



ADDRESS THIS MESS

Above, Casey Sackman's room before it was cleaned. Linda Goldman (top photo) transformed it in two hours. —ANDRE J. JACKSON/NEWS SUN PHOTOS

What do you get the teen who has everything — on the floor? Professional help

BY JUDY MASTERSON
News Sun

The air is tinged with the scent of dirty socks.

The floor is a bog.

The foot-deep layer of peat is actually discarded clothing.

A can of peanuts is submerged, along with an empty bottle of Gatorade, size 11 sneakers, last semester's English paper, a Dave Chapelle DVD, dirty bath towels, an unopened package of batteries, a book on how to win at poker, a deflated Sponge Bob balloon from a 16th birthday party and the Ouija board that failed to predict the future.

Casey Sackman is unfazed by the chaos that is his bedroom.

The Warren High School senior greeted the news that a professional organizer was about to set

his world straight with a casual, "Good luck to her."

"If I really wanted to clean it, I could," said Sackman, 17, who admitted that the girl he took to the prom probably wouldn't agree that the bottom of the bog was the best place to store the snapshots her parents took. "I guess I just have too much stuff."

The News Sun had asked readers to submit candidates for the messiest room.

Start with the clothes

Joyce Sackman, Casey's mom, admits the room belonging to the youngest of her four boys has become the hand-me-down center of the house. She said that when she ventures into the bog, she invariably twists her foot.

"A handful of times I've walked into it intending to clean," Joyce

Sackman said. "But I didn't know where to start."

Enter Linda Goldman, expert tidier of unholy messes and proprietor of Highland Park-based Altogether Organized.

With one long, sweeping look, Goldman knows where to start.

"The first thing I noticed was there was no place for the clothes to go — no dresser," Goldman said. "Casey uses the closet for a desk area, which has some shelves, but they are hard to get to."

With some gentle prodding, mom remembers a coat rack in the garage. Soon the bedroom is a flurry of activity. Clothes are sorted by type, by cleanliness, by whether they're worn. Cast-offs are earmarked for donation. Clothes for keeping are hung or folded and stacked. Mom promises to buy Casey a hamper.

Goldman gives him containers for

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CASEY SACKMAN

his miscellaneous stuff: baseball cards, CDs, photos, the mail from colleges that has begun to trickle in.

After two hours of intensive sorting, bagging and repositioning, Casey's room is clean. The floor, it turns out, is not peat but carpet.

Get rid of excess

Two secrets to keeping a kid's room clean, according to Goldman, are making it easy and letting go.

"If it's not easy for them to put their clean clothes away; they won't do it," Goldman said. "You have to make it really easy for

them. You have to identify the spaces. Now, Casey can see where everything goes and it's easy. Now, if his room is a mess, Joyce can legitimately go in there and say, 'You need to clean up.'"

Parents should also help their children decide what things should be sent packing.

"We have to help them let go of things they don't need anymore, don't play with anymore," Goldman said. "We can help them understand that donating is a really great way to help others."

"I really like it," Casey said of his new space. "Now I have a place for all my clothes and all my stuff. This is the most organized I've ever been."

"Kids usually like their rooms clean," Goldman said. "Sometimes they just don't know how."

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