

What Happens to All the Stuff?

**A Practical Guide to Clearing Out
a Long time Family Home with
Compassion, Grace and Local Support**

A GUIDE FOR SOLANO COUNTY FAMILIES

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“Memory is a way of holding on to the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose.”

— The Wonder Years

The Emotional Weight Nobody Talks About

Before we talk about donation centers and junk haulers and estate sales — I want to talk about why it's so hard to go through the stuff.

My grandmother lived in the same Vacaville home for decades. Her shelves were lined with extraordinary tiny worlds — miniature figurines, bedroom sets, bread baskets smaller than your thumb. She stockpiled gifts all year so that at Christmas she could deliver what I can only describe as a bounty.

What I Saw as a Child

Andy's mints and Werther's candies on the counter. Yarn and crochet hooks. Picture frames covering every wall. Gorgeous gowns and costume jewelry from a life fully lived as a professional singer.



What I Understand Now

The stuff was never the problem. The stuff was love, held onto. Every miniature figurine, every wrapped gift, every 70's pantsuit — it was my grandmother saying: "I was here. I lived. I loved people." So before you open a single drawer, take a breath and extend grace — to your parent, to yourself, and to the process.

This guide is here to help you move through it all with your heart intact. If you're frustrated, that's okay. If you're grieving, that's okay too. Both things can be true at once.

You're Not Alone

If you're reading this, you're probably somewhere in the middle of one of life's hardest transitions.

Maybe your mom needs to move into assisted living. Maybe your dad can no longer safely manage the family home. Maybe an inheritance has landed in your lap when you were least expecting it.

The House Is More Than Property

It's a living archive of someone's life — decades of memories, relationships, and meaning packed into every room and corner.

Family Dynamics Are Real

Managing emotions, family opinions, finances, and a care transition all at once is an enormous undertaking. You don't have to navigate it alone.

This Guide Makes It Clearer

It won't make it easy — but it will give you a clear path forward, filled with trusted local Solano County resources I know personally.





Stop and Read This First

IT MAY SAVE YOU WEEKS OF UNNECESSARY WORK

- **You do not have to clean out this property to sell it.** Most families spend weeks, sometimes months - sorting, hauling, and cleaning before calling a real estate agent. That effort may be completely unnecessary.

Many local investors will purchase a property as-is, with the belongings still inside. You take what you want to keep — the heirlooms, the things that matter — and the investor handles everything else.

If this sounds right for your family, reach out before you move a single thing. A quick conversation could change your entire timeline.

Understand the Emotional Landscape

Before you lift a single box, know what you're walking into emotionally and practically.

Sort with a Simple Method

Use the compassionate 4-Pile Method to move through belongings without overwhelm.

Know Who to Call

Trusted Solano County partners for every step — estate sales, hauling, donations, legal.

Sell When Ready

Make smart decisions about the property — as-is, investor sale, or traditional listing.

Before You Touch Anything: The First 3 Steps

The biggest mistake families make is diving in before they're ready. One person starts filling trash bags. Another wants to keep everything. A sibling who lives out of state has opinions from afar. Within an afternoon, what began as a cleanup has become a family conflict.

Here's how to avoid that entirely.



Step 1: Do a Full Walkthrough First

Before anything is moved or decided — walk every room together. Take photos. Take notes. Let everyone see the full scope before anyone starts making decisions. This one step prevents more arguments than anything else.



Step 2: Get the Family Aligned

Who has decision-making authority? Is there a power of attorney in place? Who gets a say, and who gets a vote? These conversations are uncomfortable, but having them early saves enormous heartache later. **David W. Knight**, Estate Attorney · 707-422-5411 · davidwknightlaw.com



Step 3: Know Your Timeline

Is the house being sold? Rented? Is your parent moving into care next month or next year? The timeline shapes everything. Be honest with yourself about what's realistic.

▲ Slow down where you can. The extra week almost always pays for itself.

Sorting It All Out: The 4-Pile Method

Label four areas in each room and sort every item into one of them.

KEEP

Items that belong with a specific family member, hold significant sentimental value, or are needed for your parent's next chapter. Be selective — not everything can or should be kept, and that's okay.

SELL

Items with resale value: furniture, collectibles, jewelry, tools, kitchen equipment, art. **Caring Transitions of Benicia & Vallejo** will assess what you have and handle the estate sale from start to finish.
Trang Nguyen · 369-200-5568

DONATE

Items in good condition that a new family could use and love. **Savers in Vacaville** accepts a wide range of household goods, clothing, and furniture.

*154 Browns Valley Pkwy, Vacaville
CA 95688*

- *Open Daily 10am–8pm*

TOSS / HAUL

Items that are damaged, worn, or can't be placed elsewhere. Junk Shot and Bay Hauling are local, professional, and genuinely kind — they understand these aren't just piles of stuff.

Junk Shot · Erin Williams ·
707-920-5149

Bay Hauling · Juan Vallejos ·
707-712-4430

- **Do Not Throw These Away:** Financial documents, tax returns, bank statements, legal documents (wills, deeds, insurance policies, titles), prescription medications (dispose properly — not in trash), jewelry or coins of unexpected value, personal letters, photos, and family heirlooms — even faded ones.

Selling What's Left: Estate Sales & Donating with Purpose

Caring Transitions of Benicia & Vallejo

My dear friends at Caring Transitions are the first call I recommend for any Solano County family navigating this. They specialize in senior transitions and estate sales — they understand both the logistics and the emotions involved. They'll treat your family's belongings with genuine respect.

- Full estate sale management, start to finish
- Online auctions if in-person isn't the right fit
- Move management services for your parent's transition
- Honest assessment of what sells and what doesn't

Contact Trang Nguyen · 369-200-5568

For Smaller Items: Online Options

Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, and OfferUp are excellent for furniture and mid-size items in the Fairfield, Vacaville, and Vallejo markets. Set realistic prices, take good photos, and be prepared for a little negotiation.



Donating with Purpose

There is something healing about knowing your loved one's belongings will do good in the world. A donated coat keeps someone warm. A donated bookshelf holds someone else's stories.

The reframe — from letting go to sending forward — can make a real difference in how this process feels.

Savers — Vacaville

154 Browns Valley Pkwy, Vacaville CA 95688

Open Daily 10am–8pm

Other Local Options

- Habitat for Humanity ReStore — furniture & home goods
- Local churches — kitchenware, linens, clothing
- Senior centers — craft supplies, puzzles, hobby items

📖 **Always ask for a donation receipt** — the IRS allows deductions for donated goods at fair market value.

The things they kept were never about clutter. They were about a life deeply lived. When those belongings find new homes and bring comfort to others — that love travels with them.

Junk Hauling & Getting the House Ready to Sell

When It's Time to Call a Junk Hauler

After the estate sale. After the donations. There will still be things left. And that's completely normal. This is where a trusted junk removal company becomes one of the most valuable calls you make.

Junk Shot

Professional, efficient, and sensitive to what they're doing. They're not just hauling junk — they're helping a family close a chapter.

Erin Williams · 707- 920-5149

Bay Hauling

A trusted partner serving greater Solano County with professionalism and care on every job.

Juan Vallejos · 707- 712-4430 · bayhauling.net/book-now



Don't schedule junk removal before you've talked to your real estate agent. Old tools, vintage items, and yard equipment can sometimes be sold, donated, or used as staging. Coordinate the sequence — it saves money and prevents regret.

Junk Hauling & Getting the House Ready to Sell

Getting the House Ready to Sell

Once the home is cleared, the question becomes: what does it take to sell it? The right choice depends on the condition of the property, your timeline, and the current Solano County market.

Sell As-Is

Faster, simpler, and often just as profitable. Many investors purchase with contents included.

Light Updates

Paint, cleaning, and landscaping can meaningfully increase what the home sells for in the right market.

Legal Questions Before You Sell

If the property is part of an estate, there may be probate considerations, trust documents to review, or title issues to resolve before a sale can close. Getting legal guidance early prevents significant complications.

David W. Knight, Estate Attorney · 707-422-5411 · davidwknightlaw.com

Always bring the sale back to the purpose: funding your parent's care, securing their comfort, and honoring everything they built.

Your Solano County Family Home Cleanout Checklist

Before You Begin

- Complete walkthrough of all rooms done
- Family members aligned on decisions
- Timeline confirmed
- Legal authority confirmed (POA / Executor)
- Consulted estate attorney if needed
- Photos taken of full home

Room-by-Room Cleanout Tracker

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living Room | <input type="checkbox"/> Dining Room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen | <input type="checkbox"/> Master Bedroom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedroom 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Bedroom 3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bathrooms | <input type="checkbox"/> Garage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attic / Storage | <input type="checkbox"/> Shed / Outdoor Areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Closets (all) | |

Do Not Throw Away — Checklist

- Wills, trusts, and estate documents
- Property deeds and titles
- Tax returns (keep at least 7 years)
- Insurance policies (life, home, auto)
- Bank and financial account statements
- Prescription medications (dispose properly)
- Jewelry, coins, or items of unexpected value
- Personal letters and family photos
- Military records or service documents
- Safe deposit box keys or combination
- Social Security cards and birth certificates

Your Timeline Tracker

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| WEEK 1 | Family walkthrough, legal authority confirmed, photos taken |
| WEEK 1-2 | 4-pile sorting begins room by room |
| WEEK 2-3 | Caring Transitions contacted for estate sale assessment |
| WEEK 2-3 | Savers donations scheduled |
| WEEK 3-4 | Estate sale held or online auction launched |
| WEEK 4+ | Junk Shot or Bay Hauling scheduled for final haul |
| ONGOING | Legal and estate questions addressed as needed |
| FINAL | House cleared, agent walk-through scheduled |

Your Next Step — I'm Here for You

“When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.”

— Lao Tzu

You've just done something important. You've chosen to understand this process before you're overwhelmed by it.

That decision — to be informed, to be intentional, to lead with your heart — will serve you and your family well.

Caring Transitions

*Estate sales & senior move
management*

Trang Nguyen · 369-200-5568

Savers — Vacaville

Donation drop-off

**154 Browns Valley Pkwy · Daily
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Bay Hauling

Local hauling

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Junk Shot

Junk removal

Erin Williams · 707-920-5149

David W. Knight

Estate Attorney

707-422-5411 ·

davidwknightlaw.com

Feeling Overwhelmed? I'll come to you.

I offer in-person consultations and needs assessments, right at the property. We walk the home together at your pace. I listen first — your goals, your concerns, your timeline.

We talk through every option: sell with contents, clean out first, investor sale, traditional listing. You leave with clarity, not more confusion.

There is never any obligation to move forward.

To schedule your complimentary in-person consultation, reach out anytime:

Nickole Dauer

Golden Porch Group

707-718-6728 · info@goldenporchca.com

“Those we love don’t go away — they walk beside us every day.”