

## Caring Transitions helps senior citizens downsize, relocate, and liquidate estates

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Lynn Malinowski, left, owner of Caring Transitions with Rita Lamie who will be moving into The Waterford at Levis Commons which is an assisted living complex. Malinowski's company specializes in downsizing for seniors. 4/3/09  
(Photo: J.D. Pooley/Sentinel-Tribune)

Following the death of her father in November, Melissa Shaffer found herself facing what seemed to be an insurmountable task - deciding the fate of her parents' estate.

"I can remember going to the house, looking around and feeling incredibly overwhelmed," Shaffer said of her parents' Bowling Green home.

"Where do I begin? How will I do this alone?"

Her mother, Floy, was a local artist, and her father, Earl, was an avid train collector, so pottery, glasswork and other collections had a way of accumulating throughout the couple's 50-plus years of living in the home, making the process of sorting through items a lengthy one.

"I had no idea what I was going to do, people were saying I should just open up the house and auction everything off," she said.

But after some research, Shaffer came across a Perrysburg-based company, Caring Transitions of Northwest Ohio, which specializes not only in estate sales, but also relocation, downsizing and liquidation sales, especially for senior citizens, according to owner Lynn Malinowski, who purchased the franchise branch last year.

"They don't just come in and sell your stuff, they help you sort through things," and allow time for recalling memories and grief, Shaffer said.

Working with people during times of vulnerability and grief, Malinowski prides her company on being up-front and honest with clients. "With seniors it's a trust issue because you are dealing with their life, their possessions," she said. "You make sure the family is involved. When they are involved the trust builds."

Like Shaffer, who found herself surveying several options as far as the estate, Malinowski said that before doing some research, many people are unaware that such a full-service firm exists.

"There are a lot of businesses that do bits and pieces of what we do," Malinowski said. Her company also packs and unpacks items, sets up appointments for home repairs and cleaning, networks with real estate agents, and conducts title searches.

"When you live some place for 50 to 60 years, you want to take everything with you, but these assisted living places are not that big," Malinowski said.

One way the planning process is made easier is through use of a SmartDraw program, which provides a visual look at furniture placement for a living space.

Beyond the financial and planning aspects of either an estate sale or moving transition, Caring Transitions can also serve as a middleman in trying situations, something Shaffer experienced first-hand.

It's true, she said. "The minute somebody dies, the people come out of the woodwork."

"She (Malinowski) really kind of took over and was able to say some of the tough things to people that I wasn't able to say."

Helping a senior citizen make the transition to a smaller space is something Malinowski has had personal experience with in her own family.

After her husband's great-aunt was moved into a senior assisted living facility, her family decided to liquidate all of her belongings.

"They were trying to do the best thing for her, but no one really asked her opinion and to this day it still upsets her," she said.

Drawing on this experience, Malinowski likes to speak with the seniors who are moving and arrange specific plans for items and the estate to ensure they are comfortable with decisions being made.

"A lot of seniors think it's the end of their life when they are taken out of their home," she said. "It's not the end of their life. It's the beginning of their new life, and we try to stress that."