

## Goldens Bridge startup helps seniors who need to relocate

Jay Loomis  
The Journal News

### GOLDENS BRIDGE

When senior citizens fall in their homes and break their hips, it is the type of accident that Lynda Crowley doesn't easily forget.

Responding to such emergencies has been commonplace for Crowley during her nine years as an emergency medical technician with the Lewisboro Ambulance Corps.

"You know this is a life-changing event for them," said Crowley, a resident of Goldens Bridge. "Being an EMT, once you take them safely to the hospital, that's where your involvement ends. But I could see how this was going to lead to a hip replacement, then rehab and then probably a need for a more supportive environment and a different living arrangement for them."

Her experiences as an EMT helped convince Crowley that there was a need for a business to help seniors cope with the tough decisions that aging and medical setbacks can bring, including downsizing, relocation and stressful family relationships.

Crowley and her niece, Whitney DiMinno of Brewster, are the founding partners and owners of Sort & Settle LLC. The business offers moving management services to seniors in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties in New York, and Fairfield County in Connecticut. The seniors typically are leaving their homes of many years to move to retirement communities, assisted-living centers, nursing homes or the homes of other family members.



(Joe Larese/The Journal News)

Lynda Crowley, left, of Goldens Bridge and Whitney DiMinno of Brewster run Sort & Settle LLC, which provides moving management services to senior citizens in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties, and Fairfield County in Connecticut.

"We do a free one-hour consultation within the areas that we primarily serve," DiMinno said. "We go out and meet the client. We do a walk-through of the space, get a feel for where they are going and then compile a menu of services. We create a move plan, a move calendar. We assist with getting bids from movers."

Businesses targeting seniors are expected to benefit from the demographic trends as the massive baby-boom generation retires. By 2030, the senior population in New York is expected to double, and the number of seniors requiring assisted-living arrangements or long-term care is expected to surge at a similar rate, according to Sort & Settle. Many of these seniors will leave New York to retire in other states.

"We are working with a client right now who is moving to California," DiMinno said. "We worked with a client this past winter who moved to Florida. We are working with another client who may be moving to Maine. So we do long distance."

Moving can be tough on seniors for a number of reasons, Crowley said.

"They may have to leave a home that they have lived in for 40 years," Crowley said. "They may have to leave possessions behind. I think that we all are more comfortable with the familiar. And that becomes even more true as we get older. In some cases, they don't have the physical energy or the psychological stamina to face a move without a lot of support."

Family issues also can be complex.

"A lot of times, one member of the family won't acknowledge that mom is losing her memory and really needs to be in a more supportive situation," Crowley said. "But other members of the family are ready to accept that. We try to be an objective third party that can come in and ease that tension. ... If there are children, we try to involve them early on and make them part of the process."

Crowley said she has dealt with difficult issues within her own family.

"I had an elderly mother who I moved four times to different levels of living and care," Crowley said. "In the process of dealing with her and my husband's aunt, and my mother's friends who didn't have help, I realized that there is a need for this kind of service."

Clement and Rose Piscitelli had lived for more than 50 years in Queens before moving to a small apartment in Carmel in early 2007. Rose Piscitelli, 82, died shortly after the move. Clement Piscitelli ended up in a hospital - and later a nursing home - after he fell and broke his femur. He died in March at age 89. Their son, Michael Piscitelli of Chappaqua, hired Sort & Settle to clean out the Carmel apartment and take inventory of the items.

"It was a very efficient process," Piscitelli said. "I thought they did a great job. They were easy to work with. I had a real sense that they cared about what they were doing."

Sort & Settle can dispose of unwanted items through auction, estate sale, consignment or donation.

"We don't take any commissions from those vendors," Crowley said. "If they give our client a discount, we pass that right onto them. ... We are like an advocate for the senior, like a daughter would be. We consider ourselves Rent a Daughter."

Sort & Settle's fees can range from \$2,000 to \$7,000, depending on the complexity of the services offered.

Crowley and DiMinno are members of the National Association of Senior Move Managers, a nonprofit, professional association of organizations designed to help seniors and their families with the moving process.

More information about Sort & Settle is available online at [www.sortnsettle.com](http://www.sortnsettle.com). The phone numbers of the Westchester County and Putnam County offices are 914-232-8789 and 845-279-0989.