

Geriatric Care Management: Autumn Transitions Takes an “Aerial” View in San Jose Area



As the owner of San Jose geriatric care management company Autumn Transitions (www.autumntransitions.com) since 2007, Randee Smith works to support seniors as they deal with the myriad medical, legal, financial, and social issues related to aging. In a recent conversation, we learned several facts that demonstrate why she is such an effective geriatric care manager:

Asked to describe herself, Smith says she is “proactive producer.” That phrase encompasses a lifetime of widely diverse activities, all linked by a common thread. Early on, she learned how to look at an entire situation – to take the “aerial view” – and anticipate the gaps that may come about from lack of organization or poor planning. Then she put the needed safeguards into place.

The joy Randee Smith brings to her work, as well as her commitment to her clients, is clearly evident, but her path to this vocation was circuitous. Her long career includes activities ranging from beauty pageant production to managing a talent agency. Work environments have included corporate high-tech industries, cable television studios, and marketing offices. She even worked in the New York and Hollywood film production industry for over twelve years, and was once employed as a member of the Executive Staff of famed director John Landis. He claimed he hired her because she made him feel “safe,” as he operated at the top of the dizzying, aggressive, and unforgiving world of the movie industry.



It seems a long way from this high-octane resume to her current role as a geriatric care manager for seniors struggling with their health and independence, but Smith says that the principles are very similar. It's all about assessing the needs, identifying the gaps and filling them in, and taking a potentially stressful situation and turning it into a memorable transition.

At Autumn Transitions, Smith works with both family members and older adults themselves, but she makes certain that everyone understands that she is an advocate for the senior client. “For these individuals,” Smith explains, “What matters most to them is how they feel when I am there. For the families, what matters most is that they can sleep better at night if they know I’m there.” Her initial assessment evaluates such potential issues as safety, mobility, nutrition, medication, transportation, executive functioning, and whether legal and financial paperwork are in order.

Smith also strives to determine their interests and spiritual beliefs – “what brings them joy.” One of the most critical issues she notes is the degree of isolation an older adult may face. This factor, along with health issues, will most determine an individual's preferred living environment. While most individuals desire to remain in the natural home, Smith points out that problems with isolation, for example, can sometimes make a shared living setting a better choice. Decisions about living arrangements as well as daily activities, medical care, and other concerns are addressed in what Smith prefers to call an action plan. A thorough evaluation and resulting action plan get the client, family, and other providers moving in the same direction, as they start to address some of the gaps that need filling.

Autumn Transitions utilizes a unique document, called “A Day in the Life,” that provides all caregivers with detailed knowledge of a particular client, including background information— a key to personalized care. The better educated each caregiver can be about the unique needs of a client, the stronger the care team will be. Autumn Transitions works closely with caregivers throughout the area, including those provided by Homecare California, (<http://www.home-care-california.com/>) in natural and assisted living settings.



Smith emphasizes that care management is more than care planning. She continues to work directly with the client and the entire care team as long as needed, and is available 24/7 to handle any crisis which may arise. After all, there's always another gap that needs filling, and another transition to plan. For Randee Smith, it's her true life's work.

Randee Smith is a Certified Senior Advisor and a member of the National Association of Geriatric Care Managers. Autumn Transitions serves families throughout the Bay area, including the Santa Clara and San Mateo County areas served by Homecare California. For further information about the services provided at Autumn Transitions, visit their website today. (<http://www.caremanager.org/>)