



Is this Your Niche?

Helping Seniors

Where are you in your professional organization life? Based on the assumption that being a senior is as much a state of mind as it is a biological or statistical reality, you know that someday, the aging reality will strike. If not you directly, it will be parents or friends.

As an organizer, it made be hard to imagine the angst involved for many seniors in leaving a home filled with history, memorabilia and all the major and minor symbols of life, relationships, celebrations, grieving, holidays and reminders of how we have lived.

Guiding people thru this stage could well be one of the most personally and professionally satisfying services you will ever provide. To help seniors move beyond fear and sadness as they transition from one life stage to the next, is a huge contribution.

Eileen is a perfect example. In her late sixties, she is finally facing her own reality. Three flights of stairs are making her nervous. She looks around her comfortable home, sighing over the difficult decisions she has to make, wondering if she has the strength and energy to make a move. Widowed for a number of years, with children both geographically and emotionally separated and busy with their own lives, she finds it particularly painful that she has to face this major transition on her own. Friends are helpful, but they can't tell her what to keep or throw. She hears all about selling things but how does she go about the process? She knows she has to finally part with most of the books, photos, holiday souvenirs and all of the familiar ornaments and collections that currently populate her rooms, reminding her of former lives well-lived.

But she has stopped sleeping and feels exhausted at the level of decision-making she faces. First she has to find a new home that is more suited to her lifestyle and physical needs; then she has to sell her current home; and in between, dismantle a life and

begin again. Overwhelming for many, particularly those, whether in their fifties, sixties, seventies or more, who will face this challenge alone.

What makes the process even more difficult is the reality that this move could well be one of the more “final” life transitions; that there may not be a whole lot of options once the familiar home is gone along with all the memories as the aging process accelerates. Optimistically, Eileen and the rest of us hope that the change and the new beginning will bring its own excitement and fresh opportunities, friendships, new relationships, new activities and renewed energy. This is the leap of faith we have to build upon. But as we begin, it can be very stressful.

Enter the organizer, with unique skills, sensitivity and the compassion necessary to find this growing group of individuals and help guide them through one of life’s most difficult stages.

The “Downsizing Diva’s” from Toronto are a perfect example. Both experienced professional organizers, they joined forces two years ago when they realized the extent of the demand for downsizing services focused on seniors. Working with senior citizen homes, assisted living communities, Karen and Gail have developed a package of services to the point where a person, or couple, can simply use them as consultants or hire them to do the entire project, including all the paperwork and logistics, such as sending out change of address forms and notifying all the utilities companies.

They will even stock the new refrigerator, make the bed, and have a familiar and “safe” corner set up where the individual can settle in and feel immediately at home in his/her favorite chair with the lamp and table in the right position. If you want to make your downsizing as easy and comfortable as possible, Karen and Gail have nailed down the journey with a minimum of disruption, and a lot of TLC.

The Diva says...

When it comes to finding new homes for stuff people no longer want, use or need, here's what we've learned over the years:

1. What you think is worth money, may not be. *Sometimes what we call antique furniture is just used furniture.*
2. What you think is worthless, may be valuable. *One person's trash can be another person's treasure.*
3. When someone tells you an item is worth a lot of money, ask them if they know someone who wants to buy it. *Chances are... they don't!*

4. It can take a lot of time to find the right buyer. *It's best to start now when you have the time.*
5. When you donate items to your community museum or historical society, you may receive a tax receipt. *Bonus!*
6. Win-win is best. *Give something you have enjoyed to someone who will also use it and enjoy it.*
7. Antique store prices are not what someone will pay for your stuff - *even if it is exactly the same as something you see in the window of a shop!*

The important things in life... aren't things!

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