

When to relocate and why

BY KAREN L. CHANDLER

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When to move from a beloved and comfortable home is probably one of the last big decisions a senior citizen is going to make, said Carol Thompson of Armstrong Relocation & Cos. in Mount Joy, Lancaster County.

"We decided it was time," said Joyce Saeger, who recently moved with her husband, John, into a new home in Lititz with the help of Thompson's services. On moving day, Thompson and Annemarie Webb, an Armstrong moving and storage consultant, supervised movers, offered opinions and advice and enjoyed the day with the Saegers.

Joyce Saeger describes how maintaining a large yard was draining the couple's time and energy, and health issues made the work even more difficult.

"It's no longer fun if it's becoming hard," she said. "Then it's time to have someone else do it."

John Saeger added that the cost of hiring people to do yard and maintenance work starts to add up.

Keep, sell or give away

The Saegers agreed that the process of reducing their possessions from what filled a 3,400-square-foot house to what would fit comfortably in their new 2,000-square-foot home took a bit of work.

"Each of us had different opinions," John Saeger said.

A priority was placed on saving heirlooms and giving important items to their family.

And John needed a spot in the new house for his baby grand piano.

Two trucks filled with the Saegers' possessions went to auction. But John proudly noted that many of their household items were donated to charities, even helping outfit an apartment for a victim of abuse through Lancaster's Domestic Violence Services.

Based in Memphis, Tenn., Armstrong Relocation & Cos. has locations coast to coast and the capability to disburse a senior's possessions to family members out of state, or deliver items to specified charities.

Thompson does her best to make what can be a stressful process as easy as possible.

Time of transition

Although Joyce Saeger appreciated Thompson's help and advice during her move, she drew special attention to the fact that Thompson allowed her to independently make decisions during the packing of items she has accumulated over decades.

"I try to be patient and nurturing along the way," Thompson said of the chain of events, beginning with her review of all aspects of the move; helping with decisions on what will fit in a smaller home; and how to lay out and organize the new dwelling.

She said her clients usually realize it is time for a move.

Joyce Saeger explained that the transition to Warwick Woodlands, a life care community of Lancaster's Moravian Manor, means the availability of a cleaning service, in-home personal care and outside maintenance.

"A community like this is a great way to meet new people," said John Saeger, regarding the new residence he said will offer social and recreational opportunities for the couple.

"If you're living at home, you don't have the time," he said.

Cheryl Anderson of Exeter Township, Well by Design program director of The Heritage of Green Hills, Cumru Township, agreed that freedom from the burdens of home maintenance allows seniors to have a healthier and happier lifestyle.

"There are no taxes, no repairs," Anderson said. "When you want to go away, you shut the door."

Anderson said the program was designed for baby boomers and seniors who live independently at The Heritage.

'I get them involved'

Anderson's Well By Design program focuses on keeping residents balanced with multiple dimensions of wellness, including physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially.

Anderson acknowledges that while a transition from a lifelong home can be challenging and emotional, there is support to be found in the community at The Heritage.

"Living at home alone is just not fun," she said.

Residents have opportunities to do things they've never done, like working out in a fitness center or playing water volleyball.

"I get them involved," Anderson said. "I hook them up with a friend."

Anderson said that people who move into The Heritage may need help feeling comfortable.

"It's my job to make sure they're out and they get involved," she said.

The downsizing effort

Ginny Meyer, a 1956 graduate of Reading High School, recently moved into a villa at The Heritage.

Meyer had called Hendersonville, N.C., home until the death of her husband in 2016 prompted her to consider returning to Berks County to be near her seven siblings.

Her husband of 56 years always had made sure things were in good working order.

"I was not going to be able to handle the house," Meyer said. "I didn't know the first thing to do."

Downsizing for Meyer meant getting rid of her husband's woodworking shop, filled with equipment and lumber, in addition to the usual furniture and household items.

Having saved only a few keepsakes, Meyer said downsizing was not emotional for her.

"They are just things," she said of the weeding process that kept her busy through the difficult transition in her life.

Meyer said she had little time to be sad.

Laura Zartman, move-in coordinator at The Heritage, kept in close contact with Meyer during the downsizing to keep her excited about her new home.

"She jumped through hoops for me," Meyer said.

She spoke about the long-distance construction decisions for her villa made with Zartman Construction Inc. via phone calls and emails.

Meyer is happy to have her move behind her and looks forward to meeting people at The Heritage and entertaining guests in her home.

"Berks County just has to get out of the mentality that you go to a retirement community to die," Anderson said.

Her advice for seniors on when to make a move? "Don't wait too long."

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