

## News Publications

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# Start organizing your estate, home

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Oakland Tribune , Dec 9, 2007

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MANY OLDER people wish they could organize their possessions and financial paper work to save their loved ones the difficult task of settling an unorganized estate after they die. Many older, as well as younger, people wish they could develop a system to keep paper work and clutter from taking over their home office, garage or other home space. What keeps us from turning such wishes into reality?

Besides being very busy with other things, not all of us thrive on being organized. However, even those who naturally like to keep things in order often do not know how to even get started in the face of seemingly daunting estate and personal organizing challenges.

Even ample time and determined motivation often do not overcome competing interests and our lack of experience in such matters? Psychologically speaking, who wants to throw themselves into what will remind them of their mortality and/or require them to let go of things and habits that have become part of their every day environment and routine?

Fortunately, professionals and "how to" resources are available to help seniors and their adult children take the first steps toward organizing their estate and home. Jee Kim, a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers, encourages her clients to build in professional or at least personal support, set priorities, plan the first steps, celebrate initial results and move on to finish a long overdue estate or personal organizing project.

Meg Connell, also an NAPO member, has helped many families with the unfamiliar and complex tasks of settling a deceased relative's estate. Managing the paperwork, compiling inventories and coordinating with appraisers, liquidators, charities and consignment shops can stop grieving family members in their tracks. The guidance and expertise of a professional can ease that burden, as can pre- death estate and personal organizing which many people avoid.

Seasoned professional organizers bill \$60-\$150 per hour, possibly less for someone with less experience. Kim advises consumers to identify professionals at <http://www.napo.net> and to ask about the level of their experience, specializations, insurance, references, billing and how they work with clients. For example, some will provide guidance and coaching for clients who want to carry out the tasks themselves. Also, some will get involved in the nitty gritty of challenges like clutter that has collected dust for decades. Others tend to work mostly on financial documentation and work- and paper-flow systems.

Connell points out that organizers often can save clients money as well as time, frustration and failure. For example, they can arrange for the disposal of unneeded items (often in environmentally- sustaining ways) that have been incurring storage costs for years or, in

conjunction with the client's tax adviser, they can help the client settle an estate in ways that save on taxes.

Call Jee Kim at 415-668-1854 or visit <http://www.taskitsf.com>. Call Meg Connell at 510-482-5892 or visit <http://www.theorganizedone.com>. For do-it-yourself principles and tips on home and personal organizing, read "Organizing for Dummies" by Eileen Roth and Elizabeth Miles (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., \$21.99) or visit <http://www.onlineorganizing.com> or <http://www.organizingyourlifetheeasyway.com>. For work-life advice consider the best-selling "Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity" by David Allen (Penguin Books, \$15).

Sandra J. Cohen, R.N., and Roger Cormier, M.A., of Cohen Cormier Geriatric Care Managers, provide care assessments, home care, placement and care management services to seniors and their families.

You can reach them at 510- 652-3377 or 925-945-8855

or visit <http://www.eldercaremanagers.com>.

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to get started.

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