



**A PROCESS:** Debbie Latzman, of A Move Made Easy, packs for Myron and Naomi Bash, who are moving to an independent living community. Their new apartment is half the size of their Boynton Beach home. Staff photo/Nicholas R. Von Staden

# HANDLING IT WITH CARE

Move managers help seniors change homes or just simplify

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BOYNTON BEACH • Red and green paper dots were on almost every piece of furniture, picture and ornament in Myron and Naomi Bash's home. Things with green dots were to move with them into their new place in an independent living community in Delray Beach. Things with red were heading to charities or auction companies.

Placing those dots was the hardest part of their move, so they sought help.

The Bashes hired A Move Made Easy to help them sift through the things they'd amassed over 56 years of marriage. Their new apartment is half the size of their home of 21 years in Boynton Beach, meaning they would have to get rid of about two-thirds of

their possessions, Naomi Bash said.

"It is overwhelming," she said. "I didn't know how to downsize possessions I have from my parents, my in-laws and our years of marriage."

Sharon Cofar, the owner of A Move Made Easy, came up with red and green dots system.

A Move Made Easy is one of a growing number of senior move managers offering services to elders often moving for the last time.

This industry is growing fast in South Florida, said Peg Guild, president of the National Association of Senior Move Managers. The association was created in 2002 with about 15 members and grown to more than 100 from 28 states. Florida has 10 members, the largest number in the nation,

followed by New York and Pennsylvania, she said. Five of the Florida members are based between Fort Lauderdale and Stuart.

Cofar's company helps seniors deal with the anxiety of these moves. "The hardest part for them is giving up their things because when they give up that dress, they give up memories of when they were young, strong and beautiful," she said.

Cofar and her team sift through clothes, kitchen pots and pans, furniture and ornaments and help clients understand why they no longer need something. She then arranges with charities and auctioneers to handle the leftovers.

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# Agencies help with change

## ■ SENIORS

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"She takes the emotions out of making the decisions," said Myron Bash, adding Cofar went to his home three times in December before the move to help with the sorting. The company also helped them unpack in their new home.

The senior move managers in South Florida charge from \$50 to \$100 an hour depending on the circumstances, said Cofar, whose company carries liability insurance and dishonesty bond.

In some cases, senior move managers are hired even when residents are staying put.

Senior move manager Nancy Akerman expanded her business to help seniors who aren't moving but want to clear a home clogged with things piled up over decades. Often, her clients' children call her to arrange the service, said Akerman, a partner with Transitioning Lifestyles & Changes, in Fort Lauderdale.

She also assists seniors in selecting a real estate agent to sell the old home and prepare the house for a sale, Akerman said. Her services include getting on a plane to escort her elderly clients to their new out-of-state homes.

Half of her customers move



**TREASURES:** Sharon Cofar, owner of A Move Made Easy Inc., packs a ceramic in Myron and Naomi Bash's Boynton Beach home of 21 years. Staff photo/Nicholas R. Von Staden

out of Florida to be closer to their families, escape future hurricanes or South Florida's rising cost of living, Akerman said. Her clients' age average is in the 70s.

Often senior move managers clean up homes of seniors and ship their belongings to their children.

As more people become aware of this nascent industry, competition intensifies, said Akerman, who started her business in 2003.

New senior move managers enter the field every year, but some give up when they realize how labor-intensive the job is, she said.

"It is very hands-on," she said. "You need to have a great deal of empathy and establish relationships with your clients, their families and the people who you work with, including the movers."

She doesn't mind the manual labor as long as her service makes a difference.

"To me, it is important to make the road a little bit less bumpy for them," Akerman said.

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