A Senior Care Success Story

March 15, 2016

My mother, Julie G., was a resident at an Independent/Assisted living community in Seattle for ten years---from 2006 – 2016. I cannot possibly tell you the number of times she told me how perfect it was for her. The surroundings are beautiful, the educational and recreational opportunities plentiful and the staff exceptionally caring. She was very sad when, this February at age 93, she needed to find a residence that could provide 24 hour care, following three hospitalizations and a month long stay at a local skilled nursing facility.

Knowing that this would be the likely scenario, I asked my trusted contact, the nurse at the community, who she would recommend to help me find the best "next place" for my Mom. Without hesitation, she said, "The husband-wife team Juli and Frank Simons, owners of Senior Care Consultants." She said she routinely refers families to them, and has received nothing but highly positive feedback.

I contacted Juli right away, and from the first phone conversation I felt a sense of relief. I could tell right away that Juli really "knew her stuff." Julie has had over two decades of placement experience and has worked in the senior housing industry for over eight years. In order to best serve clients, she and her husband have worked together in their own company doing this work for many years.

Juli explained that when working with them, clients always speak to either her and/or her husband directly, and both of them come to in-person meetings. I liked that. During a high-stress time, I did not want to be passed around and have to re-explain things, or get to know many different professionals.

Juli was empathic and understood what a difficult time this was. She spoke words of encouragement to me on a personal level, as well as on a practical level: together, she was sure she and Frank could help me and my husband find an ideal place for my Mom. It was clear that Juli cared, and that she wanted to get to know my both my Mom and me, so as to be able to find the best placement possible, in whatever timeframe necessary.

She also had a very good sense of the Edmonds/Mukilteo/Lynnwood area I was targeting. I had talked to an "area specialist" from another placement agency who did not know that Edmonds was in Snohomish (not King) county. At that time, I was hoping to keep my Mom's same home healthcare agency, which required that she remain in King County.

Juli explained that she and Frank pre-screen each home they recommend, both in terms of licensure/ any complaints and by conducting regular in-person visits.

I wanted to work with someone who was professionally seasoned, locally knowledgeable, well-connected, genuinely caring, and could work in a short time frame. I could tell that Juli was all of these things. My husband and I set up a meeting with her and Frank.

The next day, we found Frank to be warm, kind and down to earth, with a much appreciated great sense of humor. We felt immediately comfortable with him. As on the phone, in person, Juli is warm, reassuring, resourceful, organized and professional.

My husband and I were impressed with the questions Juli and Frank asked us to get to know my Mom, us, and what we were looking for. After that meeting, they met my Mom, and were both so good with her. They knew how to engage her, get her talking about things she loves, and put her at ease. She liked them.

Believe me, after three back-to-back hospitalizations and a stint in rehab, she did not like everyone.

About a week later, Juli and Frank attended the discharge planning meeting with us at the skilled nursing facility, and I learned we had merely six more days of Medicare coverage.

Juli and Frank were prepared. They already had several adult family homes in mind, and that very day we looked at three places. I had already been taken to several homes by another placement professional, and was not very happy with any of them (Juli knew them all). Each of the three homes that Juli and Frank took me to, I liked very much and could picture my Mom there. Each had openings.

It was a very emotionally packed day for me, and on top of that, I am recovering from some of my own health challenges. Juli and Frank drove me to all three homes which I appreciated. They knew all of the providers, and remained "professionally neutral" as to which they felt was the best match for my Mom out of the three homes. They wanted me to form my own opinions. I could tell which one they thought was best, but I was not sure which one I thought was best.

The next day, my husband and two friends came with me, Juli and Frank to re-visit my top two adult family homes.

Additionally, a nurse at the skilled nursing facility had recommended a larger retirement community with a memory care unit. While Julie did not think such a placement was best for my Mom, she recommended we look at an even "better match" memory care unit at a larger facility. I said, "If you don't think this type of setting is best for my Mom, maybe we should skip it." She said she thought it would be better for me to see, so I would not look back and wish I had explored a wider range of options.

So…my posse of my husband and two friends and I went with Juli and Frank to the memory care center in the larger retirement place. I could tell right away it was not a match. Because Juli and Frank know the person touring us so well, Juli was able to politely cut the visit short, so we could move on. I was tired and short on time, so I appreciated this! After my husband and friends saw my top two adult family homes, all said hands down that the same one Juli and Frank preferred for my Mom was the way to go.

My husband and two friends (one of whom is an Occupational Therapist), said that the place Frank and Juli were leaning towards had beyond amazing owners/caregivers, a better resident to staff ratio, other residents with similar needs/abilities to socialize as my mom, the best equipment, and was spotless and beautiful to boot.

My relationship with Juli and Frank did not end. They said they were in it for the long haul and wanted to stay on board during my Mom's adjustment. They warned me that such an adjustment is often difficult, and I should not be disappointed if that were the case. They helped me to understand dementia (my Mom had recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's) and kindly and gently helped me to accept this, and gave me useful strategies for new ways to interact with my mom.

It was particularly stressful because the room my Mom was to move into was occupied by a woman who was actively dying. This woman had a better-for-my-Mom room than the room that was open. I saw the grieving family there, and felt overcome with emotion for all of them. Juli and Frank had placed the dying woman there over a year ago. They were sad, too, but helped me to appropriately distance myself from that situation, and forge ahead doing what was best for my Mom. I appreciated their help, compassion for me and the other family, and their professionalism.

My mom moved in to the Adult Family Home on Feb10th. She has been there for a month. Although I was prepared for a possible challenging adjustment, my mom has experienced quite the opposite. She is wild about the caregivers---a beautiful multi-generational immigrant family from Romania. They are so kind and loving to my Mom. They truly anticipate her every need, meet it, and treat her with respect and compassion. The house is a true home. The caregivers are loving, professional people who derive great satisfaction and pride in their work. Their overnight caregiver is the owner's son, and he is by my Mom's bedside in a heartbeat whenever she gets up. My Mom gets "facial massages" and manicures from the owner. I brought a former resident of her old community over to visit my Mom at her new home, and the owner of the Adult Family Home had fresh cookies, tea and coffee for them set up so attractively at the formal but cozy dining room table.

Hands down, Juli and Frank are the ones I have to thank for connecting my Mom with her new home. They did it in a way where we all felt understood, well cared for and with speed and great competence.

Sincerely,

Mary Douglass
Edmonds, WA