

SUNDAY



METROWEST
WEATHER

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Snow showers
and flurries.
High of 33.
Tonight, low 25.

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METROWEST
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Q&A

SUNDAY INTERVIEW

Michele
Matties

PROFESSIONAL
ORGANIZER



DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY BEAR CIERI

Michele Matties, owner of No Worries Professional Organizing in Framingham.

People beat themselves up over their organizational problems, Matties said, but they shouldn't – it's a skill set to be learned like everything else.

Reporter Jennifer Kavanaugh recently visited Matties in her (very neat, very orderly) office and learned there is hope for the organizationally challenged.

Q: This is the time of year for new year's resolution lists, and "getting organized" tends to figure prominently in those lists. Why do you think that is?

A: The new year is a time to reevaluate, and look at, what are the things I want to change in my life? It's one of those things people are overwhelmed by everything in their life – information, activities, stuff. They just want to start focusing on the things that are important.

Q: Does that translate into more business for you at this time of year?

A: It's interesting, you would think that. But decisions to work with a professional organizer are often something that people have to come to, that realization – allowing someone into your life, and allowing someone to help you. People are getting better in asking people for help ... I've been doing this for more than 10 years. Part of it is understanding that it's OK to ask for

No worries, her business will get you organized

help. It's not usually something where people decide one day, "I think I'll go get a professional organizer to help me, and it's January, and I think I'll have someone come in." ... There's also a greater awareness now that professional organizers exist. I still get people who say, "I didn't even know you existed," but it's becoming more visible. There are a lot more home shows that show professional organizers working with people, and I think it's becoming more acceptable.

Q: Even after people make the decision to hire a professional organizer, do they get embarrassed about letting someone in? I'm thinking about my second-bedroom closet and would be mortified if it saw the light of day.

A: You know, they are, but it's funny, because people have me in for a lot of different reasons. It's a broad range. I do a lot of business organization and financial organization. I work with people who have chronic disorganization issues. I work with people who have (Attention Deficit Disorder) and have focusing issues. So there's a lot of reasons why. Sometimes it's a time issue ... But there is a great sense, especially on the residential level, everybody feels like they have to do everything. And slowly people are starting to let go of that, because that doesn't help you. That doesn't help you get to a better place. So when you invite someone in, that helps you get it done, and you can have someone with a new skill set, a fresh perspective, and better energy on it – and not all the baggage that goes with it.

And so you can approach it with a new view. So yes, some people do have a sense of, oh don't look in there. But they know I'm a professional, I've been doing this a long time, and I'm not there to judge, and together we can make things better.

Q: Besides the fact that being disorganized means that it takes people longer to do things, does it have a psychological or emotional effect on people, that they're trapped by disorder?

A: Sometimes, I think it's more the other way around. It happens when people don't feel in control of things. Oftentimes, I think the greatest impact is not being able to accomplish the things they want to accomplish.

Q: How did you become a professional organizer?

A: I was a buyer for the May Co. stores, Filene's. Although I was good at it, I didn't enjoy it. So I looked at what my skills sets were, and what I enjoyed and what I had to offer other people, and came up with this ... I truly love helping people improve their lives. I truly enjoy helping them get to that place. There's truly no situation I feel I can't help with.

Q: I was going to ask you about that, if you had ever walked into a place and thought, no this won't work?

A: As long as you want it, and are willing to do the work, I truly believe I can help you solve whatever situation you have. A lot of it is also being a trusted advocate for the person. My clients give me the greatest compliment when they refer me to

other people and say, "Oh, you can trust Michele." To me, that's worth everything. You're letting someone into your life, and into the aspect of your life that you most want to hide from other people.

Q: What do you personally find to be the most difficult part about organizing?

A: I learn from my clients, too. One great, valuable thing I've learned from my clients is that there's a middle ground, and that's OK. My personal challenge is wanting everything to be perfect ... What's tough for me is emotional memorabilia, stuff that has to do with friends, memories from my family. That's a lot of the reason people hang on to things ... If a client calls, I can tell them where something is, in the exact spot in file drawer that I've created for them. But if I sit down and try to remember something from my own life, I have trouble remembering what year something happened. I'm afraid I'll lose the memories.

Q: What's your new year's resolution?

A: Every year, my goal is to streamline. I always try to pick something in my life to let go of. My goal is always to have a better life next year than I did the year before. For me, it's looking at what's not working for me and getting it out of my life.

New Year's Day has arrived. Do you have your list ready? You know the one, the series of to-dos that are supposed to transform your 2006 into a year of better living, better health and a bigger bank account.

Even if the "O" word doesn't appear directly on your list, chances are that organization is the thematic underpinning of most goals – living a more orderly and efficient life so that you can fit in that trip to the gym, or pay the bills on time.

Enter Michele Matties, a Framingham professional organizer and owner of No Worries Professional Organizing Services. When she started this work more than a decade ago, she said, many people had no idea what she did. But now, with the popularity of home-improvement and life-improvement reality shows on television, her profession has gained more exposure.

The organizing business has expanded also because the need for it has grown, as the proliferation of material goods and increasingly crowded lives have given us more to track, Matties said.

Matties does business organization, but she also goes into homes. Her assignments can range from setting up a filing system for bills and other mail, to helping busy professional prioritize their responsibilities, projects and activities and let go of what they really don't need.