

RIPE FOR HARVEST Investing  
In a run-down orchard  
yielded much more than  
juicy fruit.

My  
Best+

AN ORCHARD.  
A STUDIO.  
A HARLEY.  
THE RIGHT BUY  
AT THE RIGHT  
TIME CAN  
MEAN PROFIT,  
PLEASURE AND  
A WHOLE NEW  
WAY OF LOOKING  
AT THE WORLD.  
SEVEN WOMEN  
TELL HOW  
THEY DID IT

By RENEE BACHER

Investment + + + +

Photographed by JAMES WORRELL

**WHO** **Angela Coel, 44,**

Portland, Oregon

**WHAT** Services of a professional organizer

**HOW MUCH** \$55 an hour, \$1,250 total

“Give me a pile of mail, and you might as well strangle me,” Angela Coel says. At least, that was the old Coel. For years, although she managed to stay ahead of the curve at work, Coel always felt as if her “tail were on fire.” And when she quit her job to stay at home with her kids, her chronic level of disorganization overwhelmed her.

There was clutter throughout the house, misplaced paperwork and lost receipts for hundreds of dollars’ worth of clothes she had brought home but wanted to return. She felt guilty about losing control, got depressed and stopped going to the gym. She gained weight and developed health problems.

Then, in 2002, Coel was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, began taking Ritalin and started looking at things differently. Rather than seeing her problems as a moral failing, she began to view them as practical issues to be fixed. She decided to get help from someone whose skills complemented her own: a professional organizer.

At first the idea of paying \$55 an hour to let a stranger witness her mess seemed unbearable. “It was humiliating,” she says. But the embarrassment gave way to relief as the house was cleared out and organized. In the last 18 months, Coel has seen that \$1,250 pay off in almost every area of her life.

She lost 40 pounds without dieting, by losing the guilt and exercising. She has begun entertaining again. And she’s even sharing the wealth. “I helped a friend set up the same file system I use. That would never have happened before; no one looked to me for organizing advice!”

Recently, when Coel wanted to return a \$1,200 pair of earrings, she was able to locate the receipt “in six seconds.” **M**