

Living the organized life isn't easy

Getting organized. It's easier said than done.

Dorothy Lehmkuhl can attest to that.

"My background is about 20 years of disorganized living," the Bloomfield Township resident said with a laugh.

Lehmkuhl writes a column, "Organizing," for the Creative Living section of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

One summer day in 1981, Lehmkuhl was at the dentist's office. While waiting, she read an article about a woman who taught classes on getting organized.

Lehmkuhl did some research and attended workshops. Just 8 1/2 weeks later, she opened a pilot class in her home.

She'd worked as a secretary for about 10 years and had been at home caring for her family for about 10 years. Lehmkuhl now teaches a series of classes on getting organized; she also does consulting for businesses and individuals.

These days, Lehmkuhl describes herself as "fairly well-organized." She tries to take things one day at a time but jokes that several days can hit at once.

There are two aspects of being organized, Lehmkuhl said. Mental and physical aspects both play a part in being organized.

"If you have that mental control, the rest will happen."

THOSE WHO suffer from internal anxiety won't succeed in getting organized, she said.

"They're not able to think straight because they're all tied up with their emotions."

Lehmkuhl has some tips for people who are trying to be more organized.

"Not to be a perfectionist. That would be my first point."

Some women suddenly try to become "superwomen" during the holidays, Lehmkuhl said. That's not a good approach; people need to have realistic expectations during the holidays and throughout the year.

And to be able to say no. I think people just try to do too much, I really do."

In managing your time, it's best to start by setting goals, said Lehmkuhl, who's the mother of three teens. After goals have been established, you can set priorities to help you reach those goals.

Decision-making is the key, deciding what those priorities are."

Ann Arbor resident Pat Materka agreed it's important to establish goals. Materka is director of development and public relations for the University of Michigan Fitness Research Center. She's also the author of "Time In, Time Out, Time Enough, A Time Management Guide for Women" (Prentice-Hall Inc., 1982).

WHEN SETTING goals, it's helpful to be specific, said Materka, who also conducts time management workshops. A specific goal, such as "I'll clean out the basement" or "I'll keep my desk manageable this year" is better than a general statement.

It's helpful to set deadlines for reaching goals and to break goals into smaller steps, Materka said.

"Small changes are easier than giant, big mammoth changes."

It's difficult for any of us to revolutionize our lives, she said. It's better to pick one physical space — such as your kitchen or your desk — to keep organized.

It can be helpful to spend some money on a file cabinet, a filing crate or a desktop organizer, Materka said. It's not necessary to spend large sums, but spend-



Time is on at least one side of Dorothy Lehmkuhl.

JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

ing some money is one way to make a commitment that "makes us a lot more likely to follow through."

Materka recommends taking a few minutes to write down your priorities. Putting priorities in writing gives your mind the freedom to concentrate on more important work.

"I also feel a lot less guilty about the places where I still have work to do." Feeling guilty isn't a good use of anybody's time, she said.

MATERKA RECOMMENDS clearing your desk and setting out the highest-priority project. It's distracting to sit down at a cluttered desk and not know where to start.

"It's real easy to dabble in 20 things all day long."

Materka, like Lehmkuhl, started to think about getting organized as it related to her life. Materka felt hopelessly disorganized and was unable to do a lot of things she was interested in doing; she realized she had to become more systematic.

"It was really a matter of desperation."

These days, Materka's more organized, both on the job and at home. She's the mother of two teenage children, "who really do an awful lot to help out."

Materka believes children are an "untapped resource" when it comes to getting organized. Children can help out around the house; doing so benefits them and the rest of the family.

Hiring household help is an option, Materka said. Some people may find that trade-off of time versus money is a worthwhile investment.

AT HOME, Materka tries to keep some rooms looking nice; others aren't quite as important.

"You can always shut doors. I guess everyone has their own level of tolerance for a certain amount of dust and clutter."

Some family members may prefer to do certain household chores, she said. Family members can work out compromises so that one person — typically the mother — doesn't end up doing all the work.

In getting organized, it's important to be aware of your energy cycle, Materka said. Some of us are morning people; others function more efficiently at other times of the day. It's best to save more creative and challenging work for times when you're at your best.

- Other tips Materka offered include:
- Using one drawer as a "holding pattern" for things that are difficult to throw away. Periodically, you can take the lower half of the drawer's pile and throw it out.
 - Having something to do at your desk for times that you're put on hold. If you're put on hold for too long, hang up and call back later.
 - Making your telephone calls at one time, rather than dotting them throughout your day.
 - Asking those you reach on the telephone if you've reached them at a convenient time.
 - Having something to do while you're waiting in line.

"To me, it's a stress reducer to get something done."

Materka and Lehmkuhl agreed motivation is an important factor in getting organized and reaching goals.

It's important to build in some rewards for yourself when setting goals. Whether it's going to the movies or buying yourself a few brownies, rewards can help you reach goals, Materka said.

Materka believes people should decide what's important to them and then pursue that. Being organized isn't so much a goal in itself, she said; instead, it's a means of getting what you want.



Out with old on New Year's

By Diane Gailo
staff writer

If the thought of welcoming 1988 in just another smoky, drink-infested bar makes you want to crawl under the covers and set your alarm for midnight, it's time for a change.

Since bars and discos are "totally out" the rest of the year, as Richard Rollins, ex-owner of "Menage" and "Cheeks" nightclubs claims, why should New Year's Eve be any different?

And you're not alone if you cringe from memories of the "annual" New Year's Eve party packed with boozers, blistering bear hugs and bunglers burning cigarette holes in your best outfit.

What's left if you don't go to a party or bar?

WELL, YOU COULD do what Ken Stockton, of Southfield's Metric Medical Laboratories, plans. "We avoid it (going out), because frankly I don't like waking up on the beginning of the year with a hangover and I don't like to deal with the drunks on the road."

Stockton's sentiments were echoed by most of the people contacted for this story. Many plan to watch the descent of the apple in Times Square on TV with a clear view from the sofa. And others said they didn't even want to give it that much effort.

But then there's those people whose calendars are marked with ideas that are definitely off the beat and track.

Like, Rollins, for instance.

"This year is an unusual year," said Rollins, a Southfield attorney.

The Bloomfield Hills resident plans to fly to Palm Springs, California, to attend a celebrity wedding. Rollins said he wouldn't identify the bride and groom, because the groom swore 300 to 500

Detroit area guests to secrecy about his identity. Rollins is planning to spend three days in the sunny state.

"I'M GOING TO THE ROSE BOWL" to see the State vs. Southern Cal game, said Dan Durack, Canton Township personal director and a 1969 green and white alumnus. He's going to the game with his two brothers — one lives in Royal Oak and the other in Colorado.

"It's different," Durack said. "Normally I'm home on New Year's Eve. I want to watch Michigan State play in the Rose Bowl."

It will probably be another 22 years from now before they're there again," Durack joked.

Susan Weaver of Farmington Hills plans to go to a Red Wings game with a group of friends "if we can still find tickets." Afterwards they'll stay downtown, she said.

It will be the first year in several that I'll be going anywhere," Weaver said, adding that she "usually plays it safe" and stays home to avoid drunks on the road.

Suzan Rollins Singer, director of public information for Oakland County, is thinking more about Jan. 1 than Dec. 31. She's sending her son, Justice, 5, to the "New Year's Eve Bash at the Club" at The Playground day care center at Orchard Mall, in West Bloomfield. "They have a New Year's Eve party for kids. It's convenient, because I don't have to get up early in the morning."

"I think it's wonderful," she said. "My son is very excited to go, because he doesn't feel left out. They have dinner, a midnight snack and breakfast. And no adults are allowed. It's difficult to find babysitters, and I know he'll be in a place where he'll have a good time."

Linda Sherman, owner of Around the World Travel in Farmington Hills, said this is a busy time of year for people trying to "do something different" for New Year's Eve.

"What most people are looking for is to go away after Christmas and before New Year's Eve," Sherman said. The Bahamas, California, Arizona, Las Vegas and cruising topped the most sought after getaways.

"People are looking for something different, something warm, something exciting," she said.

If you're plans pale in comparison, it could be worse. You could be going to a bar or party.

I resolve to . . .

If you are just getting around to your New Year's resolution, then your first one should be easy: In 1988 I shall quit procrastinating.

But what if you've gotten to this late date and still don't have a resolution worthy of hanging a New Year's hat on?

Oh, sure, you can jot down the usuals: Lose weight, exercise more, see your doctor for a physical, quit smoking, quit or reduce your drinking, install smoke detectors, use your seat belts.

These are all good, if not very original, resolutions. But let's face it. If you are not already practicing these habits, what makes you think a new page on the calendar will change things?

No, if a resolution is to stick longer than a Jan. 2 hangover it needs to be original. It must carry with it a driving motivation, and it must be something you can boast about to your friends. In short, it must be from the following list. If you haven't got your resolve down pat, then it 1988 resolve to:

- Tune your television set so that all of Ted Turner's colored programs show up in black and white.
- Learn the names of five Central American nations, their capitals, and whether the U.S. government supports or opposes their rebels.

- Stagger produce selections so that the fruits and vegetables don't all ripen at once.
- Suggest that Birmingham take a cue from Oakland County's skatmobile and start its own Spa and Tanning Boothmobile for kids this summer.
- Not use any of Joe Biden's leftover speeches.
- Quit dating dunk tank clowns.
- Stop wondering why olives come in those tall, skinny jars.
- Finish your Christmas shopping.
- Establish a Hamster Hotline number.
- Ride the People Mover.
- Start a petition drive to bring professional sports to the Silverdome once the Pistons leave.
- Fly Troy's Main Street.
- Stop eating raw cookie dough.
- Stop taking 13 items though the 12-item-or-less line at the grocery store.
- Contribute to the fund to build a Buddhist religious scene in front of the city halls of Birmingham and Westland.
- Watch every cable television station at least once.
- Get your life story on a collector set of glasses from 7-11.
- Become a square dance caller at the Jackson State Prison or a mime artist-in-residence at a home for unwed mothers.
- Read the Fisher Wallpaper and Paint big book of samples from cover to cover.
- Buy an origami factory and hope it doesn't fold.
- Never use someone else's New Year's resolutions.