

Moving your memories the easier way

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Special to the CJN

Moving is one of the most stressful things you will ever do. Whether staging your house for sale, relocating a busy family, or downsizing to a condo or retirement community, you'll need to sort through your precious possessions. While you can't wave a magic wand and make the work go away, you can call Red Coats Moving Solutions (www.redcoatsmoving.com, 416-920-1317) and gain an experienced and compassionate ally to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Working in marketing for a retirement residence nearly 10 years ago, Vicky Keyes, whose background is in hospitality, couldn't help noticing how traumatic the move was for clients who "were often overwhelmed at the thought of downsizing... and didn't have somebody to help them."

Downsizing a lifetime of possessions, Keyes says, can be fraught with emotional landmines. And with adult children far away or busy with their own careers, she noticed a need and stepped in to help. "There were companies doing this in the States," but there was nobody locally to call on.

In 2004, Red Coats became the first Canadian company to join the U.S.-based National Association of Senior Move Managers, and Keyes and her crew have been hard at work ever since.

Without help, it's easy to get overwhelmed, particularly when you're moving into a smaller home or retirement community.



Vicky Keyes, left, works with clients [Photo courtesy of Red Coats Moving Solutions]

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Red Coats Moving Solutions moves memories

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"We try to work through the whole process with them," Keyes says, beginning with a floor plan of the new location. "If people bring the wrong furniture, or too many things, they'll be surrounded by boxes they can't even unpack. They'll become even more anxious and stressed."

Most importantly, Keyes says, the client's wishes come first. The focus at Red Coats is on empowering clients to make their own decisions and set their own priorities, while at the same time, deciding what to bring or give away.

Clients' wishes come first. In one family, a daughter couldn't understand why her mother was upset at her offer of brand-new furniture. "The mother said to me, 'That's the chair that my husband always sat in when he was alive. That's why I want to bring that chair with me.' We always make sure, even if the children are there to help out, that we really listen to what the client wants."

Each item may have its own emotional connections: "memories of trips they've been on, pictures that might trigger memories of different times in their life. They might have brought their children up in the house, might have had weddings and family celebrations there."

Leave more time than you might expect if you are going to sort through a lifetime of memories. It's more than just tossing things into boxes.

One client, Keyes says, "showed me a photo of a Lancaster bomber and its crew. He said, 'On this day 60 years ago, I flew my first bombing raid into Germany.' It was important for him to share his experience, his life and his youth, and then move on."

Those memories can be draining, both physically and emotionally, she adds.

Clients' wishes come first

Realistically, not everything can come along with you. But that doesn't mean giving up on your passions. "You may not have room for your collection of figurines, wall masks or beer cans, but you can select a few of the best and make an interesting corner with them."

And not every decision is a painful one: some can even be fun, like picking new furniture to save space. And "don't forget what almost every single client I have worked with over the last year has purchased... a new flat screen TV!"

After consulting with clients, Red Coats does its best to take care of the actual move as seamlessly as possible. The day before the move, Red Coats staff arrive to pack items carefully, and they will also deal with the moving company on the day of the

move itself. At the new location, Red Coats comes in, unpacks and sets everything up.

"If we've done everything properly," Keyes says, clients "can start living in their new place the very next day. The beds are made, everything is put away, the television is connected, Internet hooked up... They can start enjoying their new life."

Keyes notes that Red Coats is not a moving company. "Anybody can move people - we're about moving people's memories and their lives."


Instead, they work with a number of local moving companies, "small family businesses... They know what our expectations are." All staff are bonded and insured, and most have been with Red Coats for four years or more.

In addition to downsizing, Red Coats is also a certified ReDesign and Staging specialist, offering staging services that will highlight your home's best features and help you sell faster.


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