

Events

Thursday

■ The Valley Oak Chapter of the Embroiderers Guild of America will hold a **summer stitch-in** at 9:30 a.m. in the Blanchard Room of the Stephens Branch Library, 315 E. 14th St. in Davis. Stitchers should bring their own projects for show and tell while they socialize. Call (530) 756-0380.

Friday

■ **Davis celebrates the Fourth of July** with a full day of family fun, starting with the Little League pancake breakfast from 7 to 10 a.m. at the Veterans' Memorial Center, exhibition baseball games and a city league softball tournament, the 32nd annual Fourth of July Criterium bike races downtown, the Kiwanis Kiddie Parade at 9:30 a.m. on C Street downtown, musical entertainment beginning at 6 p.m. in Community Park and, of course, an aerial fireworks display beginning at 9:30 p.m. in Community Park. For details, see a full schedule in Monday's Enterprise or call the city of Davis at (530) 757-5626.

Sunday

■ **Tour the Storer Garden** at the UC Davis Arboretum and learn how to add year-round color and interest to your home landscape with Arboretum All-Stars — great plants for Central Valley gardens. Docent Ramona Cramer will discuss the principles of valley-wise gardening to save water and energy, support pollinators and reduce pollution. The free tour will start at 10 a.m. at the Gazebo, on Garrod Drive on the UC Davis campus. Free parking is available in Visitor Lot 55. Call (530) 752-4880 or visit <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>.

Tuesday, July 8

■ **The Outa Sight Group** plans an Amtrak trip to San Francisco. Participants will take the Amtrak train and bus to San Francisco, learn how to use BART, tour the San Francisco Lighthouse for the Blind, visit the Lighthouse Optical Aid Store, and have lunch at a restaurant. Participants must be able to maneuver stairs and do some walking. For details on times, cost and agenda, call Lucinda at (530) 662-0535.

Wednesday, July 9

■ The June meeting of **AARP Chapter 1223** will be in the Davis Senior Center, 646 A St. at 11:30 a.m. The potluck begins at noon. Members should bring a guest and their own table service, food service, food to share or a \$5 donation. Members whose last names begin with: A to G should bring a salad; H to P, a salad; and Q to Z, a dessert. Barbara Lieb will demonstrate flower arranging. Call (530) 796-3462.

■ Arboretum Superintendent Warren Roberts leads a **lunchtime stroll in the UC Davis Arboretum**. The public can enjoy the weather, learn about the Arboretum's collections and get a little exercise. The group meets at noon at the Gazebo, on Garrod Drive on the UC Davis campus. Parking is \$6. Call (530) 752-4880 or visit <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>.

Saturday, July 12

■ **Learn about the complex and fascinating ecosystem of the redwood forest** on a free guided tour at the UC Davis Arboretum. Docent Bev Watros will lead the tour, which will meet at 10 a.m. at the Buehler Alumni and Visitors Center on Old Davis Road at Mrak Hall Drive. Call (530) 752-4880 or visit <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>.

Tuesday, July 15

■ The Institute for Restorative Health, 1460 Drew Ave., Suite 300 in South Davis, will offer a **free Healthy Back Class**, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Call (530) 758-4474 or visit <http://www.4irh.com>.

Clear that clutter



Claudia Smith, a professional organizer, shows a simple filing system that can make important papers much easier to find. Keeping papers vertical rather than stacked on flat surfaces is one of her tips to effective organization.

SUE COCKRELL/
ENTERPRISE PHOTO

Davis consultant's business shows that you can get organized

By Regina Wang
ENTERPRISE CORRESPONDENT

Ever since she started nursing school last fall, Katie Barker of Woodland, 40, said her house got messier and messier.

When she arrived home from hours of lectures and tried to catch up with the endless reading and paper assignments required by her two-year intensive program, there also were piles of unopened mail, dirty laundry and recycling awaiting her attention. Her stress level tripled when her sons asked for rides to their sports events. And she knew she did not want people to see her house.

Two months into nursing school, Barker realized she had to take action. She searched online and was delighted when she found an organization, National Association of Professional Organizers, that was dedicated to helping busy people like her.

She e-mailed her firefighter husband the contact information of a Davis-based professional organizer, Claudia Smith.

"This is what I want for Mother's Day," she told her husband.

Now two months after Smith's consulting, Barker said things have changed.

"My office is completely free now and I can do all my work there," Barker said. Smith gave her tips on the things she should keep and the things she should clear.

A former social worker, Smith became a professional organizer five years ago. The two professions, she said, share much in common. "It's not just about organizing the sweaters but letting go those memories of the sweaters," Smith said. Her job calls for empathy, sensitivity and confidentiality. "It's a difficult and emotional process for people."

According to Smith, people often accumulate things out of guilt; they tell themselves that they should keep an item because it is either too expensive to discard or was a gift from someone. Unused items, like a pair of jeans three sizes too small, represent the people they once were or the people they wish they could be. Thus, their houses become loaded with clutter and guilt.

"A person's house should enrich — not stress — their lives," Smith said.

Thanks to shows like TLC's "Clean Sweep" and HGTV's "Mission: Organization," hiring someone to rescue a household from clutter has become a welcome option in the recent years. The demand has also given rise to a new career for those seeking to share their organizational skills.

Smith said she enjoys the flexibility of her job. Her schedule depends on 12 to 15 regular clients who call on her for help.

"My office is completely free now and I can do all my work there."

Katie Barker

Busy nursing student and mom, thankful for the help she received from a professional organizer

She charges \$50 an hour. She also teaches a class through the city of Davis and holds a support group.

The 4,200-member National Association of Professional Organizers has doubled its membership in the past three years, according to president Standolyn Robertson. NAPO was founded in 1985 by five women in California.

Rather than organizing things for the clients, professional organizers teach people how to be organized.

It's "transferring skills," Robertson said. "We're putting systems into place and helping people do it on their own."

Their clients are not limited to families. They also serve corporations, law firms, small businesses.

As people have increasingly complicated lifestyles, it makes sense for them to hire someone to create a system for their office, kitchen or closet, Robertson said. In the past, people just got pieces of mail each week, but now they have their mailboxes, voice mail, and e-mail filled within a day. Kids in her generation, Robertson said, would simply go out to play. Kids now have calendars that include play dates and directions to soccer games.

"There is a lot more to manage," she said, and that explains the industry's growth in the last 25 years.

But while people seem to lack time to manage things, they find plenty of time to accumulate — perhaps contributing to another growing industry — storage units.

One in 10 American households uses commercial storage. Usstoragesearch.com, a Nebraska-based online company that helps clients find the closest storage units near their cities, has at least 51,000 visitors a month. Its Web site contains the information of 12,000 storage companies statewide.

"On the industry side we are growing," said Megan Eckert, vice president of the online company. "We have more and more hits every day."

California has the second-highest number of storage units, trailing only Texas. While most people might think students or military personnel are the top users for storage units, they only make a small percentage. The No. 1 users of are single family homeowners, who comprise 53 percent of all users, and the top storage item is furniture. There are specific units for particular needs, such as RV units and climate-controlled units (for electronics, photos or expensive furniture).

The problem is, storage units encourage people to accumulate instead of organizing

Quotes and tips

"The best things in life aren't things."

"Less stuff, more fun!"

Organizing and clearing clutter starts in your head, not with your hands.

Keep only the things you truly need, love or value.

Avoid allowing memories and dreams to fill your space.

Teach your kids about charity.

Reduce, organize, then containerize and label.

Everything in your home needs a home. Nothing else goes in that spot.

Clutter is unfinished projects or postponed decisions; so be decisive.

Reduce, reuse, then recycle!

Organizing is an ongoing process, not a one time event.

Throw away junk mail immediately.

Cancel publications you don't read.

Designate one spot for bills and put them there right away.

Keep papers vertical, not stacked on flat surfaces.

Buy a shredder and a label maker and use them often.

Maintain an ongoing charity donation pile.

Donate two pieces of clothing for each new one that comes in.

Create a keepsake box for each member of the family.

Only go shopping with a list in hand; avoid impulse buying.

their possessions. They should be used for "very specific and time-limited purposes," she said.

"You pay bills for storage each month and you feel bad about it," she said.

But hiring a professional organizer also costs money. While a storage unit may run anywhere from \$45 to \$90 a month, a professional organizer charges anywhere from \$50 to \$150 an hour.

And it's often not the cost that keeps people from hiring an organizer. The stigma attached to a messy house can sometimes stop someone from seeking professional help.

In fact, Smith's neighbors asked her to take off an advertising sign on her car — which she sometimes parks on the street — so that others wouldn't think they had hired her for help.

Robertson said, though, that hiring an organizer has nothing to do with personal weaknesses. After all, people have busy lives.

"It's not a character flaw that you have a lawyer do your will," Robertson said.

Barker agrees, and is thrilled she made the decision to get help.

Besides, a show on BBC America is enough to lighten her up.

"My secret guilty pleasure is watch 'How Clean is Your House' — it makes me feel so much better about my house," she said.