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Professional organizer finds de-cluttering fun

WHO DOES THAT?

ROSIE-ANN GROVER
The Hamilton Spectator

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Deborah Boutilier's three-level condo had disappeared under clutter.

Books, files and papers piled floor to ceiling in most rooms. A recreation area sat disguised as junk storage.

She's not a hoarder.

It's more a case of severe disorganization that plagues many home owners. It hinders productivity, making things impossible to find. It becomes a depressing environment.

The Niagara College professor, while working full-time, spent several years writing a thesis and taking care of a brother with a brain injury. The untidiness continued to heap.

"My house was the least of my worries," she says. "But I hated coming home. It affects your mental ability."

Last spring she attempted to tackle the mess and got nowhere fast. Not knowing the best places to store things, she'd also never been fond of house cleaning. It's devil's work to her.

"Sometimes you just need somebody to guide you. My house is not dirty. It's cluttered."

She googled for help and found Burlington's Julie Stobbe.

A professional organizer, Stobbe is one of 500 under the umbrella of the Professional Organizers in Canada and serves as the secretary of the Halton-Peel Chapter. She's certified in chronic disorganization from the National Study Group.

Her business, Mind Over Clutter, launched in 2006 (www.mindoverclutter.ca)

While the bulk of requests are residential and span the Greater Hamilton Area, Stobbe has expanded to give workshops and seminars, informing business owners of her service.

"She goes through (the house) like a bat out of hell," Boutilier says.



Ted Brellisford, the Hamilton Spectator

They spent 10 hours together and practised storing, recycling and donating old things. Her current rate is \$40 an hour.

"The quantity is overwhelming," Stobbe says of some clients' muddle.

One hadn't invited company to the house in seven years because of the mess.

She spends time chatting with the individuals about their daily routine.

"If you can understand what's going on in the person's life, you can usually understand why the place looks like it does."

Stobbe gets them to let go of things or put them in the most logical places.

"I'm not a psychiatrist. I don't do any therapy," she says with a laugh. "I find it fun. To me it's a puzzle."

rgrover@thespec.com

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