

## Caregiver's Corner Column (April 2015)

### **“What do I do with all of my Parent's Stuff?”**

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Do you feel overwhelmed by the amount of “Stuff” in your home? Did you acquire the items from parents or family members who either downsized to a senior living community or to your home? Did your parents pass away and now you have to decide what to do with their possessions? You are not alone. Statistics show that the age group of 60+ makes up close to 20% of the population. There is a steady climb in the number of older adults who are living longer so it only makes sense that their families are going to need to deal with the items that have accumulated over a longer span of time. The older population also can tend to keep more items because they grew up in the era of “don't waste that” and “keep it because you might need it later”. They also may be emotionally tied to things due to loss of loved ones and a lifetime of memories.

Here are a few practical tips on what to do if your home is bursting at the seams with “stuff” from your own acquiring and from the homes of family members.

- Get appraisals for items such as jewelry, furniture, art, collectibles, etc. Be prepared for lower prices due to saturation of those particular items in the market. Get second opinions if you have any concerns or questions. Consult a certified appraiser for high priced items and consider an auction to get the best prices. [www.appraisers.org](http://www.appraisers.org)
- Get rid of the clutter. Sort out any items that can be donated, sold, given to another person, recycled and/or tossed. Consult professionals who work in the field to help clients de-clutter, downsize, organize, estate sale work, senior moves and more. Professional organizers can be found throughout the country. [www.napo.net](http://www.napo.net) These professionals can be a wealth of information about resources in the community.
- Consult with an estate sale company about holding a sale. Estate sale companies take an average 35% of the total sales for payment but can liquidate an estate quickly.
- Selling online can be a good option as well. Ebay, Craigslist, online estate sales/auctions and Facebook garage sales are just some of the ways people are selling items.
- Garage sales are a popular option as well but can be time consuming for set up, pricing, working the sale and clean up. Keys to a good garage sale are set up like items together, easily accessible shopping and good competitive prices.
- Dispose of paperwork with identifiable personal information on it by shredding. Recycle papers such as magazines, newspapers, junk mail, and more. Unsure of what paperwork to discard? Check out: Consumers Reports <http://bit.ly/1jJfdP1>

- Seek a professional if you fear you or a family member has a hoarding problem. [www.ocfoundation.org](http://www.ocfoundation.org) Hoarding disorder is a mental illness that requires intervention by trained mental health professionals. To learn more about hoarding disorder: [www.challengingdisorganization.org](http://www.challengingdisorganization.org) and [www.childrenofhoarders.com](http://www.childrenofhoarders.com)
- Ready to let go of the item but you want to remember it? Take photos of the items that are special before you let it go.
- Make sure to label any bins or boxes you store or keep items in for easy retrieval later.

De-cluttering can be a daunting task if your home is filled with an extended family's lifetime of "stuff" and memories. If you have the right information and tools, it can be done efficiently and effectively. A less cluttered home makes for a more peaceful calming space and less brain clutter.

*Caregiver's Corner* is provided as a public service of the **Caregiver Resource Network**. The Caregiver Resource Network is a collaboration of West Michigan organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American's Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at [www.CaregiverResource.net](http://www.CaregiverResource.net) or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.