

Platinum Living



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The Art of Letting Go: Downsizing with Dignity and Less Drama

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On a good day, Lori Reese says, you can almost see the weight lift off a client's shoulders.

Sometimes it happens when an old box finally leaves the house. Sometimes it's when the last moving truck pulls away and a bed is made in a new apartment. But the feeling is always the same: lighter, freer, as if someone has loosened a knot they'd been carrying around for years.

Reese is the founder of Consider It Done, a Harrisburg- and State College-based company she launched in 2014 to help older adults sort, downsize and move through big life transitions with less chaos and more dignity. Her work sits squarely at the intersection of logistics and emotion.

"I always knew I wanted to help older adults," she says. "But I didn't start out thinking, 'I'm going to do downsizing and moves.' We kind of evolved into it."

The evolution started close to home. Reese's in-laws decided, on their own, to sell their house and move into a retirement community. They didn't ask their children for help; they just quietly han-

dled it. Watching them work through the process – and watching her mother-in-law later struggle to manage paperwork – stayed with her.

At the time, Reese was working in human resources and feeling burned out. Then a niece died of brain cancer.

"A loss like that makes you reassess what you're doing," she says. "I wanted to do something more meaningful."



Lori Reese

Submitted Photo

She began researching ways to work with older adults and launched as a "senior concierge," offering everything from bill-pay support and paper management to errands and doctor-visit note-taking. She was good at creating order out of chaos. Clients noticed. Soon the work expanded from sorting paperwork to organizing closets, kitchens and, eventually, whole houses.

Her first true downsizing job came in 2015, with a couple who had lived in their home for about 45 years.

"They'd raised a child there, they had decades of memories and they were ready to move," Reese recalls. "They said, 'We could use some help.' And I thought, 'Well, I can do that.'"

She had managed office moves before; a household, she realized, wasn't so different, except that every box came with stories attached.

If there's a sentence Reese hears more than any other, it's that one.

"What holds people back is not knowing what to do with all the stuff," she says.

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“They’re overwhelmed. They know their environment no longer supports how they need to live. But they don’t know where to start, and they don’t know where things should go.”

She calls the trouble spots in a house “points of friction” – stairs that are getting harder to navigate, hallways lined with boxes, closets and cabinets so full there’s no room for what’s actually needed now. For those hoping to age in place, those friction points can quietly become safety risks.

Often the barrier isn’t just physical. The downsizing process means talking, however indirectly, about the later chapters of life.

“We’re getting toward the last chapter, and who wants to think about that?” Reese says. “You’re holding up a mirror. A lot of people would rather put that off.”

Then there’s the guilt. Clients cling to inherited collections they don’t actually like, china they never use, furniture they’re keeping “for the kids.”

“They don’t want it, but they feel obligated,” she says. A lot of what we do is give them permission to let go.”

Reese is quick to explain to new clients that she and her team are “not just a set of hands.”

“We’re there to listen to the stories,” she says. “Letting go of items is a process. Telling the story to someone who’s never heard it before can be powerful, especially when your family has already heard it a hundred times and is saying, ‘You don’t need this, just get rid of it.’ We’re not going to say that. We want to hear your story.”

That listening extends to family dynamics. Adult children don’t always agree with their parents about what should be kept, donated or discarded.

“At the end of the day, our client is the person whose belongings these are,” Reese says. “We’ll say, ‘Let’s see if there’s going to be room. Let’s see what the floor plan can hold.’ The floor plan doesn’t lie.”

She also has a gentle warning for those tempted to leave everything for the next generation.

“One of the hardest things for me to hear is, ‘I’m just leaving it for my kids to deal with,’” she says. “That’s a heavy legacy to leave. Taking ownership of this process is a form of self-care, and it’s a kindness to your family.”

For those considering a move – or simply a major decluttering – Reese starts with a phone call.

She asks about goals, timelines, where they’re going and what feels hardest. If it seems like a good fit, she schedules an in-home assessment: a walk-through, a conversation about “pain points,” and a chance to talk through what success would look like for that person, not for some idealized version of their home.

Some clients hire her team for the full journey: sorting, helping decide what to keep, coordinating donations and auctions, packing, working with movers, then unpacking and setting up the new home.

“By the end of move-in day, the bed is made, the towels are out, the kitchen

is functional,” she says. “They can go have lunch at the café and come back to an apartment that’s ready to sleep in. Their move doesn’t have to be a chaotic nightmare.”

Others use the company more selectively, perhaps just for a few coaching sessions to get started, or for unpacking and organizing after a move arranged by family.

She’s also heard the same line, again and again, once the dust settles.

“So many people say, ‘Why didn’t I do this sooner?’” she says. “They’re sad to leave a home, but once they’re settled, they’re happy. They’re lighter. They can enjoy what their new community has to offer.”

Her message to older adults who know a change is coming, but haven’t started yet, is simple: “Don’t wait for a crisis,” she says. “Simplifying your space is not about giving up. It’s about taking care of yourself while you still have the energy and health to enjoy what comes next.”

Contact Lori Reese at consideritdonepa.com.

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