

Clutter Wrangler helps create uncluttered lives

By Jackie Finch
JackieSFinch@gmail.com

When Jaclyn Ray was a little girl, she didn't need to be told to pick up her toys and tidy her room. Even as a child, Jaclyn liked things neat and organized.

"I definitely had the organizing gene," Jaclyn says. "I was born this way."

When she was in the sixth grade and curbside recycling began, Jaclyn was quickly on board. "I loved sorting things into different categories," she says. "But back then, I thought I would grow up to be a therapist, a social worker or maybe a psychology professor."

Instead, after graduating with a degree in psychology, Jaclyn realized, "That I was less of a thinker and more of a doer. I like to dig right in and work side by side with my clients to tackle their clutter and get them organized."

The impetus for her business came from a statement a friend made after Jaclyn helped the friend get organized from an unexpected and difficult breakup. "Her live-in boyfriend had suddenly decided to move out," Jaclyn says. "I spent that evening helping her transform her apartment into a new bachelorette pad."

When the duo was done with the do-over, her friend was surprised and pleased at the beautiful change in such a short time. "She said to me, 'You need to be doing this for other people as a business.'"

Since 2002, Jaclyn has been doing exactly that. Starting out part-time helping people organize, Jaclyn went full speed in her own business three



Jaclyn organizes a garage.
JANE DANIELS / COURTESY PHOTO

years later. "With the help of a grant, I was working full-time as the Clutter Wrangler."

As for that name, Jaclyn says it seemed a natural choice. "It just popped into my mind. I had never heard of professional organizing at that time, so I had to come up with a catchy name that best described what I could do. It just seemed to fit."

To deal with COVID safety precautions, Jaclyn follows all Monroe County Public Health guidelines. She also wears a mask when working with clients indoors. Since many people have been spending more time working from home and kids have been doing their education classes online during the

"For most people, there are better things to do with their limited free time than getting their life organized."

– Jaclyn Ray



Jaclyn Ray bikes to work whenever possible. JANE DANIELS / COURTESY PHOTO

pandemic, Jaclyn has seen an increased need for home organization.

"I can help people with their working-from-home setups," Jaclyn says. "And, if they are back to work, I can help them deal with the build-up of clutter from the past 18 months."

Riding a bike to help clients

Originally from Toronto, Jaclyn moved to Bloomington nine years ago and was pleased to find that the Hoo-

sier city encourages her favorite mode of transportation. "In Toronto, I was able to travel 100 percent by bicycle," she says. "In Bloomington, I probably travel 75 percent of the time by bicycle. Most of my clients live within a comfortable biking distance, but there are some who live in more rural areas who need my services."

Living with clutter can be quite stressful, Jaclyn says. "The stressful

See **Clutter**, Page C4



Boy's bedroom 'before.'
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO



Boy's bedroom 'after.'
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO



Before' photo of family room.
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO



After' photo of family room.
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO



A 'before' photo of a kitchen.
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO



An 'after' photo of a decluttered kitchen.
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO

Clutter

Continued from page C1

much stuff. We live in a contradictory age of hyper-environmental awareness mixed with hyper-consumerism."

Typically, many items are made of cheap materials that don't last very long. "Electronics, gadgets and fast fashion quickly become obsolete or useless and all this stuff can be delivered right to your front door for free."

The result, too often, is that living quarters become crammed full of old

stuff. "For most people, there are better things to do with their limited free time than getting their life organized."

Getting lives organized

Once people are so stressed that they begin to look for help, they often find the Clutter Wrangler. The first step, Jaclyn says, "is to purge as much as possible" by asking three important questions – is it useful, beautiful or loved?

"Asking the right questions is a huge part of what organizers do," Jaclyn says. "The most basic question for me

is: when was the last time you used an item? Was it in the last 12 months? If not, chances are you can live without it."

The 'beautiful' or 'loved' questions are sometimes a bit more difficult. "They cover a much smaller number of items in my experience - things like decorations and sentimental items, which also have to pass a threshold of specialness that's individual to each client."

Items that are no longer needed may be needed by another so Jaclyn tries to suggest new homes for reusable things. "I give everything I possibly can to local charities," she says.

Bloomington also has several consignment shops as well as online options to sell items. "You can also have a good old-fashioned garage sale."

Of course, not everything is reusable.

Continued to page C5

Continued from page C4



Bathroom 'before' the Clutter Wrangler.
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO



Bathroom cabinets neatly organized after wrangling clutter. JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO



Bathroom 'after' the Clutter Wrangler.
JACLYN RAY / COURTESY PHOTO

“So I also work with clients to help them learn to carefully sort their recycling and trash – it can be confusing these days to know what is recyclable and what is not.”

Rewards of decluttering

The next step is to organize what is left in the most efficient way. The results of de-cluttering can be both emotionally and physically rewarding, Jaclyn says. “It’s amazing how much more relaxed and in control people feel after we’ve spent some time together wrangling their home.”

Organizing a person’s physical space can spill over into organizing other areas of a person’s life, Jaclyn says.

“Often, this also leads to the feeling of clearing out some mental clutter and making space for doing other things, like starting new projects, having company over for dinner, repainting a room, or just feeling on top of your daily life again.”

Jaclyn notes that some of her clients are so pleased with their initial decluttering foray that they decide to dive even deeper into their personal effects.

“Like organizing years of photographs into albums, shredding old income taxes, archiving children’s art and schoolwork and even documenting who you want your favorite keepsakes and possessions to eventually go to,” she says. “If it needs organizing, I’m here to help.”

Another facet of Jaclyn’s business is helping her clients realize their goals of living a more sustainable, environmentally-friendly life. “I find that clients are often interested in this goal, but are intimidated by the sheer magnitude of the problem and are unsure about where to start. I can help guide them to find the most impactful changes that can be made without turning their lives upside-down in the process.”

For more information about the Clutter Wrangler: Visit clutterwrangler.com pt vs;; 812-330-2353 land-line, no text.

Tips from the Clutter Wrangler

- **When in doubt, throw it out:** This is a time to be ruthless, to ask yourself what is the worst possible thing that would happen if you didn’t have this item?
- **Use it or lose it:** Have you used this item in the last 12 months?
- **Efficient storage:** Means that what you have is close to where you use it or where you expect it to be.
- **Tackle large project in smaller chunks of time:** Work one to three hours at a time on a room or a category.
- **Instead of bouncing around from item to item:** Pick a corner and work clockwise, making decisions about each item as you come to it.
- **Handle things once:** Make a decision then and there.
- **Donate, sell, recycle:** One person’s trash may be another person’s treasure.
- **Everything in its place:** Sometimes clutter is just stuff that belongs someplace else.
- **Label things:** Write exactly what is inside on the outside of bins and boxes.
- **Think before you buy:** Try to break the habit of impulse shopping. Ask yourself, “Do I need this item? Do I already have something similar? Do I have space for it?” When shopping online, put items in the ‘wish list’ for a day or two before actually making the purchase.