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Confessions of a Hoarder



Before-and-after photographs show the family room of a Cross Lanes house that Rita McGhee was employed to organize.

By [Rosalie Earle](#)

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- *A Cross Lanes woman, who recently employed the services of professional organizer Rita McGhee, explains her hoarding obsession:*

"One of the things people don't understand is that you have a sentimental attachment to all your stuff. It's hard to let go.

"She would make suggestions, take it out of my hands, and make it disappear. She recycled things, found a good home for my stuff. It made making decisions easier.

"She's real gentle with people. ... Others want to throw away what they think is trash and don't realize I am attached to it. She gave me enough time. Then I could say, 'OK, it can go.'

"If I said I am not quite ready, she'd say how somebody else can use this. It was a combination of common sense and gentleness, and she's so easy to work with.

"She's good at sorting things out, she has a magical way to organize. She would remember where things were -- like a giant game of Concentration.

"I would invite someone into the house now. I have one more room to do.

"I have developed some discipline. I don't want to have stuff again. Socks that I had since high school were in my drawers. ... It's such a freedom, such a relief. I'll never go back to being unfree again.

"It's easier now that everything has a home. I couldn't find anything. Now I can put stuff back.

"I complained bitterly for 30 years. I would make a little headway. I would take days off from work, but I didn't know how to do it. ...

"While I was not an extreme hoarder, I was very, very good at it. We took 25 industrial-size bags of trash -- not garbage; trash -- out of my family room. That doesn't count the boxes of books and stuff we donated.

"Before, I was overwhelmed and depressed. Now, my home is my sanctuary. It looks normal. It's still not House & Garden, but it makes me feel normal and I couldn't produce that on my own. It was worth every penny we paid her.

"I know there are other people out there like me."