

February 2018

AACM and You — Our Team Can Find Answers Beyond Helping to Manage Care

AACM (Accountable Aging Care Management) often gets contacted by families when urgent decisions need to be made. Many times, these decisions are about housing questions for aging adults.

Adult children need to know what the best housing options are for their parents – should their parents move to a retirement community or to an assisted living residence? What is the difference between memory care and a nursing facility?

Once a move gets planned, the family is left wondering what to do with all of the goods and items still left in the home. What should be done with all of that stuff!



As we go through life, we accumulate many things that feel like treasures to us. We value them in a way

A pervasive problem of our modern era is how do aging adults and their families manage the accumulation of stuff when it comes time to move.

Home is Where the Heart is — and All of Your Stuff

“When you finally go back to your old home, you find it wasn’t the old home you missed but your childhood.” [Sam Ewing](#)

I remember my own childhood very fondly. It was happy and filled with love. Nostalgia mostly helps me avoid focusing on the sad parts. For this, I feel very fortunate, as I know that not everyone has this same experience in their own lives.

So many of my childhood memories have become associated with my childhood home. Until I went away to college, it was the only home I had ever known. When my mother passed away, my dad remained there, and so I continued to visit and stay through many different stages of my adulthood – when I moved far away to Austin, TX, after I got married, and still later on when I visited with my oldest child when she was still very young. It certainly wasn’t my home anymore, but in a way, it felt the same to me as it did when I was six years old.



As our parents begin to age, our relationship with them changes. Depending on how they are faring, new and different responsibilities can be thrust upon us. In [last month’s newsletter](#), we discussed ways in which children of aging adults often find themselves in a position where they need to handle financial, legal, and health-making decisions for their parents often at a moment’s notice.

Dealing with the fate of your childhood home is another such possibility. In my case, this particular problem became very difficult for me and my siblings.

“Don’t organize your junk -- get rid of it! If not for yourself, then do it for your children. Your thought process should be, “I won’t leave all this clutter for my children.” [Julie Hall, The Estate Lady](#)

My father began to suffer from various ailments of different degrees until he developed cancer. He never needed the long-term day-to-day care that so many

that others do not. Adult children, who are in the midst of living their own busy lives, do not have the time and energy to sift through every item of a home and attempt to figure out its monetary or emotional value.

When aging adults downsize, it is a big move, and frequently an emotional time for the whole family. AACM's team has seen the complexity of downsizing occur again and again. We are able to listen to the concerns of the family and connect them to a downsizing professional that will help meet their needs.

There are members of NSMMA (National Senior Move Manager Association) in every area where we serve clients. Our team knows about each one's special talents, and we can recommend several providers to a family.

Most of these move managers can do more than just help with a downsizing move:

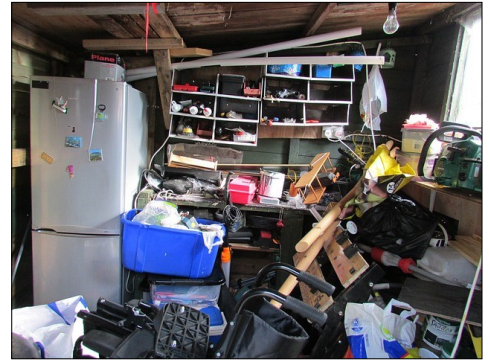
- They can also help families figure out how to deal with all of the household items that will not make it to the new residence.
- They have experience separating what is truly valuable from emotional value.
- They can help find charities, junk haulers, and estate sale companies.

These move managers will normally visit with a family and evaluate the situation. They will help make a plan and give an estimate about how

aging adults often require as his disease took him rather quickly. He lived in that same home until shortly before he passed away. His estate was settled easily and amicably between the three of us. The only thing really left for us to do was to deal with our childhood home.

My parents weren't hoarders, and yet they kept things. I kept things. My siblings kept things. This house was special to all of us, but we also knew how much junk it contained. Through the years, on some visits, I packed a box here and there, and brought it back with me to Texas. But so many of my things still remained. My brother and sister were worse. Since they were in such close proximity to that home, they never felt the need to bring anything with them.

My father's passing had been such a whirlwind. And all of us were so busy with families, with life. The last thing any of us wanted to do was to go back to that house and sort through it. Months passed, all of us avoiding the inevitable. Soon it was a year, two years, and our childhood home was still there, as if suspended in time.



It had reached a point where we had to sell this home. We had procrastinated long enough. We gave ourselves five days. Our realtor would help us get the house ready to be sold — we just had to clear the house. Five days to get rid of over 40 years' worth of stuff. Our planning was rudimentary at best: each of us would handle our own things, we would split up pictures and albums with the intent of eventually scanning and sharing them, we would peacefully decide amongst mementos, and we would find a charitable organization to come and take most of the furniture. Five days is a long time. We could do this.

Saying goodbye to your mother and father is a painful experience at any age. I had thought that what caused my siblings and me to put off clearing this house for so long was that we were afraid of having to say goodbye to them all over again. I didn't realize it was more than that.

"I have a theory that people subconsciously believe their stuff will anchor them to this world..." [Julie Hall, The Estate Lady](#)



It dawned on me how difficult a task this was going to be when on that first night, my sister and I spent over an hour pouring through one of my mother's old phone books. The emotion I felt while picturing the visage behind each name was intense. It suddenly became clear to me that saying goodbye to this old house wasn't just saying goodbye to my parents. It was also, in a way, saying goodbye to my childhood.

much it will cost.

Our team will also sometimes hear from seniors and disabled persons who are not yet ready to move, but realize that they need to declutter their homes because the amount of possessions inside has gotten out of hand. As people age and health declines, it becomes more difficult to handle tasks such as this. Hiring someone to guide you through the process may be a much easier way to handle this stressful situation.

Again, AACM can recommend appropriate organizers or downsizers who will make these homes safe, organized, and supportive of whatever stage of life that the occupants are in.

Aging adults often face problems that go beyond health, legal, and financial issues. The complication of downsizing and decluttering that we have focused on in this newsletter is just one example.

We want you to be aware that you can count on our team to help you and your family with anything that you may encounter as you make your way through the aging journey.



Every dust-laden trinket, every kitchen utensil, family vacation souvenir, even an old dustbuster I found in the back of a closet all brought back with them a flood of memories. Memories I wasn't quite ready to deal with.

Those five days ended up being a complete mess. For one thing, we couldn't find any charitable organizations willing to come on such short notice. And my siblings and I had lost the ability to differentiate between what we wanted or needed and what should be thrown away. There was too much emotion involved. And we had to slog through it. It couldn't be put off any longer.

In the end, we threw much of the contents of this house away. This was probably the right decision – but it felt heartbreaking. I had packed away eight boxes full of stuff and sent them back to Texas. With help from my brother's friend, we had gotten an enormous dumpster and filled it with a generation's worth of possessions. It just seemed like there should have been a better way.



"I like to tell people to spend some good time every day trying to reduce mental clutter and they will have energy to move and to literally rid clutter from their environment." [Lori Shemek](#)

The experience we had with this old home was not at all unique. It is a common and persistent problem of our modern era. There are too many houses filled with years' worth of accumulation. This affects not only the children of aging adults, but also their parents who are often still living in these homes.

When aging adults decide to downsize, they have to confront the terror of acquisitions gathered throughout their own and their children's lives. This is true if they make the decision to move or if it is thrust upon them by necessity. They struggle with how to leave so much behind. And after being in one place for so long, they find it very difficult to make their new residence comfortable – to make it feel like home.

I learned later on that there are resources available for those who find themselves in a similar predicament. There are many companies that can help with these exact situations. Companies that have experience with the emotional quality of such a move and who can not only save families time and stress, but can also help aging adults feel comfortable in their new residences.

In my family's case, we would have been a lot better off if we had worked with one of these companies prior to attempting to clear out our childhood home by ourselves. I have already made a pledge that I will work hard at gradually getting rid of things, so that my children will not one day have to go through such a monumental task. As for those eight boxes I sent back from my old home – they are still in my attic, exactly where I left them. I keep telling myself I will get to them soon.

By Michael Rodus AACM Benefits Specialist/Care Manager

Staff Changes

As our services in San Antonio continue to grow, we have brought on an additional care manager for that area.

We welcome Samantha Nutter to our team. Sam received her Bachelor's of Social Work degree from Niagara University in Buffalo, NY. She has worked in subsidized housing facilities for the elderly and in assisted living facilities focused on memory care. She has also helped families get through crises as an emergency room social worker. Her previous experience helps make her an excellent advocate for aging adults and their families.

In the fall, we said goodbye to Amanda George. Our new Bill Pay and Client Services Coordinator is Katie McGary. Katie is a certified Licensed Master Social Worker. She graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelor's of Social Work and a Master's of Social Work. Her background working with aging adults and individuals with disabilities has helped to ensure that AACM's clients and their families get the support they need.

Out in the Community

Since we published our last newsletter, Mary and Mick Koffend have both given presentations about aging matters.

In December, they spoke about financial planning for end of life at the AGE of Central Texas Conference for Caregivers. And earlier this month, they spoke to students at Texas Tech University in the Department of Personal Financial Planning.

Help with Downsizing and Transitioning

AACM refers clients to companies who help with senior moves in all of our markets. We reached out to a couple and asked them how their business can help families who encounter these situations.

Life's Next Step

[Life's Next Step](#), based in Austin, TX, specializes in downsizing and transitional moves for older adults. Other services they provide include estate clean-outs, and decluttering and organization assistance.

We asked Life Next Step's owner, Lynda Carter, about how they help aging adults and their families when it comes time to move:

"The family or individual preparing for an older adult move is dealing with a host of emotions which take their toll on the entire family. When we work with an older adult, we work as their partner. We prepare floor plans, downsize, pack, handle the logistics, oversee the movers, unpack, organize, set-up the new home, decorate, hang pictures, hook-up electronics and throw out the trash. Our expertise and encompassing services allows the older adult to be released from the stress of moving allowing them to look forward to their new lifestyle." - Linda Carter, Life's Next Step

Caring Transitions of Brazos Valley

[Caring Transitions of Brazos Valley](#) provides services to aging adults and their families who are ready to relocate, downsize, and/or declutter their homes. They serve Bryan, College Station, Lake Conroe, and surrounding areas.

Jared Meyer, the owner of Caring Transitions of Brazos Valley, explained how his company helps families when aging adults are ready to downsize:

"Downsizing (or "rightsizing" as we like to call it) is often a stressful experience for seniors and their families. Caring Transitions offers a total solution to help ease the stress and anxiety through providing move oversight, organizing and decluttering assistance, estate liquidation services and home clean outs. We are able to customize and develop a "rightsizing" service plan that meets our clients' needs and considerably reduces the stress of the transition." – Jared Meyer, Caring Transitions

Accountable Aging Care Management is an eldercare consulting and care management firm.

Accountable Aging is a single source for older adults and their families to attain knowledge, resources and on-going assistance with the challenges related to aging or caring for elderly or older loved ones. We serve older adults and disabled persons in Austin, Bryan/College Station, Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW), San Antonio, Permian Basin, and surrounding areas.

With this newsletter, our aim is to provide a trusted conduit for eldercare information and resources and to highlight the services we offer that meet the needs of older adults and their families.

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