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**Move  
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# SENIOR REAL ESTATE JOURNAL

SENIORS REAL ESTATE INSTITUTE

Karena Stipp, MA, Realtor, SRES, CSHP  
919-473-3676 Real Broker, LLC

Staff Writer

## Start to Finish Solutions Make Downsizing Easier

By the time you are ready to retire, downsize, and enjoy a simpler life, chances are you have accumulated a lot of stuff. When choosing to move into a smaller home or 55+ apartment community to enjoy travel, connect with others, or simply to cut down on home maintenance responsibilities, getting rid of the extra stuff can be a chore for some.

Johnny and Martha who were long time residents of a nearby suburban town, recently moved to an upscale retirement community located just minutes from their old home. They managed to downsize from over 2,000 square feet into a comfortable two-bedroom apartment with a little help from professionals.

“We have moved many times in our working days, mostly with help from relocation companies,” Martha said.

They elected to hire professional move managers who worked with them every step of the way, and also helped them dispose of the remaining household items and getting their home sold.

“This move was the easiest and most organized yet. We knew each step of the way what to expect and had guidance with all the necessary tasks.” Johnny said. “It was great having people who knew how to go about it and literally guide us through the process from start to finish.”



Professional Senior Downsizing Coach, Nikki Buckelew, says that downsizing is a big undertaking and people shouldn't be reluctant to ask for support.

“Liquidating lifelong collections, extra furniture and other belongings is physically and emotionally tough for many downsizers, but those having done it tell us they have no regrets once it's done. It can be a freeing experience,” Buckelew said.

### Space Planning and Liquidation

While some people think an estate sale is simply a garage sale on steroids, it does take some planning. Knowing who to call and when can make the process easier.

"Space planning for what will fit and then arranging for liquidation of what's left are the two biggest tasks. This is where we spend the most time with clients," said Shaunda Sims of All-Things Senior Transitions, a Colorado Springs based professional senior move management company. "Finding liquidators and getting them scheduled can be a real challenge, especially when deadlines are looming."

Finding the right liquidator, a reliable and trustworthy firm to put on the sale, is the first step. Then there is the issue of timing. It needs to be timed to be convenient and often in conjunction with a home sale. Certain times of the year the best liquidators are busy and not available to schedule a sale for several months. Then there is the added layer of emotional attachment to a lifetime of memories manifested in the “stuff” accumulated.

**Professional move management services**

To help navigate these challenges and others associated with late life moves, professional move management services have become more common in larger metropolitan areas. Real estate agents specializing in late-life moves have begun adding these services or partnering with providers to offer the added layer of relocation support.

"One of the biggest impediments to getting a home sold is the process of getting it emptied," Buckelew said.

While many people may initially intend to handle move and liquidation related tasks themselves, this frequently leads to frustration, stress, and overwhelm. Families are busy and often live elsewhere, making overall coordination challenging.

Jan, a newly downsized widow, recently sold her house and moved to a 1-bedroom apartment located in a Life Plan Community, is glad to have had the help. She and her late husband elected to handle things themselves when they downsized the first time a few years back. She said trying to do a garage sale in the midst of moving and setting up a new house was just too much.

"We were exhausted and things did not sell like we thought they would," she said. "I vowed I would never do that again."

A common sentiment typical downsizers of all ages seem to share is that they made the decision to relocate while they could be in control of the process.

"I didn't want our kids to have to deal with worrying about where I would live and what to do with all my stuff," Jan said. "I am happy to be moved and relieved that I won't have to do this again if my health changes and I need more help."



**No shame in asking for help**

Buckelew said for some people reaching out for help is difficult. They may worry about spending the money, or feel they should be able to do it all themselves. "For some people move management services are a blessing, but for others, they see hiring help as a sign of weakness," she said.

This generation of seniors, especially men, is accustomed to rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty. It may be hard to admit that some things are physically more difficult than in years past. Most expect their kids to manage a future move, but haven't had conversations about such.

**Things have changed**

"When people who haven't sold a home or moved in over two decades begin telling me they are going to do it all themselves, I get worried," Sims said. "I know they are smart and capable people who have often navigated moves before, but the terrain is much different than they remember it to be. Things have changed. They have changed."

Move management support can make the relocation process easier and less stressful.

"My job is to educate, equip, and empower people, collaborating with them throughout their move. They are in control, but having an extra set of hands and a proven strategy to follow makes them more capable and confident," said Sims.

Having support can make all the difference. While it may not remove all the challenges, it can lessen overwhelm and make it more manageable.

"We are already involved in so many new activities, while some of our neighbors are still unpacking boxes several months after their move."

Downsizing is becoming more common as people look for ways to simplify their lifestyles during retirement. Some use the extra time to travel, while others are focused on recovering from illnesses or taking up new hobbies.

"More people should start planning ahead like we did. Going to classes and meeting others who successfully moved to retirement communities made our change much easier," said Martha. "It's just like anything you want to be good at or learn how to do, it requires planning and preparation. The tools are out there, but you have to take advantage of them."

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To learn more about local education about downsizing or move management services, contact the person who gave you this article.