

Salem woman turns home-organizing into business

She honed her skill in household of six, and from research

Viktoria Haddan

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A gigantic mess. Boxes piled with stuff. Clutter. To most people, this doesn't spell F-U-N. But to professional organizer Cindy Culpovich, it spells an opportunity to jumpstart the organizing process. Culpovich is a master at decluttering, straightening, sorting and ordering any space (and she loves doing it).

"I have to be able to do this because it's so much fun," she said of her work.

In 2004, West Salem's Culpovich decided to become a professional organizer by starting her own business called Organizing Your Space. This decision was a culmination of her lifelong passion and hobby of helping people organize their spaces and lives.

Culpovich said working as a professional organizer allows her to combine her inherent organizational talents with skills that have been developed throughout the years. Since she was a child, Culpovich said she's had the ability to focus on details and to know intuitively how to organize and systematize. This comes from years of experience helping friends, family and neighbors with organizing and running a busy household with four children herself.

(I would move the sentence "Since she..." to the beginning of the paragraph to make more sense)

Culpovich and her family moved to West Salem in 2000 from Idaho. Her husband Sam works at Salem Hospital and their children include Jenny, 20, Alex, 18, Kathy, 16 and Rachel, 14. In addition to running a household and business, she also works as an independent contractor doing American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting for various agencies; she's been an ASL interpreter for more than 20 years. (10 years)

For most of her life, Culpovich said she didn't know that professional organizing existed. So Culpovich did some research and found out that such a thing existed—it's called the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO), which has an Oregon chapter. She said that the Willamette Valley (Salem) has about six professional organizers (with varying specialties)of varying practices.

Culpovich joined NAPO and read all the books she could find in the library on how to start a business. She took a class through the Salem Business Association on how to start a business. She laid out her goals and a business plan. Then, she designed a logo. (One of the things that draws people to her business is her eye catching logo and her tag line, "Turning Chaos into Calm" Her creative logo was designed by Denise Seith Company.)

Her advertising plan included an ad in the phone book and placing decals with her business name on her vehicle(s). And a Web site—www.organizingyourspace.com

"I believe in this age, you need a Web site for a business to be viable," Culpovich said. She said she got lucky because during an interpreting job at Sprague High School, she found out about the school's Web design class, wherein students practice by designing Web sites for local businesses. A high school student designed her Web site and the class maintains it for her.

Culpovich said her organizing clients are mostly women and they work together mostly during weekdays. She said men have a harder time asking someone to come in and help. She charges \$50 an hour.

One client is Kathy Scanlan of Central Salem, who is a physician at Salem Hospital. As a result (of her busy life), she said she doesn't have a lot of time to devote to organizing. Scanlan enlisted Culpovich's help to organize items in her house and garage left over from a move from the Midwest and a previous career as a university professor.

"She's directive and keeps you focused," Scanlan said. "You get a lot more done working with somebody than by yourself." Scanlan added that she had a hard time tossing items, but found it easier to repurpose items such as magazines for projects or by donating them to a women's shelter.

Culpovich said when she first starts a project, like everybody, she can be overwhelmed. But then (working closely with her client and keeping their goals in mind) she formulates a plan from start to finish to get (the results) a product that the client is looking for.

She can make recommendations for organizing products, if needed, based on the client's budget.

Her organizing bag, which she brings with her to every job, has supplies like rubber bands, stapler(s), garbage bags, paper clips, Ziploc bags, a label maker, tape, Post-It notes, Sharpies, etc.

Culpovich said her clients become almost like family, because she's helping them organize their personal items. One of Culpovich's long-term clients had a hard time getting rid of things to which she was emotionally attached. She even had a hard time tossing a cup of toothbrushes under the sink. Culpovich said she now tosses the things she doesn't need without hesitation. And when deciding whether to buy something new, the client now asks herself, "Where would I put this? Do I really need it?"

Another success story comes from a 72-year-old woman Culpovich met after her presentation to a community group. The client asked Culpovich to help her organize her medical bills and receipts. The woman's medical insurance company would reimburse her if she could show any records of her medical expenses. With Culpovich's help, the woman was able to find \$6,000 worth of receipts, for which she was reimbursed within (two) the weeks.

Culpovich said that generally, her clients' major obstacles are that they don't know how to organize themselves and get emotionally attached to "stuff."

"Many people struggle with it; otherwise, I wouldn't be in business," Culpovich said. "The key is keeping a can-do, positive attitude."

She also gives the OK to throw things away; whereas without someone else present, clients may have a hard time knowing what they should and shouldn't throw out. She starts with a small goal and consults with the client on their needs.

(Many people seem to need approval to be able to get rid of various possessions, especially those with any kind of emotional attachments. When she is present, her clients seem more able to part with things they no longer need. When working with her clients, they start with small goals and work up to bigger projects. She has organized entire houses for some clients, but it happens one step at a time.)

With all of these skills, Culpovich must have the cleanest house in West Salem, right? Nah.

"I'm not a perfectionist; my house is organized, but lived in," Culpovich said.

Viktoria Haddan is a freelance writer living in West Salem. She may be reached at vhadd@comcast.net.