

Making the Transition to an Assisted Living Community

Lynn Falwell and Janice Armour

For most people, making the decision to move to an assisted living (AL) facility or a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) is a big step, but getting there may be an even bigger one. There are many factors that go into such a decision: trading a familiar neighborhood and old friends for a new and congregate living environment full of new faces; and giving up a measure of privacy and responsibility in exchange for a simpler life, greater socialization, and freedom from home maintenance. All of these trade-offs are generally considered to be pluses, but for many families, the greatest hurdle is how to get from where they (or their family members) are presently living to where they would like to go.

How do you start the process of downsizing from a lifelong home to an AL facility?

For those with nearby adult children or others who can take the time to come and help, the process of sorting through a lifetime of belongings may be relatively easy. However, for many families, there are no close relatives to help. In some situations, there may be little time to carry out the required tasks, particularly if the adult community calls on short notice with an unexpected vacancy.

Enter Senior Move Managers

Senior move management is a relatively new industry made up of professionals who are "dedicated to as-



sisting older adults and families with the physical and emotional demands of downsizing and relocating," says the National Association of Senior Move Managers. These professionals

help with every aspect of moving—getting a home in market-ready condition; sorting, organizing, and packing; working with appraisers, charities, and antique specialists; su-

pervising movers; and settling clients into their new homes (even unpacking, hanging artwork, and making the beds). They also make deep emotional connections with their clients and their family members.

Janice Armour, co-owner of It's Your Move, Inc., a move management company based in Natick, MA, says, "Many of the seniors we work with are overwhelmed with just knowing where to start, in what order to do things, and how to find reputable vendors, not to mention the physical and emotional fatigue they feel." Move managers help guide families through the process of right sizing and simplifying their lives with the goal of helping clients ease into a safe living environment that maximizes their independence and personal lifestyle.

Like many of their generation, Boston physician Dr. Paul Russell and his wife had waited to move out of a long-time family residence into a nearby CCRC. This suited their de-

sire for a more simplified and supportive environment where Dr. Russell could continue to work and he and his wife would not need to worry about maintaining a large home.

According to Lynn Falwell, co-owner of It's Your Move, "We show our clients that the process is neither inherently chaotic, nor does it have to consume their lives. A senior move management company can free both parent and child from the physical work, allowing families to concentrate on each other."

A senior move manager is not only beneficial to seniors but also benefits the administration and staff at an AL facility.

"Relieving the seniors of all the responsibilities for the move and the settling-in process allows them to be calmer and more receptive to what their new community has to offer them, more quickly and easily," says David Mackey, marketing director at North Hill, a life care community in Needham, MA.

One example is when a senior move management company helped a couple become North Hill residents, despite the husband's uncertainty about the move and his wife's distraction with the process.

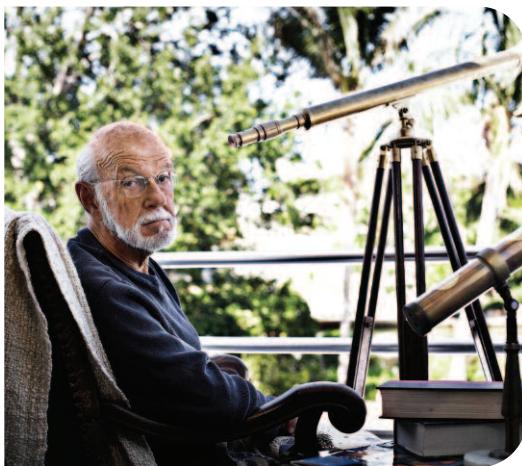
"Most impressive to me was the calm efficiency that the move management company brought to the project. After the first day, everything was in its place, the couple was relaxed, and their new apartment looked like 'they were truly home,'" said Mackey.

While transitioning to an AL facility can often be an emotional process, senior move managers can go a long way toward soothing nerves and making the experience a positive one.

ALC

Lynn Falwell and Janice Armour are co-owners of It's Your Move, Inc., a Move Management company based in Natick, MA. Contact them at info@ItsYourMoveInc.com or 508-651-8921. It's Your Move, Inc. is a member of the National Association of Senior Move Managers.

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