

Flourtown businesswoman knows all the right moves

By Thomas Celona
Staff Writer

Moving can be one of the most stressful experiences people go through. They have to say goodbye to the place they've called home, adjust to new surroundings and, on top of all that, figure out how to physically move all of their stuff from one place to another.

Flourtown resident Jennie Zehmer, however, sets out to remove the stress from the moving process with her business, Here to Home.

Here to Home helps people, most of whom are age 55 and up, move by packing up boxes, laying out floor plans, coordinating with moving companies and handling every other imaginable detail.

Zehmer has always specialized in organization — only she used to focus on art displays rather than personal items.

She had her own business de-

signing art exhibits in Alabama, and most recently, she was director of exhibit services at the Franklin Institute.

A few years back, Zehmer found herself frustrated by her job.

"I was in meetings all the time; I was in the office all the time," she said. "I wasn't really fulfilled by that."

Around the same time, Zehmer's parents in Alabama decided to move. Her father, then 83, could no longer go up and down stairs, and so her parents switched to a single-floor home.

"I said, 'Let me do a floor plan for you,'" she said.

She catalogued all of her parents' things, helped them select what would come to the new house and laid out where everything would go.

"The plan was great because [my mother] could see what they'd be moving," she said. "The movers



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Jennie Zehmer has started up her own business, Here To Home, that specializes in moving people 55 and older into new homes.

Business brings seniors to smaller quarters

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said it was so nice."

The experience sparked an idea in her head, and she began researching the National Association of Senior Move Managers. She then did the association's required training, and in June 2008, she launched Here to Home.

The business's target audience is people age 55 and older in the five-county Philadelphia area. Here to Home helps older adults move, whether to a smaller home, an apartment or a senior community.

Every move is different, Zehmer said, and so her main focus is listening to the needs of her clients.

"The first thing I do is I meet with the people who are moving,"

she said. "I make a plan with them."

After the first in-home consultation, Zehmer catalogues the person's belongings and helps determine what will be coming to the new home.

"I work with people in their homes to declutter," she said. "I do a digital inventory of each home before we move."

She next makes a detailed floor plan of the new space, showing clients exactly where everything will go.

For many older adults, how their home is laid out has become a matter of habit, Zehmer said, so she tries to replicate areas in the new home.

"We try to maintain home as much as possible," she said.

Perhaps the most stressful part of the process is the physical move itself, Zehmer said she's actually had a client who fainted because she was so overwhelmed by the thought of it.

The company takes care of every detail of the move to take the pressure off the client.

Zehmer and her team of three part-time employees coordinate movers and haulers, arrange for charities to pick up items, ship off boxes to family and friends, pack

up items to be moved and place everything in its predetermined spot in the new home. They also will refer clients to cleaners, consignment shops and any other service they might need.

"You don't have to know how to move; that's why you call me," she said. "We'll oversee the movers and the furniture placement. We'll hang the pictures, organize the linen closet, hang your clothes in the closet in order. The packing and moving are done intensely so their lives are impacted as little as possible."

The typical move takes three to four weeks from the initial meeting to the finished product, but some have been done in as quick as one week or as long as five months, depending on the client's schedule, according to Zehmer.

With Here to Home, Zehmer said she's found the fulfilling job she lacked before, and all the hard work that goes into a move always pays off.

"To see them in their new home and to see them settled in is great," she said.

Those interested in more information on Here to Home can call 215-948-3597 or visit here2home.com.