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Family wins contest through organization experts

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ROCHESTER HILLS - The one thing Rochester Hills resident Shara Barrett wanted to give her husband - a clutter-free workspace - seemed to be a far-off dream. As a first-time, stay-at-home mother to her then 10-month-old daughter, Barrett had little time to organize, or even think about, her basement earlier this year.

She admitted to being a "bargain hunter," buying great sale items throughout the year and stashing them for future birthdays or holidays.

To complicate matters further, torrential rains in September 2005 left the family's finished basement in disarray. About half of the 850-square-foot basement had to be gutted, repaired and waterproofed.



Basement "Before"

It was then that she saw a January article in the Rochester Post about the opportunity to win a free organization package from Organize Your World Inc., operated by professional organizer Donna Lindley.

"My basement is a complete disaster area and truly a safety hazard," Barrett said. "You simply can't even walk easily down there. You have to scoot and hurdle a leg over something here and there.

"There's not even a clear path to the electrical panel," she said. "I am truly embarrassed by it all."

So Barrett sat down and composed a 530-word essay. She was so mortified about her situation that she almost didn't enter, she said.

"I don't even think I need to use the 500 words allotted for your competition," Barrett wrote, referring to the photo she submitted with her entry. "I probably could just say, 'PLEASE HELP MY FAMILY LIVE IN AN ORGANIZED HOME.'"

To her surprise, Barrett was chosen as the winner from 10 entries, professional organizer and business consultant with Organize Your World Inc. Shelleen McHale said. It was truly the human aspect of Barrett's family that touched their hearts, McHale added.

Not only had the Barretts' basement reached the point of no return, but Barrett's husband, Clark, had been deployed to Iraq for eight months in 2004 with the National Guard's 1st Squadron of the 126th Cavalry Regiment. He is currently preparing to leave for a second tour of duty.

Clark also works full time for General Dynamics Land Systems in Sterling Heights and is just finishing his dissertation and portfolio for a Ph.D. in leadership from Andrews University.

"The family had reached the level that so many other families do. They were overwhelmed and did not

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know where to start," McHale said. "It was a great way for us to get the story out so that (Rochester Post) readers might feel comfortable in moving forward with their own situation."

When they decided to do the contest, it was to provide a family with an "organizing plan," McHale said. It involves a two-hour consultation and a detailed plan of how to begin the process of getting organized. When McHale and Lindley met Barrett and heard her story, they wanted to make a bigger impact.

"This is a very typical scenario," McHale said. "Today's families are so active and pulled in many different directions at the same time.

"What was once a small area of being disorganized begins to grow, and then one becomes completely overwhelmed," McHale added. "The embarrassment of getting to this point is what keeps people from getting help. Organize Your World is confidential and are professionals. We want to be sure (people) have the time to do the things (they) love."

While their basement was once a source of tension between them, the Barretts now have some semblance of an organized space.

"I can't tell you enough how much their help meant to me and my family," Barrett said. "Now we actually have floor space again, and things are in bins and neatly labeled and organized. It is such a wonderful start again, as we now begin to enter into the remodel/refinish stage for our basement."



Basement "After"

Organize Your World Inc. has offices in Rochester Hills and Sterling Heights. For more information, call (248) 726-7096, e-mail info@organizeyourworld.net , or visit www.organizeyourworld.net .

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