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HOME LIFE, HOME GIRL

Pam Socolow's knack for organization has earned her book a place in homes across the country.

BY SUSAN HODARA, PHOTO BY JENNIFER MAY

Count the appearances of the word "home" in a description of the life of Pam Socolow, who lives in Mount Kisco with her husband, Brian, an attorney in a Manhattan law firm, and their two children, Kevin, 10, and Katie, 7. Pam is an at-home mom with a successful home-based business, Family Facts (www.family-facts.com), that sells a multipurpose home-life organizational tool. And to top it off, she's just finished supervising a home construction project, nearly doubling the size of the suburban home where all this takes place.



Pam's product, Family Life Organizer, is a three-ring binder divided into tabbed sections for Calendar, Contacts, Kids, The Good Life, Home and Auto, Healthcare, and Finance. Accessories include pocket folders, business card holders, and printed forms to keep track of medical information, auto maintenance, school and camp notes, activities, babysitters, restaurants, and more. It is, says Pam, "a resource center for the whole family. It replaces the messy bulletin board and the cluttered refrigerator door."

One thing it doesn't replace is the personal organizer. "It's not a day planner, not an address book," she explains. "It's big; it stays at home. And everyone can access it."

The Organizer was born out of an innate ability to create order, and of personal need during a period when Pam, whose professional background is in media planning, was struggling to balance parenting and a part-time job. "It started with a form to plan our family's meals and shopping lists."

She also began noticing that friends relied on her for information. "They knew I kept good track of things," she says, "so they'd call me with questions. And then it hit me: I could make an organizer to help other people. And I've never looked back!"

That was in late 2003. Since then, Family Facts has become a profitable business. The Family Life Organizer has garnered national attention, starting in 2004 when *Real Simple* magazine named it Product of the Month, and most recently winning iParenting Media's 2006 Excellent Products Award. Pam is currently featured in two of HGTV's *Mission: Organization* shows. The company has shipped over 5,000 Organizers, which debuted at \$44 and now cost \$19.95 each, to customers across the country. It has been sold in Barnes & Noble since August.

As for Family Life's headquarters, where else would they be but in Pam's home? Last year she moved her office from a guestroom to a larger space in the basement, where stacks of refill pages and pads line floor-to-ceiling shelves, the walls are adorned with family photos, and a colorful tapestry behind her desk aptly (though ungrammatically) declares, "Everyone needs their own spot." "UPS comes every day," says Pam.

One of the benefits of working at home, she notes, is that she has been able to oversee a construction project that has been ongoing since May and is now nearly complete. The Socolows bought their house, a four-bedroom, center-hall colonial, in 1997, immediately after it was built. Their renovation, which took place along the rear of the lower level, involved gutting and expanding the kitchen, extending the adjacent family room, and adding a mudroom, pantry, and laundry room.

"We've lived here for almost 10 years, so we knew what we wanted to change," says Pam. And she couldn't be happier with the results. "This is my vision," she says, her arms sweeping from the double-hung windows that take in a forest beyond the lawn, to the newly installed side door from which she can watch her children play. "I have an emotional attachment to my kitchen," she adds, gesturing toward its carefully chosen cabinets, countertops, appliances, and color. Of course, all the details of the work have been recorded in the Home and Auto section of the Socolows' Family Life Organizer.

In their new kitchen is a small alcove with a granite countertop specially designed for that Organizer, a nook where family members can go to add information or retrieve what they need to know. And from what Pam says, it'll be a busy corner. "The kids bring me notes from school and say, 'Keep it in the Organizer,'" she says. "Brian is very organized; he wasn't an easy convert. But one day he e-mailed me something and told me, 'Print this out and put it in the Organizer.' With that, I knew he was on board too!"

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