

Should You Downsize?

Four professionals offer their help in your decision making

By Amy Cavalier

To move or not to move? That is the question for many seniors. Whether it's for health, financial or space reasons, deciding whether or not to downsize is one of the most difficult choices senior citizens will have to make.

Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of cleaning out, packing and moving, not to mention finding the perfect new place to live can all be the cause of much anxiety. So when is the right time to move and how do you do it after living in a house for decades. Is moving the only option? Here are four women based in the Rochester area who can help answer your questions and guide you through the process.

1

Dawn Provan —A real estate agent with Nothnagle Realtors, Dawn Provan started up her own business NewDawnings because she saw people needed help downsizing.



"It's a big change, whether you've lived somewhere for a couple of years, or you've lived someplace for your whole entire life, moving is traumatic," she said.

There are many questions, like "will I like where I'm going, do I really



need all these things, or is it all right for me to get rid of these things I've held onto for so long?"

That's why she created "A Guide for Downsizing" to help her senior clients decide whether to stay put or to move. According to the guide, sometimes a home and its upkeep can become too much of a burden for a person to stay put. For others, the solution might be bringing services into their home to assist them with everything from housekeeping and yard work to meals, laundry and health care.

The guide includes tips on everything from selecting a new home based on your personal and financial needs to making the actual move. To

get started on the process, Provan recommends separating things into piles such as things you can't live without, things you don't really need, and things you want to give to families members or donate to charity. According to her guide to downsizing, you can use different colored sticky notes to differentiate between those three categories.

"I try to stress, if you're going to a small house or apartment, don't take too much stuff because then you're really going to feel overwhelmed and overcrowded," she said.

For those things you don't want to keep, or can't keep, there are estate and yard sales, donations to charity, or you can even donate old photos or

yearbooks to local the local historical society, schools or churches. Some of your vintage clothes might even bring in some cash from a consignment shop.

Provan's guide includes a checklist for moving, a list for a survival kit for the day of move, and even a sheet to help you calculate your current expenses. If you decide moving is the right decision for you, Provan can do more than help you sell your home, she can also help organize and staff a household sale, as part of her New Dawnings business. She charges 25 percent of the sale total.

"We do it all," she said. "We bring the crew and tables in, we do the advertising, we man the sale, and with all the stuff that doesn't sell, we can get rid of it by donating it to whatever charity they want to donate it to."

2

Rebecca Pontera — When it comes to aging, Senior Life is a one-stop shop. From navigating the

health care system or having an extra set of eyes and ears at a health care appointment, to deciding on a move, Rebecca Pontera, director of client services for Senior Life Independent Care Consultants and Advocates, can help.

"Sometimes a move is more need-driven, because of health," she said, "other times it's more of a desire to simplify things or take the struggle out."

Pontera can assist with finding the right fit based on a client's emotional, financial and physical needs, as well as with the application process if that's required.

"The application process is different for every level of care, and then if needed, we can either physically help with that move, or we may help facilitate that by hiring a move manager or a moving company," she said. "It depends on the nature of the move and what we've been invited to do."

Pontera helps clients decide

what to bring to their new home and then she'll be there when the moving company arrives to make sure everything goes smoothly and to get things set up so the person feels comfortable in their new home. Pontera said there are a lot of resources in the Rochester community to assist seniors in making decisions for their next step in life, whatever that may be. A consultation with Senior Life is typically \$200, with other services ranging from \$95 to \$150 per hour.

"Sometimes it's a matter of finding the right person, the right resource that will open the door to everything that's available," she said.

3

Maureen Davis — Sometimes moving isn't the only option. Maureen Davis, mortgage loan originator for Flaherty Funding, has been in the mortgage business for 24 years. She said seniors over 62 years old who are looking to stay in their homes but reduce their expenses could benefit

New Service Offered for Seniors, Boomers

Support available for families relocating to new homes

By Lou Sorendo

Theresa Downham makes sure that Everything Has A Place.

Downham is a certified relocation and transition specialist as well as an accredited staging professional. She owns and operates Everything Has A Place, LLC, which is headquartered in Honeoye Falls.

Downham owns the business independently and has eight employees.

Her business specializes in organizing, sorting, downsizing, packing, unpacking, setup, "and a thousand other details in between,"

Downham said.

"I was already staging homes for realtors in Florida," said Downham, a native of Canandaigua. "When my husband and I moved to the Rochester area, staging wasn't quite here in this area yet."

It was at that point that she became affiliated with the National Association of Senior Move Managers.

"It intrigued me because I've done a lot of work with seniors and have moved 35 times in my adult life," she said. "So I decided to get certification which was held in Washington DC three years ago. After getting the

training, I felt I had really found something interesting and helpful and brought together so many of my life skills."

She is a member of NASMM, as well as the National Association of Professional Organizers, the Business Network International Rapid Referrals chapter, and a business member of the Greater Rochester Area Realtors.

Downham calls herself a home relocation manager, primarily because using the word "move" places her in another category for insurance.

"I am not a mover," she said.

Her primary demographic are seniors and Baby Boomers.

"However, my client base so far has been 20 something to 90 something. It started out to be primarily seniors, so I called myself a senior move manager," she said. "However, seniors believe, and rightly so, that friends, family and church need to help them. Money is tight and for many seniors, it's hard to hire us."

She said Baby Boomers are her



from a reverse mortgage.

"Most people when they're ready for retirement wind up selling their homes and getting their equity that way, using the cash to purchase a smaller home, or a rental," she said. "Many today are retiring and would like to stay in their homes. They just need access to cash to pay taxes, maintenance, or even medical care in the home."

According to a report by the AARP Foundation, "a reverse mortgage is a loan against your home that you do not have to pay back for as long as you live there." The cash can be paid to you in a single lump sum, a regular monthly cash advance, a "creditline" account that lets you decide when and how much of your available cash is paid to you, or a combination of these payment methods. According to the report, no matter how the loan is paid out, you typically don't have to



Resources

For more information on these services:

- **Dawn Provan**, the senior "rightsizing" consultant – (585) 248-1034 or newdawn@frontiernet.net
- **Maureen Davis**, mortgage loan originator for Flaherty Funding – (585) 857-1886 or mdavis@flahertyfunding.com
- **Bobbie Goodridge**, owner/manager of Grandma's Helpers LLC – (585) 334-3544
- **Rebecca Pontera**, director of client service at Senior Life Independent Care Consultants and Advocates – (585) 424-2424

pay anything back until you die, sell your home, or permanently move out of your home.

Seniors looking into a reverse mortgage must meet with a professional counselor approved by Housing and Urban Development to go through their financial picture and

objectively decide whether a reverse mortgage is the best thing for them, Davis said.

She said there are several misconceptions about reverse mortgages. One is that the bank will take the title or ownership of the home. Davis said that does not happen.



Theresa Downham, a certified relocation and transition specialist, operates Everything Has a Place in Honeoye Falls.

primary target audience.

"They are mostly still working, have kids, and in most cases, do not live close to their parents," she said. "But, they want to help their parents move, so they will hire us."

Or, the Baby Boomers themselves may be moving, and are too busy to manage the move.

"Boomers are very accustomed to hiring services, where their parents' generation was not," Downham said.

Downham said with a real estate sales tax going into effect in 2013, she expects to see an influx of people selling their homes and moving sooner than they planned.

Under the new federal health care bill, all real estate transactions may be

subject to a 3.8 percent sales tax.

Downham said the most challenging aspect of her profession is dealing with its newness.

"This industry is so new that people do not know this service is available," she said. "Some of the stories are so sad and filled with all sorts of trauma. People, especially seniors, don't realize how traumatizing a move is mentally, physically and emotionally. I just want people to know there is an option out there that can truly help in all aspects of a move."

She noted that the most gratifying part of her job "are the relationships and hugs and how truly grateful people are. It's unbelievably hard work, but I do it for the hugs."

For more information, call 585.797.9321 or check out www.EverythingHasAPlace.com.



The second misconception is that if the person taking the loan lives longer than the bank has based the life of the loan on, or if their house decreases in value, that they will owe the bank more

than they can sell their home for. That can't happen either, she said.

"My job as a mortgage loan officer is to gather specific financial information and have them determine what's going to work for their long-term and short-term financial needs, and in some cases it will be a reverse mortgage," she said. "This is for anybody facing retirement that has equity in their home. It's worth the time to make the phone call and ask questions."

4

Bobbie Goodridge — If moving

is the best solution for you, Bobbie Goodrich, owner/manager of Grandma's Helpers LLC, can help you plan and make your move from start to finish.

A member of the National Association of Senior Move Managers, Goodridge works with clients to help them decide what to take to their new residence and what to leave behind.

"We'll do a floor plan," she said. "By doing floor planning, we are able to make the transition smoother and make those decisions up front, so when we do move our seniors, there's not a lot of extraneous stuff to deal with."

Goodridge can sell items through private liquidation or conduct a household sale to help you get rid of stuff before you move.

"I tell my clients it's like setting up a retail store in your home," she said. "We pull everything out, sort it, set it up, and merchandise it so it looks nice and appealing. Then we go around and tag and price everything, we put advertisements in the local papers and conduct a sale in your home."

Goodridge will help her clients find a moving company, although the contract is between the residents and the moving company, and then she'll help with packing if you want.

"It depends on the client," she said. "It's all very individualized because people are individuals."

Goodridge's services are priced by the hour, but a typical move from a three bedroom house to a one bedroom apartment cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$3,000, not counting the cost of the movers. Goodridge does provide the packing materials.

Not only will she meet the movers at your current house to assist in the oversight of the packing process, Goodridge will meet them at your new house to make sure they follow the floor plan you've laid out.

"Typically what we do is have everything unpacked, put away, all the boxes and packing materials moved out of the apartments, set the clocks, make the beds, so when our seniors come into their new apartment at the end of their move day, they're coming home," she said.

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