

## **Aging Happens: The ups — and downs — of moving into an adult foster care home**

*By Ellen Waldman*

*May 3, 2015*

After residing in assisted living in Ashland for a few years, Rick and Mary were no longer able to remain there. They both had Alzheimer's disease and needed a smaller community with more hands-on help. This is a story of how things can work quite well with enough planning and professional assistance. And yet, there are some potential end results that many people might not be aware of, and should be prepared to address.

In November, I wrote a column about utilizing local services to maximize a successful move. The family followed this advice and hired TLC Solutions ([www.tlcsolutionsoregon.com](http://www.tlcsolutionsoregon.com); 541-301-0184) to help with pre-arranging which items to move, which ones to store, and how to set up their new home.

They were moving to the master bedroom in a wonderful adult foster care home in Eagle Point. You can locate adult foster care homes at [HomeCareChoices.org](http://HomeCareChoices.org). You can also get in touch with Kelly Schneider at 541-601-0537. She has an organization of adult foster care home owners and might be able to help you find one. Rick and Mary clearly had more stuff than room, so choices had to be made. Since TLC did not know this couple, they relied on input from both family and those around them on a daily basis, their private caregivers.

One caregiver had been with them for several years. He (yes, there are great male caregivers and they are in high demand, especially to work with elderly men) met them years ago when they still lived in their former home. He followed them to the assisted living facility, and now was part of this transition. He was able to, along with two more recently hired private caregivers, figure out which items, clothes, etc., should go with them to the adult care home.

I strongly recommend that when someone is moving, you include their long-term caregivers. This bridge from one situation to another provides some continuity in an otherwise confusing change of locale. Their caregiver becomes in essence, their "safe person." On moving day, their caregiver spent the whole day with them, occupying them with meals, a drive to the Rogue River and friendly companionship. Behind the scenes, the move was taking place and they did not have to be involved at all.

This is the up-side of this move. Great support in preparing for the move; excellent help by all the caregivers, prior to and on the day of the move; a fully set-up bedroom in the new home; and a warm welcome by the adult foster care home owners. Oh, and their older dog made this move with them too, and he also managed it quite well.

Here is the part that can catch people unawares, and is the other side of moving. Almost every time you move an older adult who has dementia, they decline cognitively, and sometimes behaviorally as well. Unfortunately, in this case, that did happen. There was an obvious decline in Mary's memory and understanding. Keep in mind that after a move, the person might not be at the same level they were before the move. Mary was very anxious and scared. By the next day, she had little recall of why she was

there and how she got there. Her caregiver went back the following day to visit, and this familiarity helped with her adjustment to her new environment.

Here's how the doctor was able to assist. Knowing this move was coming, and how often people with dementia have difficulty and anxiety with this transition, the doctor prescribed a short course of medication. These meds helped people through a potentially challenging and confusing time.

For now, Rick is happier than he has been in a long time. Hopefully, Mary's mood and memory will continue to improve as well. Their caregiver still comes to visit them, calls often, and they really enjoy his company. With so many people helping them, this is a positive outcome in their ever-changing lives.