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# A change of pace

## Relocation Planners helps seniors move to retirement communities

BY KAREN BELLS | kbells@bizjournals.com

**M**any people are uncomfortable with change, but not Tom Hambly. In fact, change is where he lives.

He spent 20 years helping people deal with change, working in the corporate relocation industry managing moves for companies' employees. Then he saw room for a different sort of business model, a way to help another group of people deal with change.

In October 2004, Hambly started Relocation Planners. While the company handles some corporate and typical consumer work, its core business is managing moves for people who are relocating into independent-living, 55-plus and other retirement communities. There is some competition locally with other relocation companies that concentrate on this demographic, but it's his soup-to-nuts business model that Hambly thinks sets his apart.

Relocation Planners can handle every aspect of the change, from the time a person decides to move until the last photo is hung on the wall. Its services include handling the real estate transaction, either selling, auctioning or even buying outright the customer's home; auctioning personal belongings; working with family members to distribute personal belongings and donate, sell or dispose of items; moving household goods, including packing and cleaning services; and settling-in services, from interior design to connecting electronics.

Customers aren't forced to use all the services or agree to a relocation package; instead, they select "cafeteria style," as many or as few as they want. Relocation Planners isn't simply a resource for the real



**Hambly**

estate and auction end of the business; Hambly and another employee are licensed real estate agents and auctioneers, along with being trained in relocation management.

So far, the model has been working. While Hambly didn't reveal sales numbers, he said business has been growing steadily. The company has formed strategic alliances with several key businesses, including Mason-based Stellar Real Estate, which

### ON THE MOVE

#### Relocation Planners

**What:** Offers complete relocation services, including real estate sales or auctioning of property and household goods, moving services and settling-in services, primarily for the senior community market.

**Address:** 9435 Waterstone Blvd.,

Suite. 140  
Cincinnati, OH  
45249

**Phone:**  
513-444-2050

**Web site:**  
relocationplanners.com

**Other:** Also has an office in Mason, OH with expansion targeted in Dayton and Indianapolis by year's end.



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**Helen, center, and Bob Fry hired Tom Hambly, right, when they moved into Mason Christian Village.**



## **RELOCATION:** *Company handles every aspect of move, from real estate to packing and cleaning*

serves as a broker for Relocation's real estate and auction transactions. It also has forged important relationships with several local adult communities, include Stonebridge at Winton Woods in Springfield Township and Mason Christian Village.

Expansion is on the horizon for the seven-employee company, which has offices in Cincinnati and Mason. Hambly hopes to open Relocation Planners locations in Dayton and Indianapolis by year's end. In September, he begins school to earn his Indiana real estate license and will sit for the Indiana auctioneers test.

Mason Christian Village, a continuing care retirement community that ranges from independent living in cottages and apartments to full nursing care, started recommending Relocation Planners to its incoming residents a few months ago, said Marketing Director Stacey Weiss.

Several things set the company apart for her, including the fact that Hambly makes regular reports to her on his progress with clients and that his employees are very professional and in uniform — an important sense of assurance when dealing with an older population, she said.

For Kelly Green, marketing director for Stonebridge at Winton Woods, Relocation Planners is particularly strong at keeping people from getting overwhelmed. For example, the company creates architectural drawings of the residents' new place and measures their furniture and belongings to help them decide what will and won't work at their new home. It makes an emotional time

more manageable, she said.

She said Relocation Planners worked with about 70 percent of the residents in Stonebridge's 42-cottage first phase and is working with many of those in the second phase, which is under way now.

Hambly also is creating a relocation division of Stellar Real Estate, said Stellar CEO David Knock. It will be owned by Stellar, with Hambly calling on local human resources executives and Stellar's staff serving as agents for the real estate transactions. They hope to get the division running by the first of the year.

Still, independent-living work makes up about 90 percent of business, and Hambly said that emphasis won't change. Green said he obviously loves the work.

"I've seen him driving around the community checking up on people he's moved," she said, "talking with them and calling them when they're sick."



**Weiss**