



BY LINDA BARRETT

A Fresh New Beginning

Simplifying gives both you and those in your community a fresh start.

While January is often thought of as a time of renewal, it can also represent a fresh start—in more ways than one.

Come the early part of the year, homeowners are getting restless. They're thinking about putting their homes on the spring market and relocating or downsizing. They're tired of being cooped up all winter with all their stuff, and they're beginning to embrace the trend of right-sizing, the new term that defines reducing the amount of stuff you have so you can focus more on living in the moment.

"Businesses right-size when they have too much fat. They sell assets or hold layoffs. Homeowners right-size to get the clutter out of their lives so they can live a more meaningful life, spend time with family and friends, focus on hobbies and take priority over material things," explained Collin Wheeler, president of 123JUNK.

We're seeing a trend toward smaller living, whether it's because we're retiring and moving to a smaller home that offers more options for aging in place, jumping on board with the tiny house trend, or simply wanting to spend more on experiences than objects. Simplify is the word for 2018.

The first step in simplifying is to clear out anything from your home that is unwanted, unneeded or unused. But don't consider these items

worthless. There are plenty of people in our own community who can really use them. Instead of tossing them out, take advantage of the many ways to donate them.

123JUNK: *Thought Leaders in Repurposing*

As thought leaders in the local junk removal community, 123JUNK was the first company to put emphasis on repurposing items. "When I researched starting my business, I noticed that most hauling companies took everything to the dump and drove away, leaving the stuff in the landfill or on the ground," Wheeler explained. "I took on a more 'social responsibility' approach than an environmental one as the core of my business model."

Wheeler recalled his own experience when upgrading from his college-days hand-me-down dishware, pots and pans. Loading several boxes of his old items into his car, he took them up to a local charity—which only accepted about a quarter of what he brought. "I was disappointed. I clearly thought my items were more valuable than they did," he said. "Having worked now to bring donations to a number of charities, I know that others can and do benefit from the items we deliver." Wheeler hand-picks the charitable partners he knows can benefit most.

More than half of what 123JUNK currently picks up from homeowners in either charity donations or hauling jobs is repurposable, and crews make the extra effort to cull these items from every pickup. "We give charities a richer quality of items than they get from anywhere else, and have become their #1 donor in most cases, with pickups seven days a week. This is the 'why we do what we do,'" Wheeler emphasized.

What you may think of as junk may be a lifesaver to someone who has little. Here are just a couple of examples of how items you no longer need or want can help your own community.

No One Left Behind: Replenishing Families

There are Afghani and Iraqi citizens who put their lives on the line every day to act as combat interpreters and cultural advisers to U.S. troops stationed in their countries. The U.S. government made a moral commitment to these allies that if their safety, or that of their families, was ever threatened by the Taliban or ISIS, the U.S. government would step in to assist them in obtaining Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) and help them resettle to the United States and get a job, housing and cultural adaptation assistance. In most cases, these families arrive in the U.S. with nothing.

No One Left Behind's (NOLB) mission is to support these allies who have been displaced from their homes. "Every Saturday, we take a volunteer crew to the 60 dumpsters where 123JUNK places their donated items, load items into our trucks, and drive them directly to the Afghan communities in Alexandria, Woodbridge and Hyattsville to help furnish the homes of the new arrivals," described Keith Saddler, DC Chapter president.

Everything these families receive is donated, either through 123JUNK, the Realtor community or faith-based organizations. "Picture yourself arriving to an unfurnished apartment. It's not just furniture you want. Even the smallest items like cleaning supplies, silverware, toiletries or diapers are greatly needed and appreciated," Saddler emphasized. NOLB has supported more than 500 families in the DC Metro area to date, and more continue to arrive.

Loudoun Habitat ReStore: Building Affordable Housing

Other charities benefit from your donations as well, like Loudoun Habitat Restore. Selling donated items in their retail

store raises the money needed to support the housing ministry, Habitat for Humanity International, on a local front and help build affordable housing in partnership with people in need.

"There are families and singles in Loudoun County who work here but can't afford to live here, so our job is to try to get them into a livable home," explained Therese Cashen, Loudoun ReStore manager. "With your donations, we can fund affordable housing for Loudoun residents."

From 123JUNK's pickup locations, the charities can choose the items that best serve their own organizations. If you have a variety of items to downsize, are looking to make a charitable donation, or simply want to start living a more "right-sized life," schedule a pickup with 123JUNK, or take your items to one of the organizations that actually funnel the goods or money raised from them back into your own community. As the adage goes, one man's junk truly is another man's treasure. ❖