



Emily Fitzgerald worked with Jane Avery, executive director of the Community Harvest Food Bank, to organize her office environment.

# Let's Get Organized

*When clutter becomes too much to handle,  
Organized Living Solutions comes to the rescue.*

article by Barb Sieminski • photography by Steve Vorderman

There's an old adage that a clean desk is the sign of a sick mind. That's one philosophy that Certified Professional Organizer Emily Fitzgerald heartily disagrees with—and with good reason.

"Most of my business clients are really

great at what they do, and by being more organized, they can focus on doing what they do best," says Fitzgerald, an Anderson University graduate with a degree in social work and a minor in psychology.

"Sometimes the reasons for disorganization are fairly straightforward—too much stuff, not enough space, not the right organizational tools," says Fitzgerald. "Sometimes the reasons are circumstantial and transitional events. Both good and bad life changes can present challenges to keeping our spaces and lives organized. Birth, death, marriage, divorce and job change, can all seriously disrupt and change our lives."

Though the general public may traditionally think of professional organizers as residential contractors, Fitzgerald stresses that many of the same principles apply to the corporate world.

"The business community needs to be aware that organizers do work in office settings and that there is someone in Fort Wayne who does this type of work," says Fitzgerald.

There are many TV shows that highlight professional organizers in a residential setting, such as *Hoarding: Buried Alive*, *Neat, Clean Sweep* and *Mission: Organization*. All of these have helped the public become aware of organizing as an industry, Fitzgerald points out.

Last summer, one of Fitzgerald's larger jobs was a real challenge. With funding from an INSPIRE grant, she helped organize the move that ARCH made to its new location on Lafayette Street.

"We started by creating a plan for the layout and the furniture in the new space," says Fitzgerald, "and with the staff's help with archives storage and the updated records retention guidelines the ARCH Board passed, we purged many boxes of old paperwork and updated all the filing cabinets. ARCH went from four people in one space to a new two-story location with eight different rooms."

Fitzgerald receives training through the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) each year and is a member of the elite Golden Circle, which consists of organizers who have been in business more than five years. She received certification through the Board of Certification for Professional Organizers (BCPO), making her one of only two Certified Professional Organizers in Indiana.

Specializing in varied business areas has helped Fitzgerald hone her craft.

- For the office manager and the human resources professional, she helps their employees be organized to stay in compliance and work well with each other by setting up systems that make sense to numerous people.

- For the salesperson, customer service is key and when you are disorganized, it can cost you big time,

Fitzgerald points out. She helps them set up a functional, mobile office so they have the most time to serve their clients and close the deal, because that's where their income is.

- For professionals helping others (accountants, executive coaches, etc.), she tries to have their documents organized for tax time, and so on.

Jane Avery, executive director of Community Harvest Food Bank and one of Fitzgerald's clients, says, "Emily's professionalism and personality instilled a great sense of trust in me, and I felt comfortable enough to let her sort, pitch and organize things in my office that I had never let anyone do before. My office environment is much more productive since working with Emily. She is a gem!"

Fitzgerald is nothing if not versatile, citing a job involving an entire 6,000-square foot house.

"Last year, two assistants and I organized a house from top to bottom without the homeowner present. In fact, the wife and children didn't even know it was being done," says Fitzgerald.

The family had temporarily moved to a different city and the husband contacted Fitzgerald to do the job as a gift to his wife before they returned home.

"The husband said 'First, my wife will kill me, and then she'll be thrilled.' And indeed she was!" she says.

Fitzgerald, who works with many not-for-profits, regards it as a compliment when she is told that she really takes the time to listen and come up with solutions that suit the individual person.

"Every physical space I work in is different, and while there are basics that apply to each person and space, I don't subscribe to a one-size-fits-all approach," says Fitzgerald. "Many clients tell me that the process was actually enjoyable because of my energy and passion for what I do." •



Geoffrey Cly, M.D. with Northeast OB/Gyn, has streamlined his office space with Emily's help.

## Organized Living Solutions

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Professional Organizing

“Before Emily, I used to get overwhelmed from the messiness in my home office, now I enjoy going in there and my productivity is so much better.”

- Geoffrey Cly