



On the Move

Team with a senior move manager and offer another valuable aftercare resource to the community.

BY MATILDA GARRIDO

As funeral directors, you care for a family throughout the funeral and in the days leading up to it, but you may feel unsure about how best to support them in the days and weeks following. The shock of sudden death can leave survivors feeling overwhelmed with all there is to do. You've shepherded the family through that first difficult transition, but once the dust has settled, for many, the real work begins in settling the deceased's estate. As funeral directors seek to build ongoing bonds with their communities, positioning themselves as a strategic aftercare logistical resource is one good way to continue the connection and grow the relationship.

Families coping with a recent death may feel a tremendous weight on their shoulders as they turn toward the daunting task of handling all the necessary legal paperwork and beginning to clean out a home. Many need guidance on where to start or initial steps to take. Moreover, if the deceased was a primary caregiver, there may be an elderly or infirm spouse to consider and plan for.

Deep trust can be built between funeral directors and the families they serve through the funeral planning process, and families that feel supported by their funeral directors will likely feel relief at any personalized recommendations you can offer. Pre-vetted by you, es-

tate attorney, real estate agent and home healthcare agency introductions will be welcomed.

However, one of the most poignant and challenging areas is the deceased's home and possessions. This is where a senior move manager can step in from a growing field of professionals who aim to help people downsize, appraise and deal with clothing, furniture, kitchen items, etc.

Partnering with local senior move managers can be a real asset to your business. Because many people don't know how to assess items' value, a trusted recommendation is highly sought. Developing reciprocal relationships with senior move managers can also help you grow your business and continue the connections with the families you have served.

"Possessions are so personal," said Katie Hustead, owner of Paper Moon Moves, a senior move management company in New York City (papermoonmoves.com). "Just picking up a pair of sunglasses that belonged to your sister can bring back a rush of memories, which can be overwhelming and paralyzing." If the deceased was an older adult who had lived in one home for years, there may be much to go through, and decision overload can set in. A move manager with an objective sense of the value of things – what should be donated,



what could be sold – and the accompanying resources (such as appraisers, auction houses, thrift store contacts, etc.) can lift much of the burden.

Move managers can provide a wide range of assistance when someone is packing up a home. On top of appraisal services, they can pack and move items, take things to dumps and donation centers, find and fill storage units for later action, pack and ship things, etc. These hands-on services can hold real value for children who live out of town and can't spend weeks dealing with a home or for a spouse who may be too frail to do this physical work. They can help identify and shut off accounts like electricity or gas, digitize photos and home videos, and bring in cleaning services. The relief and comfort that move managers can provide in these difficult times is truly invaluable, giving you the peace of mind that families are well-supported.

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Move managers also work with older adults who are downsizing and moving to smaller quarters or are forced to move suddenly due to illness or disability. The need to plan for significant life changes can hit people suddenly, and in confronting these life changes, people may also see the need to consider other advanced planning, such as funeral planning. This can be an opportunity to forge connections and take advantage of the trust built between the move manager, who can recommend your firm, and the families they serve. Just as your recommendation is like-

ly to carry weight, so will the recommendation of a move manager who has built a relationship with the families they work with, opening up new avenues for business and referrals.

The most prominent professional association for move managers is NASMM, the National Association for Senior and Specialty Move Managers (nasmm.org). Members of this association meet specific educational requirements and ethical standards and possess the required liability insurance. The NASMM website has a directory; search your area to see if any members live or work nearby. There are lots of ways you can partner with them:

- *Co-host a fun event at your funeral home.* Paper Moon Moves hosted a walk-in appraisal event (like the kind you see on TV) at a local funeral home. Husted reported that it was packed and everyone was extremely enthusiastic. This is a great, nonthreatening way to get people in the door to see your facility.
- *Offer a planning workshop* at a local church or community center. Invite an estate attorney to join you and the move-management company to discuss advance planning. The workshop should cover necessary legal and medical documents, Swedish death cleaning or more general downsizing, and funeral planning.
- *Forming a "What Now?" consortium* in your area is a proactive step to create a one-stop resource for those navigating a recent death or beginning to downsize or move to supportive housing. This consortium can serve as a comprehensive support system, aligning with home healthcare agencies, estate attorneys, real estate agents and move managers to create a solid team with whom you refer reciprocally.

As a funeral director, you can play a key role in this consortium

by providing your expertise and services to support families in their time of need. Your involvement can help you build stronger relationships with other professionals in the industry, increase your visibility in the community and, most importantly, provide comprehensive support to the families you serve.

Partnering with move managers is a beneficial way to continue connecting with the families you serve after the funeral. By extending the relationship of trust you've established before, during and after the funeral, you can expand your potential business circle.

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More importantly, it demonstrates your commitment to the families you serve, ensuring that they feel confident that an association with you will cover all bases and situations that might arise while navigating a death and in the days, weeks and months following. This commitment will make them more likely to use your services again in the future and to refer you to others, thereby strengthening your role in the community. ☰

Matilda Garrido, MS, CT, holds a Master of Science in thanatology (study of death, dying and bereavement), a Master of Science in bioethics, and she is certified in thanatology by the Association for Death Education and Counseling. She has extensive experience working with the dying, families of the dying and the bereaved, and is focused on normalizing the experience of grief and reducing death fears through education, focused action and increased community supports for the dying and grieving.