

Sherwood entrepreneur helps others Restore Order *Organizational guru Vicki Norris demonstrates the work-life balance*

October 3, 2013 BY SAUNDRA SORENSON



by: TIMES PHOTO: JAIME VALDEZ - Trevor and Vicki Norris host events at their barn in Sherwood, where they run Restoring Order.

Perhaps it was congestion that led Vicki Norris to her dream home.

“If you live in Sherwood, you really want to avoid Tualatin-Sherwood Road,” the long-time resident says, “so you drive through back roads. I would drive past this house literally for 12 years. I loved this house.”

As an organizational expert, Norris was deft at visualizing what kind of spaces work best for her clients. She sensed that this farmhouse just off Morgan Road might serve as the ideal “international headquarters” of Restoring Order, the consultancy she began in 1999, which she had since nurtured into a small business with an additional staff of six. In a sequence of events Norris can only call “providential,” the house went on the market in 2008, followed soon after by the house next door. Norris and her husband, Trevor, were able to make her commute-time fantasies a reality, putting roots down on their own five-acre farm as her parents settled in next door.

“Having the property has opened up a whole variety of different ways that we can deliver organizing ideas and content to people,” Norris reflects.

Through Restoring Order, she offers seminars and one-on-one organizational coaching services to individuals and businesses. One day, Norris might find herself tackling a messy attic, garage, basement or — most commonly — home office. The next, she might be outlining the inefficiencies in a business’ chain of command.

In the past 14 years, Restoring Order has become something of its own organizational empire. Norris has published two books about her approach and produced a line of instructional DVDs. She recently launched her own Reclaim Your Office product line. And if her face seems familiar, you might have caught her in one of a handful of episodes of HGTV’s “Mission Organization,” where she appeared as an expert organizer. Or perhaps you saw her on KATU, or CBS.



By: TIMES PHOTO: JAIME VALDEZ - Restoring Order owner Vicki Norris sits in her office at her home in Sherwood, where she meets with clients and helps them get organized.

“It’s a really important consumer topic, one that we’re approaching now in a very personal way,” Norris says.

She believes there is an intrinsic connection between the “state of order” in a person’s physical surroundings, peace of mind — and quality of life.

“We’re not an organizing company that just wants to come in and containerize people’s stuff and label it,” Norris says. “We want to get to the root causes of the chaos.”



by: TIMES PHOTO: JAIME VALDEZ - Restoring Order owner Vicki Norris closes the door to the custom desk she created for her home office in Sherwood.

For example, a client might have what Norris calls “situational disorganization,” where clutter is caused by external factors, like a divorce or other major life upheaval.

“That’s very recoverable,” Norris says. “But a lot of people have dealt with this for a long, long time. So we need to help pull them out and give them some hope.”

Or a client might be in the throes of what Norris calls “historical disorganization” — bad habits reinforced by either extremely disorganized or rigid parents.

The third category is “habitual disorganization” — or as Norris says, “your own bad habits are to blame.”

In any case, Norris knows she can help.

“This is about helping people dig out of what I believe is bondage,” she explains.

Norris has stood next to clients grieving the death of a parent, and readying themselves to sort through an entire estate; she has helped new parents arrange their living space to better accommodate a baby.

“We become an advocate for our clients,” she says. “We can be like an adjunct advisor, or service provider.”

The goal isn’t to have a spotless environment.

“It’s really more about life and enjoying what you have,” she says. “Using granny’s china. Enjoying your kids, letting them get dirty. Being together. These are things that are far more important than a perfect home.”

The Norris’ farmhouse serves as an ideal working model of this philosophy. A “mud room” separates Restoring Order’s base of operations — a large office and training room — from the home Norris and Trevor share with their sons, Nash, 6, and Brock, 5.

Norris describes theirs as an “integrated” lifestyle.

“We’ve made an intentional move over the last five, six years, to really live a home-based life,” she says, adding that her sons are both home-schooled, and they often help with Restoring Order events.



by: TIMES PHOTO: JAIME VALDEZ - Labelling is one way Vicki Norris helps clients to organize their homes.

The family’s acreage has enabled Norris to reach an even wider audience. In 2009, she started Simple Sale, a giant yearly yard sale that has hosted upwards of 700 people. Anyone is welcome to rent a table for \$30 and sell their stuff. Meanwhile, representatives from charities like the Portland Rescue Mission and Union Gospel are on hand to collect anything that doesn’t sell, so participants can leave empty-handed — a beautiful sight to an organizational professional.

This weekend, she’s combining a smaller sale with two organizing workshops, which she plans to host in her barn. The morning session will cover “Diagnosing Your Disorder” and “Organizing Mistakes to Avoid.” Afternoon classes cover “Complete Paper Management” and “5 P’s of Paper Management.” A shredding truck, as well as a donation truck, will also be on hand.

Norris is eager to welcome newcomers to Dream Acres.

“Our slogan is ‘Reclaim your life,’” she says. “We want to help people take back what they’ve given away. They’ve given away their sanity and their homes and their businesses. They’ve given away their time. They’re overcommitted. They’ve given away their money and their health. All for what? To run the rat race. We’re just trying to say, ‘Hey, come back to the original. It’s fun. It’s better out here.’”