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REGIONAL ROUNDUP

STARTUP

Downsizers offered help

Organizer finds niche helping seniors move

By Luci Scott

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When Sun Lakes resident Debbie Meyer lived in the Bay Area, she worked with an outside contractor to help move 500 Nextel employees and their 2,000 boxes into another building 30 miles away.

"I'm very organized and patient," she said.

She moved herself to Phoenix in 2001 and worked for a corporation. When she got laid off last year, Meyer decided to use her organizing skills by forming her own company, Moving You Simply.

"I turned 50 in December and thought I should do what I love," she said. She had already been helping friends and family pack when they moved.



Debbie Meyer

Moving You Simply

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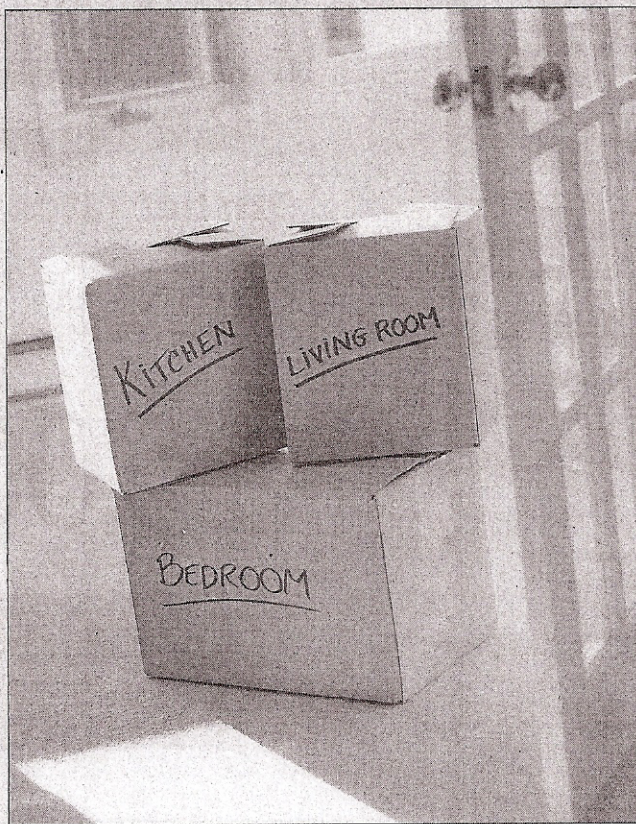
"Sometimes, if something is major in their life, and depending on their mental state, I will take it to their destination so they can see it's not going to fit," she said.

One couple had slept in twin beds shoved together and connected to a king-size headboard. They were moving to a two-bedroom place in assisted living, and as soon as Meyer put the beds together in the new place, they saw the furniture was too big and had no problem letting it go, she said.

One client had a beloved piano that wouldn't have brought much money on the current piano market, Meyer said.

"I donated it to a Montessori school," she said. "The owners were pleased it just didn't go to Goodwill."

Meyer's biggest challenges occur



Much of her focus is on helping seniors downsize into a smaller home or into assisted living, although she will organize or move anyone. She starts with a free hour of consultation.

The physical part of the organization isn't difficult, she said.

The more challenging, emotional aspect for her clients is deciding what to move and letting go of favored possessions.

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when the client has dementia or when adult children don't care for their parents or hold long-term grudges.

"I have to teach them to put issues aside and deal with the issue at hand," she said.

Meyer eases transitions by pointing out the benefits of the new home. "A lot of them appreciate that," she said.

At the new home, she helps unpack and cleans up. "I make the bed and take away the trash before I leave so they feel they're living there with no problem."

In some cases, the client isn't moving but wants to organize, simplify or downsize in the same place. For the moves Meyer coordinates, she works with Atlasta Moving Co. and with From the Attic, an estate-auction company.

She gets other leads from referrals by estate attorneys and people working at assisted-living facilities.

She acquires business through networking with the Chandler Chamber of Commerce and several professional organizations.

She started her business in January and, after some networking, the business took off to where she averages four moves a month and has done about 16 so far.

Last year, after her mother passed away, she realized her father needed help in rearranging furniture and becoming more comfortable in his home.

"What if family is not available to come in?" she said she asked herself.

About the same time, someone she knew in California was starting a similar business, and she realized that she could do it in Arizona.

Prices vary per move according to what is involved.

Meyer said her prices are near the median prices of those who are members of the National Association of Professional Organizers.