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member:**

Susan Hunsberger  
Professional Organizer  
[organize@susanhunsberger.com](mailto:organize@susanhunsberger.com)  
419-296-2602  
[www.susanhunsberger.com](http://www.susanhunsberger.com)

Produced by:  
National Association of  
Professional Organizers  
Southeast Michigan  
Chapter  
Newsletter Committee:

Betty Huotari  
Logical Placement LLC

Editor: Cynthia Gentil  
Eat That Elephant! LLC

Newsletter Advisor:  
Deb Stanley  
Red Letter Day



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# A Fresh Start!

Our NAPO-SE-MI Organizing Newsletter

## Organizing to Save

"Being organized can save you \_\_\_\_\_" (time, stress, money, yo  
sanity), you fill in the blank. Ask the person who just discovered \$100 worth of  
unopened (and now expired) medicines in the bathroom and he'll readily agree  
with you, the cost is right in front of his face but many of the costs of  
disorganization are invisible and therefore not considered.

For instance, making a third trip to the grocery store in a week because you  
didn't make a shopping list, can't find the necessary ingredient you know you  
have, or the staple you thought you had lots of – but didn't, costs you. We all  
know it's extra time and gas but we don't consider the invisible costs; the extra  
mileage and wear and tear on the car, the stress of the resulting lateness for the  
evening's activities or the impulse purchases we made when we got there. In  
this issue we are going to focus on our kitchens and how being organized in this  
crucial area can save you \_\_\_\_\_ (all of the above.)

### The Pantry:

Clean out the pantry and toss any old food and items you no longer use (or  
donate those that are still useable.) As you return items to the pantry, pay  
attention to how you use them, and how often. The items you use the most  
often should be replaced in easy reach, on the handiest shelves. Items you use  
but not as often can go on the top or bottom shelf or the back of a deep shelf –  
for your own safety try not to put heavy or breakable items, like your crock pot,  
on the top shelf. If you make spaghetti often, maybe storing the spaghetti and  
the sauce side by side on a handy pantry shelf would be a good option for you.

### Reduce unnecessary trips to the store:

Consider how and what you cook. Every family has their favorite meals – make  
a list of 10 of your family's favorites. Then (on the computer if you have one)  
take those meals and make a list of all the ingredients needed to make them.  
This is now your family staples list. Print a copy and hang it inside your pantry  
or cupboard door, or make a copy when you're ready to go to the grocery then  
scan the list for any of your staples that need to be purchased. By always  
having these ingredients on hand, you will never have to run to the store at the  
last minute to complete dinner.

### When to shop:

If you want to maximize your savings, try to shop the day after the sales start  
so that the shelves will still be well-stocked and you won't have to make an  
extra trip later. Find out from your local store managers when things are  
marked down. A friend shops at her local Meijer store after 8pm because she's  
learned that this is when all the sliced lunch meat (cut fresh that day) is reduced  
by 50%. She saves on lunch costs and her family enjoys a wider variety of  
meats.

### Where to Shop:

Remember that family staples list? Use it to compare prices at your local  
grocery stores. If one is consistently less on the items YOU buy the most, then  
start shopping there.

*(continued on next page)*



## Have an Organized Thanksgiving



Hosting Thanksgiving dinner doesn't need to be so stressful. Here are a few tips to help you.

- ◆ A few days before the big day arrives get out all the serving pieces you will need. Label them with a Post-it; yams, stuffing, etc. Not only will everything be out and ready to go but others can help you set out the food without needing to ask what goes where.
- ◆ Set the table a day or two before.
- ◆ Make the mashed potatoes in the morning and put them in the crock pot until mealtime or just delegate them to someone else.
- ◆ Cut/slice/peel all the vegetables the day before and store in zip bags in the fridge.
- ◆ Make the holiday planning simple. Keep a file in your drawer – call it fall, Thanksgiving, whatever makes sense to you. During the year as you come across decorating ideas or recipes, put them in the file and review it a few weeks before the holiday.
- ◆ Keep track of what you do and the order you do it in before and during the holiday. From your notes, make a master list of what you do when. You won't have to worry about thawing the turkey because your master list will remind you to do it. Keep the list in your holiday file.
- ◆ Want to share the work load? Make a list of things that can be done after everyone gets there and ask folks to sign up for one chore.
- ◆ Still too stressful? Consider just fixing the turkey and making the rest of the meal potluck.

### Organizing to Save (continued)

#### **Keep a shopping list:**

Put a magnetic pad on the fridge and keep a pen nearby. If you are cooking and run low on an ingredient, write it on the list. Explain to your spouse and children that you want them to do the same. "Yeah, right," you say, "I'll never get my family to do that." Well, it can be done – just don't buy the snacks they like that aren't on the list, even if you know you need them. When they complain (and they will!) say, "Oops, I forgot to buy them because they weren't on the list. Why don't you go write that down for next time." and then offer them a piece of celery instead. You'll be amazed how quickly they adapt to the system. When it's time to go to the store, take your fridge list, check the family staples, and off you go.

#### **Coupons:**

Coupons are a double-edged sword. We all want to feel we are doing our best to save money (the visible) but often we don't count the time necessary to cut, file, and weed our coupon collection (the invisible). Can't decide? Keep track of your savings for a month or two as well as the time spent maintaining the coupons. Look at your average savings for a week versus the amount of time spent on the coupons. If you're saving \$5/week but spending an hour or more on the collection, then ask yourself, Is it worth it? What is my time worth to me?

Not worth it? Then quit saving those coupons and stop feeling guilty about it – you're saving time instead. Worth it? - Consider a coupon organizer to make your shopping easier (<http://www.organizeit.com/pocouponorg.asp>).



*Always remember, being organized doesn't mean going out and buying bins, dividers and gadgets. Being organized means putting in place a system that works for you and sticking with it over time. The supplies are just aids in maintaining that system.*