



JOE MAHONEY/TIMES-DISPATCH

Katherine Lawrence rests on one of an organizer's favorite tools: the trash can. The hallway was her staging area.

INSIDE OUT

Irritated about something? It may be clutter

Do you need to get organized? That the question has to be asked at all puzzles me.

Either you do, or you don't.

But professional organizers say there are people who don't recognize that disorganization is the reason their lives aren't running smoothly.

So how can you tell?

"The way people know they need to organize is when they get irritated," said Debbie Bowie of Simply Organized. "You can tell by the energy people have when they talk about it that there's something



JANN MALONE

irritating them that they want fixed.

"A lot of times — this is a universal thing — the reason that it doesn't get fixed is because people are so busy they don't make the time to stop and figure out why am I bothered? What's bugging me?"

Here's your chance to take the time: Get a cup of coffee, sit down with this column and see if anything in it sounds like it's part of your life.

This month — Get Organized Month on some calendars — a group of Richmond professional organizers donated blocks of time to their favorite nonprofit groups.

They found problems that weren't much different from what they encounter when they work with individual clients in their homes or offices.

Lucky for the chronically cluttered among us, they shared their solutions.

"People don't realize that when you're not organized, it affects you spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically."

IRETHA BARRETT
THE ORGANIZING
PROFESSIONALS

Problem: We got organized once, and we don't know what happened.

Well, two things happened, said Katherine Lawrence of Space Matters. She worked in the supply room at Big Brothers Big Sisters Services.

"Nothing had been labeled, and things weren't really put back. Things were placed where there was space. So they made it to the supply room, but if there was empty space on the shelf, that's where it would go."

Solution: Labels.

"We labeled the containers," Katherine said, "and we also labeled the shelves, so if someone did take the entire box for a project in another room, they'd know where to put it back."

She also tried to maximize the space on



The result of Katherine Lawrence's labeling system: a place for everything, and everything should stay in its place.

