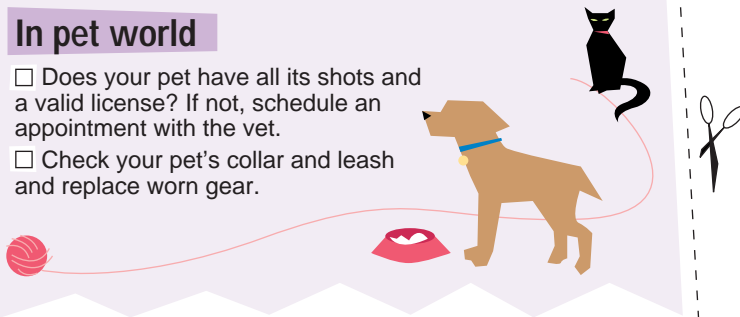


Fresh year, fresh start

CONTINUED FROM 1F

In pet world

- Does your pet have all its shots and a valid license? If not, schedule an appointment with the vet.
- Check your pet's collar and leash and replace worn gear.



Safe and secure

- Get carbon monoxide and smoke detectors for your home, upstairs and down.
- Get fire extinguishers for the kitchen, family room and bedrooms.
- Test the batteries of existing detectors. Flashlights, too. If they're fading, replace them.
- Where would it be convenient to have a flashlight: bedrooms, bathroom, garage? Stock up.
- Install plug-in night lights in bathrooms, halls, bedrooms and other dark areas.
- Check the family first-aid kit. If you don't have one, this is a good time to create one. Replenish the supply of plastic bandages, antiseptic, antibacterial cream, burn ointment, indigestion remedies.
- Don't wait until the next hurricane scare. Videotape your home, inside and out, narrating as you photograph the interior furnishings and items of special monetary value. Use your recorder's date-stamping feature; otherwise, place a copy of the front page of that day's newspaper on a desk or table and videotape that first. Put this tape in a safe-deposit box.
- While you're at it, photocopy the relevant insurance policies and agents' names and phone numbers (including emergency numbers). Place these and other important papers (or copies thereof) in a box or other container you can grab in a hurry if you have to evacuate.
- List your credit card numbers and the phone numbers to call if the cards are lost or stolen. Put this information in a safe place.
- Use these dry winter months to assess your home's hurricane-worthiness. Now, during the slow season, is the time to get bids from vendors on window protection. Don't wait until next September, when the Weather Channel is broadcasting from Clearwater Beach and a hurricane is looming off the coast, to start thinking about shutters or window film.



Taming the clutter

- Cancel subscriptions to publications you no longer have time or inclination to read.
- Stack up all those back copies of magazines. Bundle them up and take them to your doctor's office, your hairstylist or a retirement center. Or swap with a friend who subscribes to a magazine you'd like to read.
- Buy plastic or cardboard magazine holders to keep the magazines you do want in order.
- Take yourself off mailing lists. Write to Mail Preference Service, Attn: Department 12562815, Direct Mail Marketing Assn., P.O. Box 282, Carmel, NY 10512. Or visit www.the-dma.org. It's free to register by mail, \$5 if you do it online.
- Get on the national Do Not Call list to reduce unwanted calls from telemarketers. Register online at www.donotcall.gov or call toll-free 1-888-382-1222 (TTY 1-866-290-4236) from the number you wish to register. Registration is free.
- If your desk is a sea of unsorted papers, spend 15 minutes a day wading through it, organizing and throwing out.
- Once you get a sense of what you need to keep your paperwork in order, visit an office supply store and buy what you need: file folders, stacking baskets, sticky notes, envelopes.
- Always out of scratch paper, greeting cards, stationery, stamps? Stock up at the office-supply store, discount store, card shop, post office.
- Mark birthdays, anniversaries and other special days on your 2004 calendar.
- Address greeting cards and have them ready to send for the next couple of months.
- When you clean out your closet, don't keep a pile of stuff waiting for the next yard or rummage sale. Give it away now to those who need it, and be done with it (even if it's a \$100 dress you never wore).
- Set aside time, in the cooler winter weather, for that one great chore: cleaning out the garage or carport, establishing a garden, painting a room, building a deck or patio.
- Inspect garage doors for broken springs and other obvious problems. Schedule routine service.
- Take all the magnets, notes, artwork and other stuff off the front of the refrigerator.



- Sort through books, appliances, old tapes, records, CDs, clothing, doodads. Invite friends over for takeout or pizza and offer them first dibs on what you're discarding. Unload the rest at a yard sale or take it all to a charity donation center.
- Particularly for older people, look around the house at the objects you've collected over the years. If you'd like to make sure a particular item ends up in the hands of a specific person, make a gift of that item now. You'll have the peace of mind of knowing it got where you intended, and the pleasure of seeing the recipient's enjoyment.
- Know when to say when to collections. It's okay to decide you're not going to amass any more napkin rings or butter knives or items with a butterfly motif.
- Transfer photographs to discs so you can store them on the family computer, use them to create greeting cards, e-mail them to friends and family.
- Tame that stack of bulging shoe boxes full of family photos. Take one night a month for a family get-together. Spend an hour or so around the dining room table identifying the people in those pictures, dating them, and placing them in albums. Don't be afraid to throw out duplicates or bad shots.
- Buy additional clothes hangers if you're always running short. Treat yourself to specialized skirt or pants hangers.
- Throw out (recycle!) those dozens of spaghetti-sauce bottles, jelly jars and yogurt containers you've carefully saved but never use.
- Add hooks, brackets or shelves to make your closet or other storage space more efficient.
- Get a big artist's portfolio or a large flat box or a scrapbook and use it to store your child's artwork. Everything doesn't have to be on permanent display.
- Go through the kids' drawers and closets. Weed out old clothes, books, toys and games. Pass on wearable clothes to smaller kids or donate to charity.



Behind the wheel

- Create a car emergency kit: change for phone calls, pad and pencil, a couple of envelopes, first-aid supplies, needle and thread, spot-remover pads in foil packets, premoistened towelettes for cleaning hands and faces, paper towels, flashlight, oil, emergency flat-tire fixer, duct tape, window-cleaning solution, umbrella.
- Wash the car, vacuum the inside, clean out the glove box and the trunk.
- Get a good mug holder and a trash container.
- Replace your tattered, coffee-stained and outdated street maps with up-to-date ones.



Family business

- Start planning for retirement, no matter what your age. It's never too late or too early.
- Have an honest talk with yourself and family members about end-of-life issues. If you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself, whom do you want to do so? Do you want to be kept alive on a feeding tube or by mechanical means? Prepare advance directives about medical care. Name someone to be your health care proxy to make decisions for you and talk to that person about what you want. To obtain a free living will form, call the Florida Registry of Living Wills toll-free at 1-800-624-5498.
- Make out your will. Review the one you have to be sure it's current.
- Remaster the old art of letter writing, even if it's through e-mail.

