

# Unclutter Your World

make a | green sweep | of your | home

BY: Susan Ferrier

**e**arth Day falls on April 22 this year, but you can do your part throughout the year by simply ridding your home of clutter. Once useful but now unused items have a way of taking on a life of their own: growing, consuming and even procreating.

That one handbag lurking in the back of your closet has turned into 10. You open the hall closet and out falls a jumble of cables and an old computer keyboard, behind that sits a monitor with a 13-inch screen the size of a 27-inch TV. In the kitchen pantry sits a sack of plastic grocery bags. In the linen closet are 10 sets of sheets for your three beds. Oh, and then there is the home office—enter at your own risk.

Where does all this stuff come from? Better yet, how do we rid ourselves of it?

Becky Banks, a professional personal organizer and owner of Organizing Essentials says, "Recycle it. So much of the clutter people have in their homes can be reused or recycled."

Many women hold on to clothes that are either outdated or in a variety of sizes, sometimes called their fat and skinny wardrobes. If those jeans don't fit you, ask yourself how long it will be before you might be able to wear them again. Then ask will they still be fashionable? If you are just kidding yourself that you are going to someday wear those size 4 jeans you wore in high school it's time to give them the heave-ho. But don't ditch them in the trash. Bag up those clothes and take them to a homeless shelter such as the Atlantic City Rescue Mission. The mission can always use women's and children's clothes as well as men's. Or donate that classic designer suit you haven't worn since you landed your current job and probably won't wear again to the Atlantic County Women's Center. This can help a woman who is entering the workforce after a difficult time get the proper attire to help her land a job that can lead her out of abuse and poverty.

Banks, a former social worker knows firsthand how

desperately some of these items are needed. When clients are reluctant to give things away, she gently nudges them saying, "Remember how badly someone else needs what you are not using." Even things you might not think of giving away can be used. Banks says gently worn undergarments are especially needed. She explains, "These women are going out on job interviews and they don't even have a bra to wear."

Don't stop at the clothes closets, move on to the linen closet. All those distasteful sheet sets and bath towels that you purchased while deciding if you preferred country or contemporary would delight a single mother decorating her apartment after leaving a shelter. The same is true of curtains, comforters, and towels.

Moving on to the home office, if you are like many of us, you may feel buried by papers. It's understandable. Each day our mailbox is jammed with credit card offers, catalogs, subscriptions, solicitations and bills. Much of this can be eliminated. Banks recommends taking the time to stop subscriptions you're not reading, catalogs you do not order from or that have websites. Ask charities to remove you from mailing lists. Stay only on lists that are for causes you feel passionate about and then ask to receive only one mailing per year.

Many people hold onto records much longer than required adding to the paper pile. It is still necessary to hold tax returns and checks or bank statements with copies of your checks for seven years. According to Banks utility bills, credit card statements and pay stubs can go directly to the shredder. This may be something you need to do in steps if the idea of holding onto all documentation for seven years is entrenched in your mind.

The next step in freeing yourself of the paper pile is going paperless. Convert as many of your accounts as possible to online billing and bill pay. This will not only reduce the amount of paper but also save you time paying your bills and filing.

Now that you have reduced the amount of paper

crossing your desk by utilizing computer technology, how do you dispose of your obsolete computer equipment and peripherals? Goodwill Industries accepts most computers and auxiliary equipment. Banks cautions however, when donating or recycling your computer to remove the hard drive. This is the only way to remove all traces of your information from the computer.

So, go ahead and get rid of all that clutter you've been holding on to either because you didn't know how to dispose of it or couldn't bear the idea of tossing perfectly good items. This Earth Day and beyond free your space and feel good about doing it.

↳ For tech-waste such as computers and peripherals, visit [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/ecycling/donate.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/ecycling/donate.htm)

↳ The Career Opportunity Development Center located in Egg Harbor City will shred any quantity of paper for 28-cents per lb. Call 965-5422 for more information.

↳ For information on recycling rechargeable batteries and cell phones, visit [www.call2recycle.org](http://www.call2recycle.org).

↳ Staples accepts most brands of used printer cartridges and will even give a rebate to customers bringing in cartridges for recycling. For a complete list of brands accepted visit [www.staples.com](http://www.staples.com). For all other brands, check with the cartridge manufacturer. Most have recycling programs.

↳ Eyeglasses can be refitted and reused. Most eye doctors' offices have a drop location. If your physician does not, Pearl Vision Centers accept donations.

↳ Plastic shopping bags can be dropped at most grocery stores for recycling. Homeless shelters need bags of all types.

↳ For a consultation with Becky Banks call 609-645-7197 or email her at [becky@organizingessentials.com](mailto:becky@organizingessentials.com). Visit her website at [www.organizingessentials.com](http://www.organizingessentials.com).

## Additional Resources for Recycling



*Spring*

*Meet me at Cornerstone!*

<b>The Bake Works</b> (609) 926-3382	<b>Italian Dimension</b> (609) 601-8422	<b>Rissy Roo's</b> (609) 926-9200	<b>Suncatchers Tanning Spa</b> (609) 653-2826
<b>Bonita Baskets</b> (609) 398-6557	<b>Linwood Bagels</b> (609) 601-0094	<b>Trinkets</b> (609) 601-7737	<b>American Abstract Agency</b> (609) 641-7899
<b>Eurocolour Salon</b> (609) 601-2970	<b>Mainland Fitness</b> (609) 601-7150	<b>Surroundings Furniture</b> (609) 601-7000	<b>Ivy League Mortgage</b> (609) 601-6500
		<b>Atlantic County Women's Center</b> (609) 601-9925	<b>Wells Fargo Home Mortgage</b> (609) 653-4140

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