



Creative Closets

Photo by Charlie Daniels

In 2008 Ellyn G. Elstein, founder of Creative Closets®, Ltd., celebrated 25 years of “conquering chaos.” And conquer, she does. One visit to the company’s 2,800-square-foot showroom opens a world of order and creative storage solutions to anyone struggling to get and stay organized.

In 1983 Elstein was the mother of two preschoolers. As a registered nurse, she recognized the importance of maintaining order in her busy life. She began by tackling her own haphazard closets, then helped a friend do the same. “My strong desire to organize, combined with the need I saw in the Lehigh Valley for an organization expert, encouraged me to become that expert,” she says. Courses in drafting, blue-

print reading and carpentry gave her the skills she needed to tackle complex organizational problems.

She began with bedroom closets, then branched out to garages, toy rooms, pantries, workshops and kitchens. Today, Creative Closets, which Elstein ran out of her basement and garage 26 years ago, is housed in a 26,000-square-foot facility and has 12 employees. And, one of those preschoolers in 1983, her son Andy, is now the COO of the company. “We run the company together,” Elstein explains with more than a hint of pride in her voice.

What has made Elstein (also known as the Closet Lady®) and Creative Closets so successful? “Providing personal attention, quality materials and expert craftsmanship

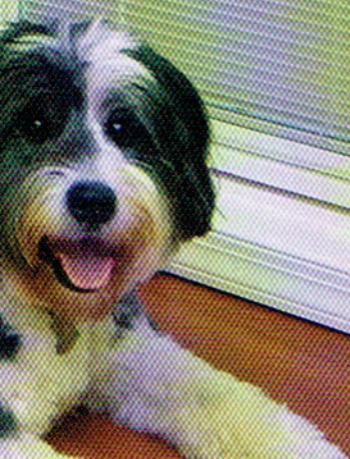
is the foundation of our success,” she says.

Why is it important for people to be organized? Because it’s painful to be disorganized, Elstein explains, and makes everyday living more difficult than it should be. The Creative Closet process begins with a consultation in which they learn how the client works, plays, what and how much they have to use and store, when and how often they need it, etc. Understanding people’s needs enables them to create their ideal solutions. “We teach clients how to de-clutter and purge,” Elstein explains, “then we design storage systems that put them in control and keep them in control.”

What kinds of spaces do they organize? Single closets, home offices, garages, laundry and mud rooms, pet rooms, hotels,

PRIDE OF place

By Nancy Moffett



dormitories, hair salons and business offices are all part of Creative's repertoire. Costs may run from a few hundred dollars up to \$85,000; and the company has served more than 16,000 customers within an 80-mile radius of the Lehigh Valley. They also work with 60 area builders installing organizational systems in new homes.

The Creative Closets showroom features

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full-scale displays of professionally designed spaces such as kitchen pantries and cabinets, a kids' playroom with built-in desks, a garage with a changeable storage system and various closet configurations in materials ranging from mahogany and granite to zebra wood and tile or wire and laminate. Displays include such innovations as self-closing cabinet doors for wheelchair users, built-in hampers and clothes-sorting baskets, locking jewelry drawers, built-in safes and a beautiful wine cellar in redwood and cedar that can hold 1,284 bottles!

Elstein reminds people that a makeover doesn't have to be expensive. Choosing less costly materials can make it affordable. "Don't decide what we can take care of," Elstein says. Creative Closets offers complimentary in-home consultations. And, the team includes seasoned designers and their own installers—no subcontractors. Indeed, some employees have been with the company for more than 10 years. "We look for employees who will go the whole mile for the company," Elstein notes.

Starting with a desire to make her own life easier, the Closet Lady and her team have built a business that helps put people out of their "closet misery." As one happy customer said of their work, "You changed my life." ■

RESOURCES

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