

Getting your life organized

By TERRY WARD
Shaw News Service

WEST CHICAGO — Feeling disorganized?

If your life needs a little order, Fran Piekarski said she can, at the very least, help you clear away the mess in your home or office.

The company is Remedease, a cure for your chaos and clutter. Piekarski operates the two-year-old business out of her West Chicago home.

Piekarski said her business background has served her well in her personal business venture. For two years, she had served as an administrative assistant at a funeral home.

After that, she worked for a real estate firm, helping pack and organize homes for people who were relocating.

"During that time, I saw an article about a professional organizer," Piekarski said. "I thought, 'I can do that,' since I've always been orderly.

"My first customer (was referred) through the realtor. My husband got me the next one. A lady had just moved and needed her kitchen organized. I helped her get settled."

Her third client she gained through a Yellow Pages listing.

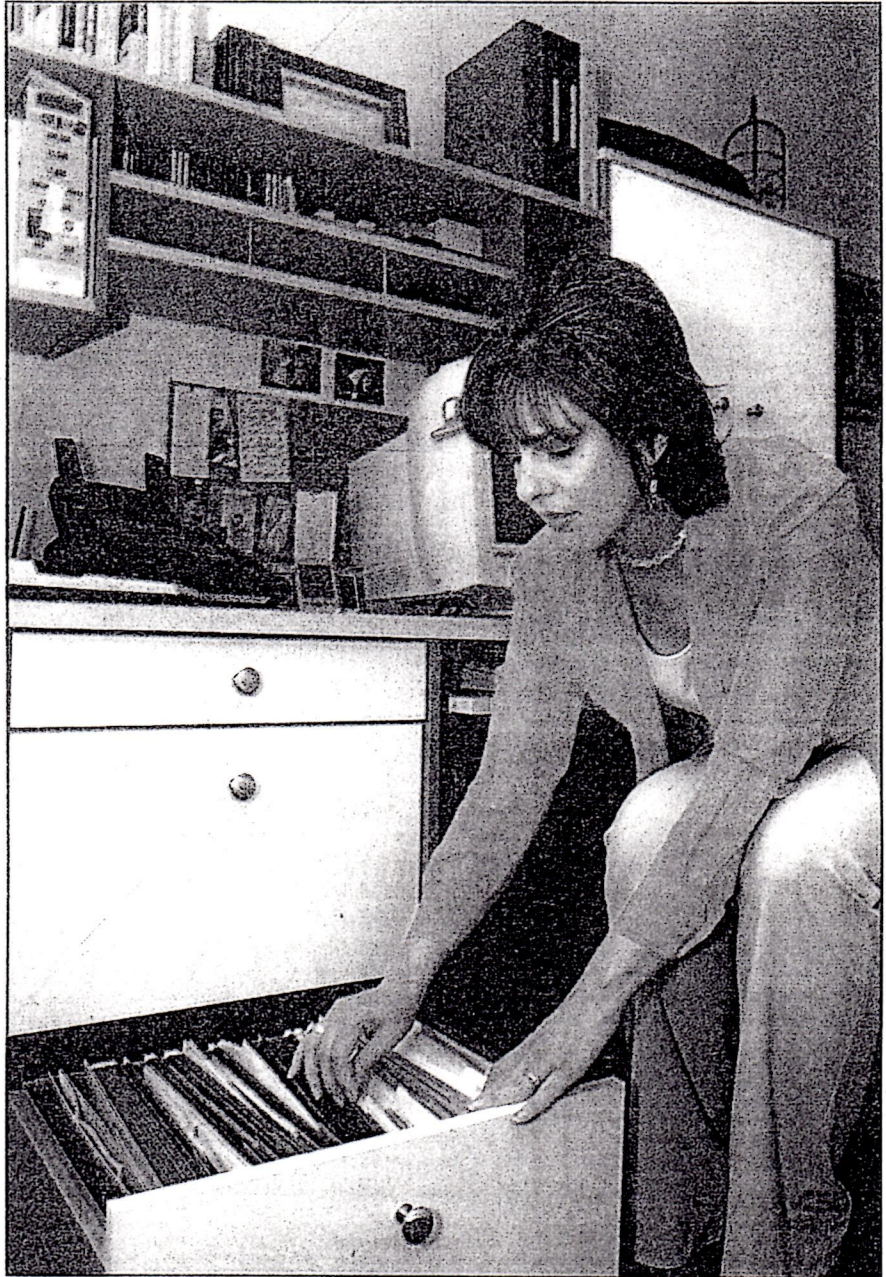
"She had one emergency after another and needed to get her head above water," Piekarski said. "I worked with her for four weeks.

"My services are as varied as the many chores it takes to run a household."

For a relocation job, for instance, Piekarski can call a moving service, shop for her customer, find a handyman and, for certain large jobs, use a subcontractor.

"My first appointment is a conference, in which I listen to their needs and learn about things that are difficult for them," Piekarski said.

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Robert Barcroft — Chronicle photo staff

Fran Piekarski, owner of personal organizer business Remedease, organizes files in a home office on Tuesday afternoon.

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"Then I strategize and trouble shoot and put a plan together in my head that will help them to achieve their goals without changing their habits."

Piekarski mused about why people need her services. She observed that "as much as they seek organization in their lives (many people) are not willing to give up the habits that have gotten them into the situation in the first place."

"I appreciate this and formulate a plan so that they don't have to change," she added.

Does it sound miraculous? It's not, Piekarski said. It takes time and many sessions to achieve these goals.

For example, when there are several people in a household, the approach may be more complicated than with a single person.

Piekarski offered one example: a husband was supposed to take the mail off a peninsula in the kitchen and put it in his home-office. Her client said, "Don't nag — he'll never change."

In this case, Piekarski acted as a buffer. Her solution was to buy a half basket and hang it on the front door. The mail went in there and quickly down to his office.

"My client was ecstatic," she said, adding her client told her: "I've been trying to get him to do that for years."

"I'm not a therapist or psychologist but what I do is very therapeutic," Piekarski said.

"My goals are to reduce stress, to help

clients reinvest their time in more productive ways. I look at a person as a whole. Environment is a part. I want to find out how people spend their time."

Her shortest job was four hours and involved straightening files and lending her strategies for an office. Longer jobs are ongoing, lasting as long as a year.

She doesn't rush a client, although the client may want a solution immediately — whether it's a matter of simply not finding an important document or a phone number on a scrap of paper.

Piekarski is gentle but firm to the individual who may very well be emotionally attached to "stuff."

"I ask her how badly she wants to keep this article and if the answer is yes, it goes into a box marked, 'Archives,'" she said.

She brings her folded cartons to the job and together with the client, sorts and labels items to be dealt with later. There is an assignment after each visit: depending on how much the client wants results, there's even more to be done on the client's own.

Piekarski has had several opportunities to hone her skills by working on projects as subcontractor and shadowing other organizers. She is a member and holds an office in the Chicago chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers: she attended the NAPO convention in Atlanta in the spring.

Piekarski and her fellow NAPO associates also are donating two days time to moving the American Cancer Society in Batavia.

■ For more information, call (630) 587-4259 or e-mail Fran Piekarski at: Remedease@cs.com.