**Notes from May 28, 2020**

**Village of Takoma Park Aging Well event**

Notes by Paula Ottinger

Professional organizer Candy Speight helped participants to better understand the overall process of organizing and how to apply it to various areas of the home. She also gave tips on how to better manage paper, including mail. Some take-aways of her presentation:

Organizing is simple to describe, but not always easy to do!

The three elements in the process are Sort, Purge, and Organize:

* **Sort** the items you want to organize into categories, such as items to donate, sell, throw out, and keep. Try to touch every item just once--but--if you cannot make a decision, don’t get stalled.  Put the item aside and move on.
* **Purge** all of theitems you do not intend to keep.
* **Organize** the kept items by grouping into categories, and decide on a logical spot to keep things.

Always **put things back after use**, so you can find them. This saves time that’s wasted searching, and saves money that’s wasted when you buy a replacement for something you know you own, but cannot find.

**Create a filing system** for papers that have to be kept.  Start with broad categories that fit your needs (e.g. medical, utilities, finances, etc.), and then decide if you need to divide into more specific sub-categories. Schedule a regular time to do filing, so it doesn’t pile up and become overwhelming to deal with.

**Don’t buy lots of organizing containers until after you sort and purge**, and see what you need, and look for containers you already own and can repurpose.

**Start small**, maybe with a cluttered counter top, messy drawer, or kitchen cupboard, and focus on identifying one specific, manageable task, for example, sorting through your shoes.

**A suggestion for mementos** that create clutter: rather than saving the object, consider taking a photo of it.  Remember—the memory lives in you, not in the object. The photo can spark the memory.

**Sort mail as soon as you pick it up**, and have a designated place for each category. Possible categories are:

* Important—needs prompt attention
* Review later—set aside a specific, regular time to go through this group
* Shred—credit card offers, anything with personal info
* File—for items that need to be kept
* Trash--immediately toss junk mail