

FIFTY PLUS **D**

Active and Involved

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Dad needs to be moved into personal care home

ASK THE CARE MANAGER

Dear Care Manager: My 94-year-old father lives in a condo at a local over-55 community. Dad was one of the original seniors who moved in when he was 64. At that time he was active, driving and involved in many activities. Somehow with the passing of time his place has become a nightmare. It smells of mildew and dust. There is clutter everywhere and the place is in need of many repairs. He has resisted housecleaning help over the years. My siblings and I, who live out-of state, have ignored the situation as we have been busy with our own lives. Dad always claimed to be so independent, but now we see this is not the case. With his health

declining rapidly, Dad needs to move to a personal care home very soon. We need to sell the property to raise funds for his care. His personal hygiene is compromised as well. We are finding soiled clothing, spoiled food and piles of trash hidden in drawers and other odd places. The refrigerator is full of food, but half of it is spoiled. The plumbing, heat and electrical systems all need to be checked and upgraded. Where do we start?

— Stressed Son

Dear Stressed Son: Have a conversation with your siblings and get them updated on your Dad's physical condition including his current living environment. You will probably need a heavy duty cleaning company,



Karen Wolfrom

one that does a comprehensive assessment for mold and mildew, to make recommendations. Some housekeeping services will send cleaners to sort and discard items, but a family member should be present to supervise. You may save money by organizing the family for some preliminary cleanup sessions. Investigate the cost of a small dumpster. Some local

charitable organizations may accept items that are no longer useful, but still in good condition. It is very dangerous for a frail senior to live in an environment that is dirty, cluttered and in disrepair. In fact, a guest invited into the home may contact the local Office on Aging and report family members for neglect if the situation is as bad as you

relate. Unless the family can act quickly, consider hiring a home health aide to stay with him for safety.

A senior, especially one with dementia, gets accustomed to living in a deteriorating environment and considers this the norm. Accordingly, it is very important for family to stay in close contact with an aging parent and to evaluate his needs on a regular basis.

Send your questions to Karen Wolfrom at kwolfrom@surreyatthehickman.org with "Dear Care Manager" in the subject line. Karen Wolfrom, MSA, RNC, CMC, RHU, is a member of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers and the executive director of Surrey at The Hickman in West Chester. Her column appears once a month in the Daily Local News.