



Meet ANNE LUCAS of Ducks In A Row

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sponsor of the month

Where did you grow up? How long have you lived in the area? Tell us about your family. I was born and raised in Malden, Massachusetts, so I've lived in the area all my life. I have two sisters and one brother. My dad passed in 2002, but my mom still lives in the old house in Malden. I married my husband Tom (he's from Pittsburgh) in 1987. We have three boys, Brendan (27), Patrick (26) and Corey (23). They are the three baby ducks in my logo. The boys are all on their own, so Tom and I are empty nesters. We moved to Winchester in 1995.

Tell us about the events that led up to where you are now. I graduated from UMass Amherst in 1982 with a B.A. in Economics. I worked through high school and college as a cashier at First National Stores. When I finished UMass, I worked for Merchant's Cooperative Bank and then at New England Telephone and Fidelity. My last corporate job was at Fitcorp in Boston where I was the administrator for the physical therapy department.

What is your business and why did you start your business? I am a professional organizer and senior move manager. I started the business in 2000. I had seen a Hallmark Hall of Fame movie in which the mom had been sick and the daughter went to the big old house and found piles of newspapers and other clutter. So she hired a clutter lady. I thought, "That's what I should do."

My husband, however, said, "That is the stupidest thing I've ever heard. No one will pay you to do that; you should try real estate." Since I didn't have his blessing on the organizing, I got my real estate license and worked for two years at Carlson Real

Estate in Winchester. In two years time, the only thing I sold was our own house. I decided I didn't need Tom's help. I knew exactly what I wanted the business to be, so I put it together little by little. I worked for free in the beginning, donating my services to local groups for fundraising auctions, etc. I joined the Winchester Chamber of Commerce and Cathy Alexander, the executive director, said I needed to come to her house. Cathy also runs Winchester Cooperative Theatre for Children. The costumes and props were stored in her basement, not in any organized fashion. I spent my afternoons putting everything in order, which was fun.

Gradually, with Cathy's recommendation, I had people calling for help - cleaning out their attics, basements, closets and cabinets. I eased into the move management. It was a natural fit for me. A lot of the local realtors refer me to their clients who are trying to get their houses ready for sale. I help them get rid of the clutter and decide what to take/not take. I help them pack and unpack at the new house. I love working with the seniors. They really need the help. They don't know where to start and often have 30 or 40 years of stuff. It's often better to have someone like me who's impartial. I don't have any attachment to their stuff, so I can help them make their own decisions.

What is unique about your business? I find a home for all usable items. I try hard to repurpose, reuse and recycle as much as possible. I bring things to local organizations like the schools, the library, the senior center, the DPW and the music school. I also give things to local businesses if they can use them, such as flower vases to Pondview Florist.

What advice can you offer to residents? Start early on the de-cluttering, even if you don't plan to move. If you want to downsize, don't wait until it becomes a crisis situation. Don't leave it for your children to deal with either. You don't have to do it alone; there is professional help!

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Ducks in a Row belongs to the national and New England chapter of NAPO (National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals). It also is a member of NASMM (National Association of Senior Move Managers). Anne serves on the board of directors of the Winchester Chamber of Commerce.

