

## The Decision To Move

One of the biggest decisions facing seniors as they age is the decision of whether or not to sell their long-time home, and move to smaller living quarters. Often the decision is to move to an independent or assisted living community, where there is no longer a need to maintain a larger home and property.

Carol Oniskey, director of senior move management services for **Hands of Change** (a division of Gentle Giant Moving Company), finds that the biggest obstacle facing seniors is not so much the decision to move, it's facing all of the decisions involved *around* the move process. There are decisions to be made regarding what to move, what to donate, what to give to adult children, utility changeovers, and more. Facing the downsizing process can be overwhelming. That's where Hands of Change comes in. Hands of Change can help to coordinate the entire move process, addressing the challenges involved, coordinating what needs to be done, and helping to alleviate much of the stress.

"Moving to a new home should be something to look forward to. It's a chance for new beginnings and friendships, an opportunity to leave behind the responsibilities of home ownership, and begin a new phase of life. Change is a good thing," says Oniskey.



There are bound to be many items you may not have seen in years as you start the downsizing process.

## What Community Senior Centers Offer

From the Metlife Since You Care: *Community Services Guide*

Senior Centers offer a vast array of services primarily for elders in the community. However, people of all ages with disabilities are welcomed and programs exist for those who can function independently. People attending these centers are usually independent or require only minimal personal or cognitive assistance. They do not have a severe disability but have a desire to interact with other older adults or participate in social, educational, or recreational activities not otherwise available to them. Centers offer programs that are of interest to older adults, but they also offer programs for families, such as individual and family counseling and caregiver support groups. A social worker is often on staff to help answer questions about specific programs. Funding for these centers is often provided through a combination of public and private funding.

## **Loneliness Linked To High Blood Pressure In Seniors**

From the University of Chicago

Loneliness is a major risk factor in increasing blood pressure in older Americans, and could increase the risk of death from stroke and heart disease, new research at the University of Chicago shows. These findings are important considerations for adult family caregivers, in home health care providers, and others working directly with seniors on a daily basis.



**Getting together with friends can help lower high blood pressure, and help alleviate loneliness.**

### **The Findings**

Scholars found that lonely people have blood pressure readings that are as much as 30 points higher than in non-lonely people, even when other factors such as depressive symptoms or perceived stress are taken into account, said Louise Hawkley, senior research scientist with the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago, and John Cacioppo, the Tiffany & Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor in Psychology. This is equivalent to the difference between a normal blood pressure of 120 and a level of 150, which signifies Stage 1 Hypertension. Blood pressure differences between lonely and non-lonely people were smallest at age 50 and greatest among the oldest adults tested - those at retirement age.



*“Treat endings with as much importance as beginnings.”*



### **The Research Group**

The team based their research on a study of 229 aged 50 to 68. The randomly chosen group includes whites, African Americans and Latinos who are part of a long-term study on aging. Members of the group were asked a series of questions to determine if they perceived themselves as lonely. They were asked to rate their connections with others through a series of topics, such as “I have a lot in common with the people around me,” “My social relationships are superficial,” and “I can find companionship when I want it.”

The research team also examined data on weight, alcohol consumption, smoking, blood pressure medications, and demographic characteristics and found that people who rated high on being lonely had a significantly higher blood pressure than non-lonely people with similar profiles on the other measures.

The research also showed that the normal increases in blood pressure associated with aging are augmented by loneliness.

### **Additional Findings**

“Lonely people differ from non-lonely individuals in their tendency to perceive stressful circumstances as threatening rather than challenging, and to passively cope with stress by failing to solicit instrumental and emotional support and by withdrawing from stress rather than by actively coping and attempting to problem solve,” Cacioppo said.

“I’m surprised by the magnitude of the relationship between loneliness and hypertension in this well-controlled cross-sectional study,” said Richard Suzman, Ph.D., director of the Behavioral and Social Research Program at the National Institute on Aging (NIA), a funder of the research.



**Plan a visit or give a call to a senior you think might be lonely. It can do wonders.**

## Loneliness (cont.)

"Older people's relationships are often disrupted by death, illness and geographic mobility. One of NIA's goals is to help determine what can be done to improve the quality of relationships and social connectedness as a way to ease loneliness and reduce blood pressure."

## Exercise Helps Even Frail Elderly Regain Mobility

From the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston

Even 94-year-old shut-ins can benefit from exercise, according to the preliminary results of a study by a researcher at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

In the first phase of the study, a group of 10 mobility-impaired elderly subjects nearly doubled the distance they could walk as well as their gait speed during a 12-week period. "We couldn't believe the improvement ourselves," said **Elizabeth Protas, Ph.D.**, study director and chair of the Department of Physical Therapy in the UTMB School of Allied Health Sciences. "In only three months their walking improved up to normal speeds and endurance for people their age."

Subjects in the UTMB Strong Elders Project Pilot ranged in age from 70 to 94. All were screened for frailty prior to the start of the study. Protas defined "frail" as those who have walking problems. "They're losing so much function that they might have to go into residential care," she said.

Exercise sessions occurred three times per week for three months. Each session lasted an average of 75 minutes. During the sessions, participants used treadmills equipped with a safety device called a "tread-about." Other exercises included stair-steps, knee bends, stand-ups, and hip and knee extensions.

Working with the muscle metabolism group at Shriners Hospitals for Children-Galveston Burns Hospital, 10 subjects who were not walking-impaired were given essential amino acid supplements to help build muscle mass but did not participate

in the exercises. "We think for people who are very frail, one of the problems is that they just don't have enough muscle mass to get stronger," Protas said. The researchers think that the supplements will help build the muscle tissue and then the strengthening will be more effective.

Protas is seeking funding for a second phase involving several hundred subjects. The second phase will also help determine whether this type of exercise would be useful in the general population of elders. Protas notes that some of the study volunteers enrolled on their own, while the middle-aged children of others urged their parents to participate. "They saw this and said, 'You know, mom, I really think you should do this' and got them enrolled in the study," Protas said. "This is how we got the 94-year-old in. Her daughter said she wasn't even leaving the house. After a couple of weeks in the program, she started taking strolls outside the house and was again going out."



Exercise is a great way to keep bones strong.



*"It's never too late to be what you could have been."*





## **Movers And Shakers– Gentle Giant Moving Co.**

Founded in 1980 by President Larry O'Toole, and incorporated in 1985, Gentle Giant Moving and Storage Company, Inc. is the premier residential and commercial moving company on the East Coast. With regional offices in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Virginia, Gentle Giant offers local, interstate, and international moves. The company has grown to include storage services, packing material delivery through its Box Xpress service, a full art and furniture restoration service, and a senior move management service known as **Hands of Change**.

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**800-GIANT MEN**



The goal of the company has always been to provide full-service moving "by the greatest team of movers ever assembled," with "no questions asked" customer service, and a mission of making every customer a customer for life. The company takes the "Gentle" part of its name very seriously and does everything possible to ensure a safe, effective, hassle-free move. While this was actually a new concept in the moving industry when Gentle Giant was founded, it has since become the norm, spawning numerous imitators.

Gentle Giant is honored to be recognized as:

*Gentle transitions. Giant Possibilities*

- The 2006 winner of the Better Business Bureau's International Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics
- The 2002, 2003, and 2005 winner of the Better Business Bureau's Local Torch Award for Excellence
- The 2002 winner of The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce's Small Business of the Year Award
- Seven-time winner of Boston Magazine's "Best of Boston" and inductee into their Hall of Fame
- A 2005 winner of the Angie's List Super Service Award®
- Six-time winner of The Improper Bostonian's "Boston's Best Moving Company" Award
- One of Boston Business Journal's 50 Best Places to Work in Massachusetts, 2004, 2005 and 2006
- The 2005 winner of the United Chamber of Commerce's Business of the Year Award



*"Every man's memory is his private literature."*

## **Your Memory– Use it or Lose It**

This article was posted on [ucihealth.com](http://ucihealth.com), the website of the University of Ca. Med. Ctr.

Memory fitness begins with exercise—mental as well as physical. So flex your brain cells with crossword, card and trivia games. Converse with friends. And take 20-minute walks or do light gardening.

"Studies show physical exercise can improve cognitive functions in seniors," says Dr. Claudia Kawas, UCI Medical Center geriatric neurologist.

Remember to nourish your brain with antioxidants found in broccoli, berries, prunes and green tea. Eat "good" fats like those found in olive oil, walnuts, and some types of fish, including herring. And avoid carbohydrates that spike blood sugars. You also can supplement your diet with memory boosters. Ask your doctor about vitamins C, B-1, B-3, B-6, B-12 and lecithin.

