



DON'T WAIT TO START DOWNSIZING

By Janice Martin, Senior Advisor / Family Liaison

Many people moving to assisted living don't begin the important process of downsizing until they are faced with an imminent move. They bury their head under the covers and hope that the day won't come. They have one reason after another to procrastinate and avoid being proactive.

Last year, I helped a couple transition to assisted living after living in their own home for many years. The wife had significant memory impairment and the husband was doing everything he could to keep her at home. At his daughters urging, he decided to move into a community together. They moved before their house was sold, which allowed him to shield his wife from the chaos. It also gave him time to take an occasional break from the massive project. When I spoke with him a few weeks ago, I asked him what advice he would give to others. His quick response was, "Start downsizing years in advance!"

So – where, and HOW, do you begin? My favorite saying is, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!" I have helped hundreds of families through this process. I'd like to suggest some wonderful local options to offer the things that no longer serve you to now benefit others.

PHOTOGRAPHS – For Ann's Sake will take your photographs, scan them, and offers a nice selection of digital frames to provide a beautiful slide show. They will add captions to help those with memory impairment remember faces and encourage reminiscing. They will also produce digital albums and videos to share your history with family. For more information, call 301-471-8479.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS – I can't tell you how many people I have met who insist on keeping receipts and files from the 1980's! There are simply not enough closets and rarely is storage offered in assisted living to move them with you. **Iron Mountain** is a great resource for scanning lots of documents. They will pick up the boxed files and put the scans on a thumb drive. They provide shredding as well. They can be reached at 877-654-3757. For smaller projects, The Villages Pack and Ship Plus or office store can help.

CLOTHING AND HOUSEHOLD ITEMS – There are several non-profit options other than Goodwill that benefit others. **Key Training Center Thrift Store** in



Wildwood accepts gently used current clothing and the money raised helps to train adults with developmental disabilities to work in their stores and other local retail. For information and to schedule a pick up call 352-661-3052.

If your clothing is a bit older, another great option is a hospice or church thrift store. Additionally, "**Restoring Hope Thrift Store**" in Wildwood benefits post-911 veterans and families transitioning back to civilian life through donations of furniture and household items. For more information and to schedule a pickup call 352-748-1855. In July, "**Restoring Hope Clothing Boutique**" will accept on-site clothing donations at a second Wildwood location. "**Operation Shoebox**" in Belleview uses money raised from donations of clothing, furniture, household items, and individually wrapped cookies and snacks to send personal items, goodies, and letters of encouragement to our troops overseas. For information on pick up or drop off options call 352-307-6723.

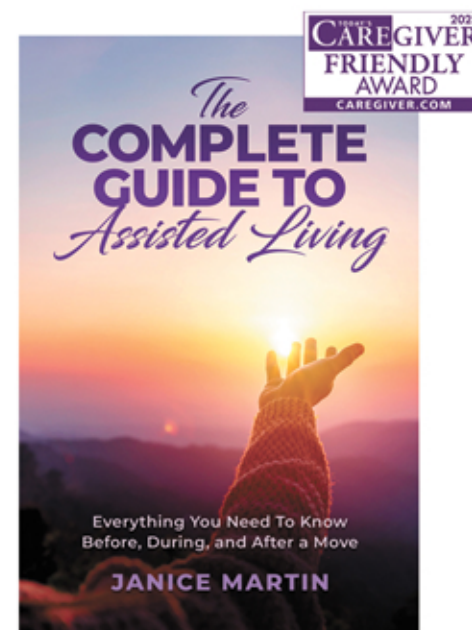
TOOLS – Rather than get pennies on the dollar trying to sell your still useful tools (including cooking tools), there is a Citrus County non-profit called "**Skill Building Class Inc.**" Each class allows 28 youth living in poverty to attend a free 12 week course to learn essential life skills for their survival and to instill a desire for a possible future career. Volunteers from the community teach sewing, tile, oil/tire change, cooking, welding, and more. Donated tools can be used for classwork and are also given to the participants upon graduation. For more information, call 352-436-3105.

COLLECTIBLES – There are many collectibles such as Hummels, Precious Moments, baseball cards, stamps, coins, comic books, dolls, and more. These items are of great value to you and I'm certain you have enjoyed collecting them over the years. Sadly,

your children may not appreciate them as you have. There are businesses and local clubs that will help sell them privately or list them online.

For everything else, there are businesses that will come to your home to do an estate sale, if your community permits it. They take a percentage of the sale; however, there is often very little profit in the end. Some will do online auctions for more valuable items. Finally, there are businesses that will come to your home to give guidance on how and where to begin and help determine what to move to your new community.

The most important thing is to not procrastinate. A magic genie will not swoop in and make it all go away. Don't leave this for your children to decide what to do with everything. Start now and if the time comes that you have to move to an assisted living or elsewhere, it will be a far less stressful experience. Just take it one bite at a time!



Janice Martin is an author, educator, and specialist on senior living options and the owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc. She has written "*The Complete Guide to Assisted Living: Everything You Need to Know Before, During, and After a Move.*" This award winning and #1 best seller is available on Amazon.com in paperback and eBook. For more information, call 352-477-1866.



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