

# HOME



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Whitney DiMinno and Lynda Crowley, right, make moving as easy and fun as possible for senior citizens.

# Making mom's move *a little easier*

by Jeannette Ross

No one likes the process of moving. It is that much harder when the person leaving one home for another is elderly, and family members are unable to help as much as they might like. That's where Lynda Crowley and Whitney DiMinno come in.

They are the women behind Sort & Settle, a senior-move management company. Their goal? "We make moving easier and add fun to the process," says their publicity flyer. Meeting them, it's not hard to see how they succeed.

"We do what a daughter would do," Lynda said, explaining how she and Whitney, who is her niece, take care of their clients. Services include creating a move plan, sorting through belongings, recommending movers, overseeing packing and unpacking, and helping clients settle in. The two women have been in business three years

and specialize in making a senior citizen's move from one home to another not only less traumatic but as pleasurable as possible.

It's not always easy and the challenges range from moving an older person from the large, comfortable home in which they raised their family to a small condo or apartment in an assisted-living facility to moving someone who has already downsized into assisted living or perhaps an in-law apartment. Sometimes family members are closely involved and sometimes they are far away. Sometimes there are no family members to call on.

Their biggest job tends to be helping the older person or couple go through their belongings and decide what to keep and what to part with. "The goal is to bring the familiar," Whitney said. Sometimes that goal can be daunting, as in the case of one woman who wanted to take her 400 paintings from a large three-bedroom home to a much smaller two-bedroom condo. With the help of their tape measure and creativity "we were able to bring most of it," Lynda said.

In other cases it's a question of how much furniture a person can bring. In these instances, Lynda and Whitney will

visit the new space and take measurements. They will also pay attention to details such as the number and location of phone jacks and outlets. Then they measure the client's furniture and lay it all out on a paper grid so their clients can see what will fit and what won't. In the new space they will even take yarn or painters' tape and lay out the floor plan. This is especially helpful to the movers. "We are careful to leave space for walkers and wheelchairs," Lynda said.

Those kinds of issues are cleared up during the free, one-hour consultation the women offer new clients. Based on

that meeting, they will present an estimate of what they think the project will cost. "We will customize our menu of services to meet the needs and budgets of our clients," Lynda said. They will bill either on a project basis or hourly basis depending on what services are needed.

In one case a client handed them the keys to his house while he went to Florida for the winter, leaving Lynda and Whitney to prepare his house for sale. In another case, they helped a couple move to

California, taking care of things only on this end. And in yet another case, they took over only on moving day, while a client's children took her out for the afternoon, bringing her to her new home only after everything had been moved and she could comfortably settle in.

Both women are members of the National Association of Senior Move Managers ([nasmm.org](http://nasmm.org)) and earned certification as relocation and transition specialists. "Our certification was specific to seniors," Whitney said. The program covered issues such as memory impairment, dementia, ethical issues, how to do a site visit, and training as to who is the client. As to that last issue, Whitney and Lynda said that whether they are hired by the senior or their adult children or someone else, their first priority is the mental and physical well-being of the senior who is moving.

Their business, which takes them throughout much of Fairfield County, northern Westchester, and Putnam County, comes from a number of sources. Some referrals are word of mouth, some come from geriatric case managers, elderlaw attorneys, and real estate agents who have sold a senior's home. Out-of-town relatives tend to find Sort & Settle online.

About half the moves Lynda and Whitney help with are precipitated by a health crisis. In some cases, there is not a lot of time to make the move, but if time is not of the essence, the women said a lead time of six months means things can go smoothly at a leisurely pace. Less than two months' notice means things will have to move much more quickly. In all cases, families should have a new home picked out. For those who are having trouble

locating something suitable, Lynda and Whitney recommend A Place for Mom ([aplaceformom.com](http://aplaceformom.com)), a free resource for finding senior housing. There are representatives in Norwalk and Chappaqua.

Both Lynda and Whitney have personal experience in moving others and detail-oriented planning. Lynda, who lives in Goldens Bridge, moved her mother four times, and then her aunt. She watched friends who had no help struggle. That's what gave her the idea for the business. Professionally, she first was a vet tech, which helps with peoples' pets, then a legal secretary. She raised her children and now is a licensed EMT.

Whitney, who lives in Brewster, worked for six years as director of Events Services at the Waldorf-Astoria in Manhattan. At Sort & Settle, she carries over her expertise in scheduling, budgeting, logistics, and attention to detail.

While Lynda and Whitney could move anyone, they chose to work specifically with seniors. Whitney said they view working with seniors as a privilege. "We love to hear their stories," she said. Lynda said she likes to tell them, "You're an amazing generation. You saved the world and you've saved a lot of stuff."

Their clients are appreciative. One gentleman sent them the following note: "Over a lifetime of moves, I have never had a more satisfying result than Sort & Settle has provided. Bravo!"

"We love what we do," Lynda said. "We really like it. It's very rewarding to know you've helped somebody and left them better off."

*For information, visit online at [sortnsettle.com](http://sortnsettle.com); e-mail [info@SortNSettle.com](mailto:info@SortNSettle.com) or call 1-845-279-0989. ■*