

Downsizing? Meet a Specialist

By D.K. Christi
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Bonita Springs—Moving to a new home is one of those major life events that ranks high on the stress scale. Brenda Bergin has experienced it firsthand.

"The move from Boston 11 years ago was a downsizing experience for me," said Bergin owner of All the Right Moves. "The difficulties of letting go of treasured possessions is only tempered by the fact that I can visit my sister's home and feel the comfort of former belongings that I gave to her in the process."

"My career path began as an engineering manager in the early days of the computer industry – I had one of the first Mac's in 1984."

After she moved to Southwest Florida, she became involved in real estate and still is; but in the last two years, she found a new niche – assisting primarily seniors with downsizing and letting go of items no longer needed for their future residences. Last year she provided door-to-door downsizing assistance to approximately a dozen clients.



Brenda Bergin owner of All the Right Moves helps those moving to downsize and then manages the move for them.

"In real estate, I staged homes for sale and experienced the trauma owners felt facing the daunting task of packing up and moving when it also included eliminating possessions they had owned for years," Bergin said. "I found a niche market for customized services."

Bergin meets with the potential client and plans their downsize experience from sorting every possession into categories, labeling, taking inventory, deciding where those items selected for elimination will go (charities, Goodwill, Salvation Army, consignment shops, eBay,

friends, relatives) packing, labeling boxes for the move to the new place, and arranging for moving and supervising setup in the new location. Most clients contract for the complete door-to-door service.

"They can see whether I am helpful by buying four-

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—Brenda Bergin

hour blocks of time," Bergin said.

She has found that her patience and communications skills are as important as her technical skill.

"I take the time necessary for a client to become comfortable with the move and the process," Bergin said. "By the time it's complete, we have become friends."

She gets to know them intimately from the discussions and counseling that occur sorting through their life's possessions.

Licensed, bonded and certified by the National Association of Senior Move Managers, she stresses this is a career for a person of high ethical standards and empathy for seniors and their

life stories and understanding sentimental attachment to possessions. Most of her business is from referrals: realtors, retirement communities, assisted living facilities, funeral homes (surviving family), attorneys, estate managers and word of mouth. She networks with community service and business organizations.

Bergin explains that it helps to let go when the items will be valued in their next use.

"I had one client whose spouse had a major investment in woodworking equipment that was very meaningful," Bergin said. "Gifting it to the Youth Ranch made it possible to let go."

Another client, a local artist, was able to part with paintings by donating them to the Art League.

Bergin offers the following tips for those beginning a downsizing project: 1) resist the urge to rent a storage unit; 2) sort items into sell, donate, give away and keep; 3) consider putting valuables in a safe deposit box and keep medicines well-located and available and 4) invite a friend to comfort and assist with the tough decisions.

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