

Spotlight

Glencoe organizer puts clutter in its place

BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH | Contributor

GLENCOE

Laura Ashman became a professional organizer 15 years ago when she started her company, Home & Office CPR.

Yet, the Glencoe mother of three has been organizing her friends' homes and businesses since she was 18 years old.

Ashman said it all began her freshman year of college when she noticed her roommate was unpacking and having trouble figuring out where to put everything.

"I turned to her and said, 'Do you mind if I help you?'" said Ashman, who is still best friends with her ex-roommate. "Organizing things has just always come naturally to me."

After college, Ashman worked in radio sales and marketing for several years, organizing all of her co-workers desks and work spaces, of course. When she had her first child, she left her career, and decided to finally start her Glencoe-based organizing business, the business she knew she was always meant to have.

Home & Office CPR's typical clients are busy city and suburban moms and professionals.



Laura Ashman, owner of her company Home & Office CPR poses for a photo in one of her closets in her Glencoe home. Ashman said she's been organizing other people's things since she was 18 years old. | JACKIE PILOSSOPH-for Sun-Times Media

Ashman also organizes offices.

"Most people are just busy people who have let things pile up," said Ashman, who is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers. "I can sit down with someone who has a huge pile of stuff and help them purge it, either by throwing it away, giving it away, storing it or putting it in a more practical place."

Ashman said she finds many clients put things in the wrong places, places that don't make sense when it

comes to everyday use.

When she first walks into a client's home or office, Ashman said clients are usually apprehensive and nervous, almost apologizing for the mess.

"Everyone asks me, 'Is this the worst you've ever seen?' I'm not judgmental and I think I make people feel comfortable right away," she said, "It all comes down to helping people do what they're capable of. They just need someone to give them guidance and support, much like a

trainer or a therapist."

Geena Zaslavsky, of Glencoe, is a client who called Ashman when her mother passed away. She needed help organizing all of her mom's belongings that had been shipped to her house.

"It was an emotional time and I couldn't get my brain around how to integrate all of my mom's things into mine, and Laura came over and started looking at more than just my mom's things," said Zaslavsky, "She saw the job in such a more macro picture

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and started organizing many rooms."

Zaslavsky said Ashman put everything into categories, measured closets and shelving, and then went out and purchased the right size storage bins for everything.

"She was so hands-on and so much fun," Zaslavsky said. "She's easy to be with. She doesn't criticize you. She makes you feel like you're part of it."

Rebecca Miller, of Chicago, worked with Ashman at a radio station several years ago and said Ashman was always organizing her co-workers desks. When Miller needed help in her home, she became a client.

"She gets you to see clearly," said Miller. "You either need this or give it away or throw it away, and it makes it so much easier to live."

Ashman charges \$90 per hour for her services.

"Even though hiring someone to organize your things is somewhat of a luxury, to me it's a necessity," said Miller. "When there's too much clutter, it's just too chaotic." ■