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FINDING BURIED TREASURES



Missy Gerber with Organizers Northwest helps local homeowners tackle the projects they often put off, such as straightening up a bathroom to be more functional.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS/ ORGANIZERS NORTHWEST

It's amazing what gems you'll find when you take the time to organize your bathroom. Missy Gerber with Organizers Northwest shares how to make best use of the small space.

Story by Nicole DeCosta

You have 10 minutes to get ready before taking the kids to school.

Standing in front of the bathroom mirror you hesitantly open the top drawer, hoping to find the toothbrush. Not there. Oh well. You can find that after your errands. Just wash your face and fix your hair for now. But, where is the hairbrush? Did someone steal the soap? Why does starting each day make you want to crawl back into bed? "Clutter is postponed decisions," said Missy Gerber, founder of Organizers Northwest, a local firm tailored to each individual, family or business. Gerber works with locals to achieve "less mess, less stress, better life. Period" as the slogan states on their Web site.

This month, she helped West Linn resident Shannon Vial conquer the clutter in her master bathroom.

"I knew there was a better way to organize my space, and I didn't know where to start. I was

overwhelmed," Vial said. "I also felt like it was something I should be able to do on my own, but I never seemed to get around to getting it crossed off my list."

That's where Gerber comes in. "We help (clients) find more time to do the things they really want to do," Gerber said. "We get results."

While Vial's bathroom is spacious, with plenty of cabinets and three drawers in the center, items weren't easy to find.

"She had hair care products she couldn't find, so she bought more. She had makeup she didn't like or use, but yet didn't throw out," Gerber said.

"What she did want and love she couldn't find."

Vial's two children — Robbie and Gracie — often use the space and needed an efficient way to find their items also. To begin organizing, everything was removed from the cupboards and drawers, cleaned and sorted according to purpose. Items not used, broken or expired were

thrown out.

"When I saw the volume of stuff on the counter and floor, I was amazed at how much we had," Vial said.

Items used every day were given easy access, such as the top two drawers in the bathroom.

"We made conscious decisions regarding their placement in the space. Infrequently used? bottom cupboard. Cleaning supplies? Grouped together in one container and location," Gerber said. "The goal is to make the process of putting things away a quick and easy task so that items land where they are supposed to."

And to make sure these newly organized areas remained in their place, a label maker was used as a visual reminder.

"Bins, containers and zones are all great but can lose their purpose over time if they are not labeled. If the razor blades get tossed in with the hair scrunchies, it gives permission for anything to

go in there that doesn't have an assigned space," Gerber said.

She continued, "When labeling a space, you want to use the word 'only'. Scissors 'only' go here, and 'only' scissors go here. It makes it a snap for all member of the household to put away items and locate what they want, when they want it."

Vial moved her makeup to the middle drawer and placed items used everyday — like her toothbrush — to the top drawer.

"I (also) now have a 'travel drawer' so that when I travel, I have a bag all packed with what I know I will need," Vial said. "No more forgetting items for a last minute weekend to the beach."

While each bathroom is different and each client has different items to organize, Gerber suggested these bathroom cleanup tips for everyone:

■ **Keep countertops cleaned off:** "It's much easier to keep a space clean when the horizontal surfaces are bare," Gerber said.

■ **Sort your space to fit your life:** "If you use electric curlers every day," she said, "they need to be easy to get out and easy to put away."

■ **Cleaning supplies should be grouped together.**

■ **Assign specific drawers, cabinets or shelves for each person that uses the space.**

■ **Throw away expired items:** "Old makeup can carry harmful bacteria. If you are not sure how long you have had an item, it's probably best to toss it," she said.

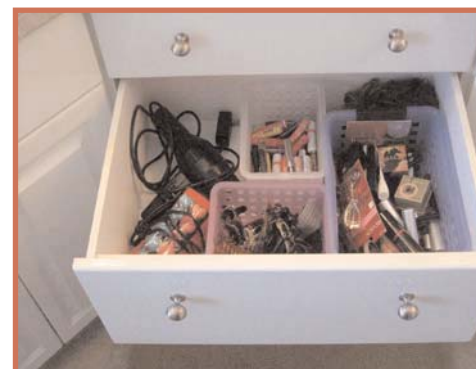
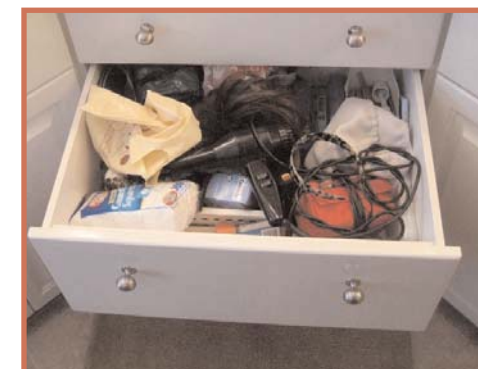
Mascara and liquid eyeliners expire every three months; lipstick loses its luster after two years. And always throw out dated prescription medication from the medicine cabinet.

"They should not be tossed in the trash. Flushing them or putting them down the drain is also a big no-no," gerber said. "To dispose of them properly, mix with water and let stand. Mix with coffee grounds or kitty litter to make them unappealing to children or animals."

■ **Make sure you can easily see everything:**



Before, the cupboard below the sink, above left, was cluttered with cleaners, hair products and other household items. After organizing, above right, cleaners were grouped together so they are easy to find. Other items were relocated to either drawers or the medicine cabinet. Before, the middle drawer, below left, was a mix-match of items. Afterwards, below right, it features makeup and hair-related items in neatly labeled containers.



Pullout shelves, bins or turntables can be used within large, deep cabinets underneath a sink. "To organize drawers," Gerber said, "try drawer dividers and label each space with what should go in it. The makes it easy for everyone to put items away."

■ **Group items by usage:** "You might want to use a small bin for items used everyday. When you are getting ready for work, you grab your container, complete you routine, put all items back in the container, and put it away where it lives," Gerber said.

She continued, "When we group items together — like with like — it gives us an easy answer as to how many lip glosses, mascara tubes, or moisturizer we really have in our pace. Our goal, as professional organizers, is to help you save money by not purchasing items you already own."

Gerber said that she enjoys helping her clients move forward with organizational projects in any room of their home. This project took a few hours and will save the family time when locating items and money because they will no

longer buy duplicate products.

Gerber said that often clients are amazed by how many items they have that they couldn't find before.

"Whether it's jars of spices, cans of WD-40, sweatshirts or pot and pans, we waste hard-earned cash on duplicate purchases because we can't put our hands on what we want, when we want," Gerber said.

Spending an afternoon can make a major difference with daily routines.

"When our clients contact us," Gerber said, "they are ready for change, and they are ready to be successful in reaching their goals."

For more information about Organizers Northwest, visit <http://www.organizersnw.com>.

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