



One model room at K&E demonstrates how unused space can be transformed into a very organized dressing room by employing a Victory Closets system that can be easily reconfigured by the homeowners as their needs change. The color seen here is driftwood.

Resolve to Get ORGANIZED!

BY SUE LONG | PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICTORY CLOSETS OF SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY AND K&E



The Victory Closets of Susquehanna Valley sales and installation team (left to right), Jonah, Jen and Jake.



K&E addressed home office organization through the addition of built-in cabinetry in this space claimed from a very large laundry room.

Each year at this time, we resolve to make positive changes in our lives. Without fail, getting organized figures into the Top 5 of New Year's resolutions due in part to messy closets, packed garages, overflowing kitchen cabinets and cluttered basements. Where to start is always the dilemma. Fortunately, help is available as close by as Brownstown, from Victory Closets of Susquehanna Valley and K&E (Kitchens by Eileen).

How many times have you stood in front of your closet and thought to yourself, "I have nothing to wear." Think of it as not being able to see the trees because of the forest you've created. Do you have a friend who habitually arrives late because she "couldn't find anything to wear"? You may joke that her tardiness is related to her personality or lack of time-management skills, but the real culprit probably begins with her very disorganized

closet. Or, have you been late for an appointment because the dress you wanted to wear was a wrinkled mess and required ironing? (A packed closet can impact the condition and longevity of your clothing.) Often times such scenarios are related to the fact that our closets are filled with items that are out of season, out of style or are several sizes too small or large (most women admit to having wardrobes in three different sizes). Being disorganized seeps into other areas of our homes. Have you reached

into the back of a kitchen cabinet and pulled out an ingredient for a dish you are making only to discover it's five years old? Are you constantly searching for your dog's leash for that 6 a.m. walk? When was the last time you parked your car in the garage? Having to remove snow from your car at 7 a.m. is not fun. Such scenarios are not good ways to start the day, as they can make you late for work, an appointment, a restaurant reservation or a family function. Preparing dinner for guests can throw you into a tailspin if it requires an

unexpected trip to the grocery store. The roots of such problems can be traced back to a closet or cabinet that is lacking in organization. **Believe it or not**, the chaotic state of the storage areas in your home can weigh on your mind and contribute to mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and even depression. It can even lead to unnecessary spending – how many times have you bought something only to find a similar item hiding in your closet? Being

unorganized can upset family dynamics and even lead to isolation, as such a lifestyle isn't conducive to entertaining friends and family. Next to a cup of coffee, an organized home may provide the key to starting your day on the best foot. It begins with your closet. Choosing what to wear will become easier and you'll look more polished and put together. You'll be able to better concentrate on your plans or tasks for the day. Best of all, you'll arrive on time.



Top to bottom:

The building/remodeling industry is addressing consumers' desire for organized homes. In bathrooms, vanities are now outfitted with drawers and cabinets that include shelving.

Kitchen pantries provide space to store essentials such as paper products, as well as appliances and ingredients that are not used on a regular basis.



VICTORY CLOSETS

Aaron Riddle, the president of Kbe (Kitchens by Eileen), became acquainted with Victory Closets through participating in regional home shows. "For some reason, we always ended up right next to them," he explains. As Kbe expanded into full home remodels, homeowners invariably expressed an interest in customized closets. "We used a couple of systems but found them to be challenging to work with," he notes. In addition, the systems were not consumer-friendly. "Our customers couldn't reconfigure the systems themselves; we'd have to go back and do it," Aaron recalls.

Impressed with Victory Closets, Aaron asked the company's owner, Greg Ahart, if he would be interested in collaborating on some of Kbe's projects. As the company is based in Boyertown, Berks County, Ahart readily agreed to the request.

The premise of Victory Closets was launched in 2013, when Ahart tapped into his building and cabinetmaking background to create a wall-mounted sports-equipment storage system for his own use. He soon found his project progressing into a new type of custom closet storage system that can be reconfigured and used for any number of storage scenarios. The system is designed to evolve as your needs change – shelves and hanging sections can easily be reconfigured and other elements can be added so you are not limited by your original design.

Ahart spent the next year engineering and perfecting the system before debuting it at the 2014 Philly Home show where it received extremely positive feedback from attendees. He then pursued and received a U.S. patent in 2015 for his unique product.

Ultimately, Aaron opened Victory Closets of Susquehanna Valley as a licensee, selling and installing the Victory Closets system along with his existing Kbe kitchen and bath remodeling business.

Aaron was excited that he could now offer clients and home builders such as the Custom Home Group and Pine Hill Builders custom-closet systems at an affordable price. "I'm always surprised to go into high-end homes and only see standard wire shelving in the closets," he says. Victory Closets and Kbe have also partnered with Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology students on their Parade of Homes entries.



This pantry demonstrates how a Victory Closets system can fit into custom cabinetry. Behind the vintage-inspired sliding doors you find shelving and a cabinet on one side and floor-to-ceiling cubbies on the other.

A PANDEMIC PHENOMENON

Clients love the look of the system, which is available in white, driftwood, and vintage colors. Rods, drawer pulls, and accessories are available in rubbed-bronze or brushed-nickel finishes.

Optional elements include glide-out wire baskets, hampers, two-tier jewelry drawers, belt/scarf and tie racks, valet rods and more. "You don't see any metal pins, either," he remarks. "The result is a more polished, custom look." Aaron's wife and the company's operations manager, Esther Riddle, likes the practicality of the system. "It's suspended and doesn't go to the floor, so it doesn't impact your flooring or baseboards and makes replacing the flooring much easier," she notes.

Another plus is the fact that should you move, you can take the system with you. However, that may prove to be impossible since buyers love such amenities and will probably write into the contract that the closets remain in place. Tune into a show such as *Love It or List It* (HGTV) and inevitably the party who wants to sell names a lack of closet space as a reason why the house no longer suits his or her needs. As for the party who wants to stay put, his or her wish list seems to always include adding a spacious, walk-in closet in the primary suite.

Incredibly, the pandemic only drove interest in the closet system. "People were home and cleaning out closets," says Aaron. "They began to make lists of what works and what doesn't. Their remodeling goals always seemed to address increased storage and bringing organization to their lives." Business boomed.

Fortunately, no matter the need for organization, whether it's in a bedroom, the kitchen – "Everyone wants a pantry," Aaron notes – garage, basement, mud room or rec room, there is an organization solution. For example, Esther reports that empty nesters who are staying in their homes are creating the ultimate indulgence by converting unused bedrooms into large walk-in closets complete with chandeliers, wallpaper, storage islands and other conveniences. "The systems work equally as well in standard reach-in closets," Aaron adds.

The home building and remodeling industry is also taking notice of the consumer's desire to get organized. On the Kbe side of the business with

its custom kitchens and baths, Aaron notes, "Cabinetry is better designed and much more functional now." Features such as appliance garages help to keep coffee makers, instant pots, mixers and other appliances out of sight but easily accessible, which contributes to clutter-free counters. Pull-out spice racks add convenience to the cooking process. In bathrooms, vanities now feature pull-out drawers (equipped with electrical outlets and organizational canisters) instead of "dark holes" that are not conducive to organization. Built-ins and cabinetry are also in demand to make home offices more organized and professional looking.

"Being organized can change your life," Aaron says. He speaks from experience, as Kbe recently put the finishing touches on their new headquarters, where model rooms allow visitors to see products that address organization, while private offices enable designers and other personnel to be creative and simply breathe. "Before, we had eight people working out of one office. It was becoming a problem," he says of trying to make a 100-year-old building meet the needs of the tech-driven 21st century. "Plus, it had no storage, so we can definitely relate to the problems our customers are having."

For more information, visit kitchensbyeileen.com and victoryclosets.com. Visit their showroom at 4224 Oregon Pike, Brownstown.