

Vicki Gillam Norris '95

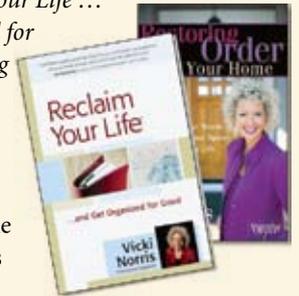
Made to order

Vicki Gillam Norris says her career leanings showed themselves in childhood, early and often.

“At slumber parties I would say, ‘Hey, do you guys want to take everything out of the closet and organize it?’” says Vicki, laughing. “And I’d ask my mom, ‘Can I *please* clean out the kitchen?’ I guess I’ve always found a therapeutic element in getting organized,” she says.

Since she first took the plunge as a professional organizer in 1999, Vicki’s Portland-based company, Restoring Order, has transformed clutter control into a Martha Stewart-like

mini-empire. She now employs seven people, including her husband of eight years, Trevor (they have two young sons, Nash, 2, and Brock, 9 months), and has written two best-selling books—*Reclaim Your Life ... and Get Organized for Good* and *Restoring Order to Your Home* (Harvest House 2007)—is a sought-after speaker on the how-to circuit, has



HEY! I FOUND THE CAR! One of Vicki's makeovers—a garage that went from unkempt to uncluttered on CBS' "The Early Show."



patented four original designs for office-supply products, and has appeared on dozens of television and radio programs.

But these milestones are only the beginning, says Vicki, who notes that running a business in these crazy economic times has forced her to think bigger and smarter.

"I build a brand, not just subcontract out my services," she says. "Many organizers hang out their shingle and hope for the best. My goal is not to just 'clean up' for people but get to the heart of why they're disorganized," says Vicki. "For small businesses specifically, being organized can make the difference between surviving this economy or not."

A communication major at Puget Sound, Vicki says she knew she'd be selling something after college ("My personality test results were always either 'Promoter' or 'Persuader,'" she says, laughing. "I couldn't escape it."), but it wasn't until after a brief stint in real estate in Portland that she realized her true calling.

"I read an article about someone who

organized for a living, and I was, like, 'People do that? I've always done that!'" she says. "It was perfect for me."

Starting out, Vicki targeted home and small-business owners, all of whom were overwhelmed by their, well, stuff: from messy garages, to disastrous home-office filing systems, to rec rooms overrun with toys and unused fitness equipment. By 2003 her business had grown into an official LLC and boasted a staff of consultants who assisted Vicki in processes that are often as delicate and personal as substance-abuse interventions.

"It is very emotional for people," says Vicki. "When we meet someone, we will have done an extensive intake process over the phone so by the time we see their space, we aren't totally shocked. There is often an element of shame for them. We want to help them get past that, bring them hope, and deliver a breakthrough."

Today, Vicki has made good on her goal of "stopping office-product abuse" with her flying-off-the-shelves series of stylish, vintage-

influenced filing and organizing products. (More than 1,000 units have been sold to clients as varied as hospitals, stay-at-home moms, and entrepreneurial start-ups.) She's also keenly focused on expanding Restoring Order's reach beyond the Northwest through a recent national media tour, making stops in Atlanta and New York, and fulfilling a crowded docket of speaking engagements.

All the while, she is driven by the belief that real change—not shoving everything into the hall closet—comes with commitment.

"Organizing isn't about hiding or stashing stuff because guests are coming over for Thanksgiving," says Vicki. "There aren't any shortcuts, especially for people living in chaos. Like anything worthwhile, it is a process. Living an orderly life helps you make room for the things that really matter, and that, ultimately, is utterly rewarding." — *Stacey Wilson '96*

You can find out more about Vicki and Restoring Order at www.restoringorder.com.

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING Vicki's Reclaim Your Office collection helps businesses manage paper and supplies. The products are constructed of aluminum and assembled with rivets for strength and an urban aesthetic. She chose a luminescent silver powder-coat finish. All are made in the USA.