

Door to Door Solutions helps 'A to Z'

Firm grows from consulting to moving seniors' belongings from the heart to the hearth

BY JOAN TUPPONCE
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Relocation supervisor Arlene Campbell was working feverishly to relocate residents of Imperial Plaza after a May fire damaged their apartments.

Feeling overwhelmed, she contacted Katie Hamann, owner of Door to Door Solutions.

"I was in desperate need of a company that was going to take care of our residents in this delicate situation," Campbell recalled. "Close to 40 residents were displaced."

TRADE NAMES

Campbell knew of Hamann because Door to Door had moved several residents at Imperial Plaza during the past year.

"We gave her company 95 percent of the business," Campbell said. "They worked morning, noon and night. They were so detailed. They took digital pictures in the apartments so they could get an idea of how to replicate things."

Most of the residents' belongings had been cleaned, packed and put into storage. Hamann and her staff unpacked the items and arranged them exactly as they were in the residents' previous apartments.

"She did a great job," Campbell said. "Katie and her crew did a lot of handholding. It was a traumatic experience for these seniors to go through."

Hamann opened Door to Door in 2004 with two partners — she has since bought them out. She operates the business from her home in Chesterfield County.

"I met them through the business community, and one of them came up with the idea for this company," Hamann said. "They told me that in exchange for making this happen, they would give me ownership."

Hamann had dreamed of owning her own company for many years. The Door-to-Door concept was a perfect fit for Hamann's personality and her sales and marketing background.

"It was creative and service-oriented," she said. "I've always been good at connecting with people. I remember working in a flower shop [when I was young]. The flowers would always bring a smile to a person. I liked being around people and giving them something they enjoyed."

Before opening, Hamann conducted focus groups in retirement communities. She also advertised in senior publications.

"We grew very quickly through referrals," she said. "In the last two years, we have had triple-digit growth."

The business started out as a consulting service with Hamann drafting floor plans for clients.

"We soon found out that our clients needed



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help with the physical aspect of moving as well," Hamann said.

"We needed to get a truck and be able to do the packing, handle the move from A to Z. We wanted to be a one-stop shop."

Instead of outsourcing the work, Hamann decided that Door to Door would take on the new tasks. She expanded the staff from three to 10 part-time workers and bought an 18-foot box truck.

"It's been a wonderful addition to the services," Hamann said. "I've even been known to drive the truck sometimes."

Helping seniors downsize and move is a multi-layered task. Often excess furniture is given to relatives or donated to charity.

"We take care of all of that," Hamann said. "We do overall move coordination. We don't conduct estate sales, but we have resources that can do that."

Larry Marchant contacted Hamann when his 84-year-old mother was downsizing and moving from Fredericksburg to Richmond.

"Katie and her crew put everything in her room exactly like it was in Fredericksburg, from my mother's hairbrush to her jewelry," Marchant said.

"When mom came into her apartment, it was so her. She was very pleased." Marchant worked with Hamann again when his mother moved to a smaller room in Brighton Gardens because of her health.

"They took it from square one and moved her in," Marchant said. "They picked out things that were perfect for her. They picked out a smaller dresser for her [that I purchased]. They made it her room. They did the impossible."

Hamann and her staff have been known to stock the refrigerator with food.

"When they moved us, everything was in place like we had it at home," recalled Holly Hay.

Hamann moved Holly and husband, Thomas Hay, to Heritage Oaks from their home in Stratford Hills. "They moved the computer and set it up and they set up the television. They even hung the pictures. We didn't have to do anything. They were nice and friendly. I would highly recommend them," Holly Hay said.

When Hamann started the business, most of her clients were seniors. Now many of her clients, such as Marchant, are children who are helping their parents downsize. Hamann's clients also include seniors who are moving within a retirement community, from independent living to assisted living or a memory-care unit, for example.

"Those types of moves are very detailed," Hamann said. "We put back everything exactly where we found it."

Since opening, Door to Door has completed nearly 500 projects. "This is a new industry, about 15 years old," Hamann explained.

"One of the best things we did was to join the National Association of Senior Move Managers. I now serve on the board, because I believe it's important to mold this industry. I know it's going to explode."

Connecting with people is still the part of the business Hamann enjoys the most.

"The people we move have had full lives," she said. "They open up and talk to us. We get to learn who they are. We gain so much wisdom and insight."

Katie Hamann (left), owner of Door to Door Solutions, a company that specializes in helping senior citizens relocate, moves a client from Regency Woods to Westminster Canterbury, with the help of Juan Jimenez (left at rear of truck) and Vincent Lee.

THE RÉSUMÉ

Name:

► Katie Hamann, owner of Door to Door Solutions since 2004

Born:

► Nov. 18, 1971, in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Family:

► single

Education:

► 1994, bachelor of science from University of Richmond in business administration

Work history:

► Xerox agent, 1994-95 for The Supply Room Companies; sales, 1995-2000, Xerox; business development manager, 2000-2002, Springs Leasing; marketing director, 2002-04, Party Perfect

Hobbies:

► golf, travel, volunteering for the Association for the Support of Children with Cancer

Web site:

► www.doortodoorsolutions.com