

Helping homes and offices slim down

January is a busy time for professional organizer Conny Gut. New Year's resolutions are freshly made, tax time looms in the not-so-distant future, and people are attempting to burrow out of the holiday excess that clutters our homes and our lives. For some, producing order from this chaos is no big deal. But for many, getting help from someone like Gut is the fastest track to a more organized existence.

"We are educated about everything in life, but nobody teaches us how to organize our lives," says Gut. "An organizer can teach you how to simplify your life and make your home more beautiful."

Gut is one of the fortunate people for whom organizing always came naturally. Living in the Bay Area, she began her business by organizing the offices of friends. In 1999, she joined and received training from the National Association of Professional Organizers.

In 2000, Gut relocated her business, FineLine Organizing, to Paso Robles. Here, her residential customers far outweigh her business clients. She has noticed one other significant

difference. "In the Bay Area it was a chic thing to have a professional organizer, just like it is to have a personal trainer. Here, people seem embarrassed about needing an organizer," she says.

Some of this hesitancy has diminished due to the recent popularity of television organizing shows. "It's made people more aware of our business," she says. What she doesn't like about the shows are the unrealistic expectations they create. "They give the false information that any house can be fixed in one hour," she said.

Gut says that her method typically takes six to ten hours per room. This includes general decluttering, and setting up a system to keep the room organized.

She also noted that professional organizers are not just for the rich and famous. "I've worked with low-income families and ones in million-dollar homes," she says. She offers packages that start at \$300.

For those who are overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of organizing their home, she recommends starting small. "Set a timer for a half hour and start on a desk, a corner of the room, even just a drawer. When you see how



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONNY GUT

Conny Gut started her organizing business up in the Bay Area. She says Central Coast residents tend to be more embarrassed about needing a professional organizer than their Northern California counterparts.

easy it is, you'll want to do more," she said. Whether you tackle the mess alone or with an organizer like Conny Gut, the job won't likely be fast or completely painless. But the simplicity and peace of mind that comes from being organized is the reason that, this

time of year, so many of us resolve to try.

Contact Conny Gut at 226-7556 or e-mail her at Conny@fineorganizing.com.

Organizing tips from Conny Gut

Tell a friend about your resolution to become organized. Being accountable to someone will help you stay on track. They can also celebrate with you as you reach various milestones.

Items acquired from friends and family, including unwanted Christmas gifts and hand-me-downs, are a major culprit of clutter. If you are afraid that your loved ones will be hurt if you donate, toss, or re-gift an item, be honest and tell them about your simplification program. Chances are, they'll understand.

Paper clutter is another roadblock to organization. Keep mail off of the kitchen counter by having a designated in-box. Toss newspapers and magazines once you've read them. If you need a piece of information in the future, you can probably find it online.

Teach kids organization skills early by involving them in cleaning and organizing their rooms. But be sure the system you use is kid-friendly. That means keeping containers down low and making sure they have lids that are easy for little fingers to open.