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Changing Places, LLC Advocates Careful Attention to Aging Parents This Holiday Season

As the holidays approach, a local company specializing in the aging population is urging adults to take heed during upcoming visits with their elderly parents. Every January, Changing Places, LLC, a senior move management company serving Westchester and Fairfield counties, receives a considerable increase in requests for help from grown children of senior citizens who, over the holidays, note that their parents' health is beginning to decline.

New York is one of nine states that account for 53 percent of the country's aging population. A cultural shift has placed the responsibility of caring for seniors on their adult children, the "sandwich generation" of Americans ages 45-54.

"You'll be spending a lot of quality, one-on-one time with your parents, so take the opportunity to evaluate their living conditions and figure out if any improvements or changes are needed," said Paula Meighan, RN, LMSW, CRTS, a founding partner of Changing Places.

Some clues that may indicate the need for intervention include: evidence that their memory is lapsing, erratic driving and bumping into poorly placed furniture or tripping over the edges of area rugs.

Upon assessing the safety issues within their living environment, Meighan offers immediate strategies

that can be accomplished over the holidays to declutter and reorganize their possessions to create a healthier environment. These include:

- **Address safety issues.** Remove area rugs, rearrange furniture, add lighting. Install safety rails in the bathrooms. Make a list of current medications and post it on the refrigerator door.

- Start a conversation about where their heirloom pieces will go in the future. Take notes; it may help down the road to have a written record.

- Go through collections of old photos and home movies. Decide which images should be kept, converted to digital albums or passed along to other family members.

- Spend a few hours together in the basement or attic, and start to make piles — "keep," "donate" and "discard." Throw away as much junk as possible before you leave.

- Take your own "stuff" home with you, such as old yearbooks and school memorabilia, toys and games or clothing.

"You are giving your parents the gift of your time this season. Make sure it's time well spent, helping them improve their quality of life," Meighan added.

If the decision is made to move parents out of their homes, Changing Places further advises that there are strategies to sort through decades of

collections in order to preserve important items and wisely dispose of the rest.

The professional services of a senior move management company can include anything from providing consultations to physical assistance throughout every step of moving. For nearly five years, Changing Places has helped local residents organize and sort possessions; dispose and sell unwanted items; oversee movers; arrange shipments and storage; and unpack and organize a client's new home.

Changing Places is a member of the National Association of Senior Move Managers, the nonprofit, professional association of organizations dedicated to helping older adults and their families with the moving process. Additionally, Meighan and her partners, Patty Gabal and Carol Lightbody, have each received the Certified Relocation and Transition Specialist designation upon completion of a comprehensive, nationally recognized training program.

More information about Changing Places is available online at www.changingplaces.info. The phone numbers of their Westchester County and Fairfield County offices are, respectively, 914-381-1022 and 203-569-6016. They can also be contacted via e-mail at paula@changingplaces.info.