



About Andrea

Andrea Donovan holds a B.A. in Communications/ Sociology from St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, and an M.B.A. from Loyola University of Chicago, IL. She was the Admissions/Marketing Director of the St. Andrew Life Center in Niles, Illinois, which provides continuity of care for independent living, assisted living, and intermediate nursing care. She was responsible for conducting the initial tours/ interviews with the families and prospective residents. Together with the community nurse, Donovan assessed prospective residents to determine placement in the appropriate level of care. Counseling was provided when a change in care level was necessary. She also has experience in the insurance industry.

Throughout Donovan's years of service at St. Andrew Life Center, not a single deficiency was found during the State inspections of the intermediate care community. St. Andrew Life Center is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Andrea has attained [Certification as a Guardian](#) and can act as a Guardian of the Person or Guardian of the Estate for those individuals who cannot act on their own behalf.

Andrea is a Certified Care Manager recognized by the National Association of Certified Care Managers as a provider of services that links and coordinates assistance from both paid service providers and unpaid help from family and friends to enable consumers with functional limitations to obtain the highest level of independence consistent with their capacity and preferences for care.

Please note that we do not represent nor are we compensated by any of the communities included in our presentations.

Dear Kim:

"Organizing for Your Golden Years Will Produce Platinum Results"

When you have completed the daunting task of choosing the right senior living community for your loved one, your next mission will be to prepare for his/her move. It is very likely that the senior will be moving to an apartment or room that will be much smaller than his/her current living arrangement. Decisions will need to be made as to which items the senior will discard, donate or keep. All of us tend to have difficulty parting with "keepsakes" to which we have emotional attachments; accordingly, it may be a wise decision to utilize the services of a professional organizer when your senior moves.

Sue Becker is a Certified Professional Organizer in Chronic Disorganization. She has worked side by side with my senior clients (including those with dementia) to help them with the highly emotional task of sorting through years' worth of keepsakes and papers and deciding which items to keep.

Keepsakes: Turn Your Muddled Mess into Meaningful Memories

Are you hanging on to tangible reminders of people and events, thinking it is a way to reminisce or even to honor the people those things represent? I certainly understand the emotions that keepsake greeting cards, ticket stubs, old toys, and even clothing can bring. However, if those items have overtaken your basement, attic, garage, closets, *etc.*, it might be time to realize that boxes loaded with a disorganized collection of memories may be more overwhelming than comforting. I recently had this

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If you know anyone who is facing the difficult decision of placing a loved one into a facility, please forward this newsletter to him/her.

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realization myself.

I knew the time had come to pare down my burgeoning collection of mementos when I tried to jam just one more greeting card into one of my four large keepsake boxes and a cascade of papers came tumbling down. With no lid to hold back the avalanche, I received a very clear wake-up call that I can't save everything. I hope my description of how turned my muddled mess into meaningful memories will help you do the same:

First, I took it slowly. I took a deep breath and recognized that getting through even one box was going to take time. So I set aside a half hour per day to work my way through the piles.

Second, I stored photos separately. I put all photographs in their own box to be dealt with as a separate project.

Then, I sorted by person. I grouped the remaining objects according to the originator. For example, greeting cards and letters from my grandmother and her "something old" handkerchief from my wedding all went into one "pile."

I contemplated the significance. For each pile, I considered which items captured the soul of the person or experience and whether letting go of any particular item would have any impact on my memories of, or relationship with, the person they represented. I had some good laughs, shed a few tears, and at times shook my head and wondered why I had saved some of the items.

I kept only the gems. I let go of most items without much trouble, recognizing that their importance had diminished over time or that other items were *more* meaningful keepsakes of the person or event. I kept any item that stirred a twinge of nostalgia, but later photographed many of them and let go of the original article. Throughout the entire process, I reminded myself that the item was not the person or the event and I was not dishonoring anyone by letting go of things.

I stored the remainder in a meaningful way. I put a date on all items, and for some, I also included a sticky note with a description of why the item was significant. I placed the sorted keepsakes into a banker's box and used file folders to divide the box into sections by person. My goal was to get everything into a single box – after all, I just wanted to capture the essence of my relationships and life experiences, not every trinket from them. However, I created a second box for things from my kids and husband after realizing that the most important people in my life were worthy of more than just a couple of keepsakes.

I'll keep a lid on it. I don't miss any of the items I've discarded, and I'm glad to know I've got some room to spare in my two boxes so I can add meaningful items as they come along. I've vowed that I will not

add any additional boxes to accommodate my keepsakes – I'll have to delete an item in order to add one, take a photo, or find some other means to capture the memory without keeping the item.

I'll live in the moment. While keepsakes help me reflect on how meaningful the people and occasions in my life have been, making the most of each day is the best way to make sure I fully experience and appreciate the important people and events that enrich my life.

Sue Becker is a Certified Professional Organizer in Chronic Disorganization who helps individuals and businesses discover the simplicity, harmony, and freedom of being organized and productive. She also speaks to companies and organizations about how to get organized and make the most of their time. Sue can be reached at www.PilesToSmiles.com or 630-724-1111.

For all of your senior living needs, contact Andrea Donovan Senior Living Advisors. Call us at [\(708\) 442-7174](tel:7084427174) or email us. Please visit our [website](#). Please watch my [video](#) to learn how the process works and learn what some clients have to say.