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# Launching a senior-focused business

## Loganville woman sees market for elderly transition services

by Chelsea Rathbun



Angel Van Wye and David Van Wye

At an out-of-town wedding in June 2007, Loganville resident Angel Van Wye struck up a conversation that would change her life. Van Wye had a successful career as operations manager for Snap-On Tools' southeast region, but when she met a woman who ran a senior downsizing business, she was intrigued.

Van Wye and her brother David had recently moved their own parents into a smaller home. She remembered how overwhelming the process had been – and how much they could have used objective, pro-

fessional guidance.

Six months later, Snap-On Tools announced it was closing its southeast region. Van Wye had two choices: relocate to Wisconsin or lose her job. She knew she had to act fast, and remembering that conversation in June, she began researching the senior care industry. She discovered Caring Transitions, a national franchise specializing in helping families transition their loved ones from home to retirement or care facilities.

Recognizing the opportunity to help families in Gwinnett and seeing rising

demand for services for the elderly, Van Wye became a Caring Transitions franchisee. She enlisted her brother David (also a victim of Snap-On Tools' downsizing) as business partner and, after extensive training, opened her home-based business in June, just two months after Snap-On Tools closed its Atlanta offices.

"I had to have a fast turnaround," Angel Van Wye says. "I put my severance pay into this, so it was really a do-or-die situation."

Happily, Van Wye's decision to help seniors and their loved ones with major life transitions has resulted in a positive transition in her own life. Working together, Angel and David Van Wye provide a variety of customized senior moving, home downsizing and estate sale management services, including helping families sort through belongings acquired over decades and assisting them in making critical decisions.

"Often, people have a do-it-yourself attitude and then get overwhelmed," Angel Van Wye says. "We're objective. We have no emotional attachment to anything in the house."

"There are lots of people in transition who have no one to help them," David Van Wye says. "We come in and take some of the pressure off."

While the Van Wyes market Caring Transitions to the senior care community, they also serve families outside their indus-

try's traditional client base. For example, they have begun assisting people affected by the economic downturn, helping families facing foreclosure liquidate their properties.

While Angel Van Wye's career transition has been smooth, she advises other aspiring entrepreneurs to do their homework before buying a franchise.

"Ask tough questions, call others in the business, and step outside of your particular franchise to find someone who does something similar," she says.

Along with careful research prior to launching, the Van Wyes can point to another factor in their fledgling franchise's success: a true passion for their work. Motivated by more than a paycheck, the brother-and-sister team's services are in line with a more personal mission.

"We've worked together in church ministry for more than 30 years and sung in a gospel trio for more than 20 years," says David Van Wye. "We have a history of longevity and genuinely want to help people."

Angel Van Wye agrees: "It's not just a business transaction for us," she says. "We really build relationships with our clients, and everyone has kept in contact with us."