

Ready Your Home For Holiday Guests

(StatePoint) The holiday season brings with it great meals, presents, beautiful decorations and guests... lots and lots of guests coming and going.

Holiday guests -- be they family members or friends - often show up early, stay late or even pop by unexpectedly. And with them can come hectic, harried moments as you rush to get your house company-ready.

Organizing expert, Vicki Norris, calls this phenomenon the "dash and stash" -- when we frantically rush around hiding clutter, hanging up coats or even strategically placing a plant or floral arrangement before opening the door.

"I recommend people strive to keep the most visible spaces of their home organized 24/7. It's not nearly as hard as it sounds," says Norris, author of "Restoring Order to Your Home."

Norris suggests several simple tricks that can help keep your home's public spaces, such as your entryway, living room or family room, neat for holiday traffic.

"For instance, placing flowers or a favorite accessory where clutter typically congregates does two things: it brightens the room and prevents future messes from settling there," suggests Norris.

While your family room probably is your home's superhighway, a few tweaks can eliminate those piles of roadway rubbish, such as toys and magazines. And quick fixes that yield permanent results can help ensure your entryway (the natural "drop zone" for your family's coats, shoes, and keys) doesn't become an unruly hazard.

Because the entryway is the easiest place to drop things, and is the first space guests see, your focus in this area should be clutter control. Determine what types of items are left here and then implement a clutter capture system.

Look around. Do you see a handful of coats or an entire closet full? Do you spy a few shoes or a shoe mountain?

Select and install the right storage solutions, whether they are hooks, bins, shelving, benches or other furnishings. Think about your aesthetic preferences. If you prefer not to see clutter, consider a narrow armoire to neatly store your belongings.

Then personalize your entryway. Welcome your guests with an inviting display of family photos, a favorite collection, or fresh flowers to suit the season. Having these items on tables actually will prevent future clutter from collecting. Also, a strategically placed floor plant can divert attention from less



Reclaim cluttered areas with a display of flowers.

appealing areas.

As for the family room or living room, Norris recommends determining the room's direction, de-littering and finding homes for such nomadic items as backpacks, toys, magazines and everything in between.

First decide upon the room's direction. For example, should it be an off-ramp of the kitchen or an entertainment hub where you will gather to watch TV and play games? Set up a "go-elsewhere" basket, so at the end of each day you can relocate items that don't belong here back to their proper places.

Create a plan of attack for accumulating papers and other misplaced possessions, including a reference binder to create a permanent home for take-out menus, gift certificates, coupons and commonly reached-for phone numbers such as the dry cleaner, your florist, hair stylist and movie theater.

And don't be a litter bug! Keep surfaces such as ottomans and tables clear, and beautify the room with flowers or a plant to reclaim the space and make it a nice place in which to spend time -- both for you and those holiday guests.

"Perfection is unattainable and should never be the goal," stresses Norris. "By clearing out the clutter and reclaiming your space, you create more time for the things that are truly important in your life."