



JUST ASKING

BY MARY KLEST

What are five ways families can get organized as children return to school?

I asked Clare Mantelman and Kim DeSimone, founders of Barrington-based Organize Now Inc.

CLUTTER HAPPENS, EVEN IN THE BEST of families. "A house lived in is not immaculate. Try creating an environment that can be tidied up in a manner of minutes," says Mantelman. With the dog days of summer over, it's time to take a new look at household management. Sharing a sense of humor and a wonderful detachment from the silly ways we stack our stuff, Mantelman and DeSimone offer back-to-school and other organizational strategies for busy families.

FILE

Are you tired of being asked, "Where's my paper?" Designate a spot in the home for school-related work. Maintain a current folder for each child. "Staying organized is a great way to prove yourself right," DeSimone says. You know where to direct the child and the child knows where to look. Keep a separate file for report cards.

PURGE

If you haven't done it already, go through last year's school papers, pictures, and projects. Pick what you want to save and file it in a legal-sized accordion folder and label it with your child's name, grade, teacher, and year. Throw away the rest. This is part of their "current year only" strategy.

CATEGORIZE

What goes together stays together. Store glue, tape, colored pencils, calculator, and scissors in one easy-to-reach place. Be ready to respond to those last minute requests for pizza party money and permis-

PHOTO: MARY KLEST



CLARE MANTELMAN (LEFT) AND KIM DESIMONE, FOUNDERS OF BARRINGTON-BASED ORGANIZE NOW INC, WITH CLARE'S SON (BACK) WORKING AT HIS "ORGANIZED" WORK STATION.

sion slips. Organize a drawer with some cash, envelopes, note pads, and checkbook.

AROUND THE HOUSE

Wheeled bins slide easily into a closet. Fill bedroom drawers with foldable items. Hang clothes in the closet to keep them wrinkle-free and easy to reach. Leave a donation bag for outgrown clothes and shoes. Locate toys where you want activities to occur. Use hooks in the mud room so backpacks and sports equipment can be hung easily.

LIMIT WHAT YOU ACCUMULATE

Before adding another bin or desk to store your stuff, ask yourself, "Why am I holding onto this?" and "How often do I use it?" Observe where items accumulate and discover why. Avoid clutter by limiting what you bring into the house.

CHOOSE PEACE

Clutter can fill your mind as well as your entryway. Being organized saves time and energy. It creates a peaceful environment and teaches children good organizational skills. Predictability adds serenity to everyone's day. Reclaim your peace of mind and quality of life; recycle, donate, or shred what you don't use. As Henry David Thoreau said, "Our life is flittered away with detail. Simplify, simplify."

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