
4. **Store at Your Point of Use.** Store items at or near where you will use them.
  - ❑ By doing this, you create a dedicated “home” for things. This ensures that you will always know where to find something when you need it, makes it easy to maintain the space, and aids in the success of the organizing system.
  - ❑ Communicate the system to other users so that everyone is accountable to it.
  - ❑ If you buy in bulk and need to store excess supply in another space, make note of where to find the surplus when you need it, to reduce duplicate purchases.
  - ❑ Consider buying in bulk only if you have ample storage space to accommodate the excess.
  - ❑ If you are space-constrained, evaluate the trade-offs of having more items than you have space for. Keep in mind your goals for the space.

**WDC-Area Community Resources: Book Donations, NCCF, Elfa® Shelving Sale Donate Books to B-CC High School.** Support the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Annual Used Book Sale (April 5-6) by donating your books to the PTSA. Drop-off collections are scheduled for the following Sundays from 11am-2pm at B-CC High School, 4301 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD: January 27, February 10, February 24 and March 2. Most genres are accepted, but do not send magazines, textbooks or encyclopedias. Mark one of these dates on your calendar and clear a shelf today!

**The National Center for Children and Families (NCCF®).** NCCF is a private, non-profit agency that has served families in the national capital area for 90 years. NCCF supports residential

programs helping homeless families, victims of domestic violence and vulnerable adolescents. The Greentree Shelter in Bethesda, MD provides basic services to families in need of emergency shelter and other support systems to promote self-help skills and resources to help families rebuild their lives. The Greentree Shelter accepts new or gently used donations to fulfill the following needs: winter wear (through Feb only), full-size toiletries, gift cards, art supplies, party supplies, office supplies, culturally diverse children's books, toys and dolls, baby items, first aid supplies and writing journals, among others. Visit [www.nccf-cares.org/wish.htm](http://www.nccf-cares.org/wish.htm) to read the full wish list. Donations can be brought to the NCCF office at 6301 Greentree Rd., Bethesda, MD (20817) between the weekday hours of 8:30am and 5pm. For more information call 301-365-4480.

**Annual Elfa Shelving Sale at The Container Store – 30% Savings!** Take advantage of the current shelving and storage sale going on now through early February at your local Container Store (or online at [www.containerstore.com](http://www.containerstore.com)). Elfa shelving components are currently priced 30 percent off regular prices, a significant savings. New this season is the Elfa free-standing frame. This product can accommodate vertical or stand-alone storage needs where wall-mounted shelving is not feasible. Maximize your work and storage spaces by outfitting underutilized rooms and wall areas with targeted shelving solutions. A minimal investment in effective storage offers added value in the form of a better functioning, low maintenance space, not to mention time saved in having things just where you need them. Shelving solutions can be configured to your specific needs, including closets of all type, media and book storage, small work spaces, utility storage, bedroom and family rooms, as well as home offices.

### **Clearing House in Parenting Magazine!**

Look for tips from Clearing House published in the February 2008 issue of Parenting Magazine, and featured in an article titled "Get Organized Now: Start the Year Off Right!" The issue is available on newsstands now and the article can also be found online at <http://www.parenting.com/parenting/article/0,19840,1695372,00.html>. The article offers tips on getting you and your family out the door, managing laundry and organizing your paperwork.

### **Earn Free Organizing Hours from Clearing House!**

As a thank you for your past and continued efforts at spreading the word about our services, and the benefits of becoming organized, Clearing House will credit you one free hour of hands-on organizing service for each new referral you send to us.\* So continue to spread the word about how you've saved time, money and reduced stress by working with Clearing House, and earn enough hours to maintain your organizing "fix." It's never too soon for an organizing tune-up!

### **New! 10-15% Discount on Pre-paid Organizing Package**

Clearing House now offers pre-paid organizing sessions at a discounted rate. As incentive to realize your organizing goals, receive a 10% discount when you purchase a 15-hour organizing

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\* The one-hour credit will be applied to a scheduled 3-hour organizing session.



package. A 15-hour package is equivalent to five 3-hour sessions, perfect for several projects or organizing maintenance. Purchase 25 or more hours and receive a 15% discount. Hourly packages must be pre-paid and be used within 6 months of purchase. As a reminder, Clearing House accepts all major credit cards, processed through a secure online payment service. Contact Clearing House for current rates. If you have a project in mind, consider purchasing the pre-paid discount package to help get you started. Clearing House will work with you to schedule time and plan your project to maximize your investment.

***Next Issue: Organize your Home Office***

**Best Wishes for a Productive New Year!**

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