



## ***Preparing to Care for Aging Loved Ones***

By Leslie Knopp

Comfort Keepers® Franchise Owner in Traverse City, MI

There are many joys families experience within the relationships they have with senior relatives. Grandma and Grandpa are often able to tell the best tales of times past. The memories they impart during family get-togethers, along with valuable family history seniors recount, become the ties that bind many families together. Our elder ancestors are the very roots that strengthen each relative's sense of place, comfort and knowledge of how they came to be in this world.

Along with the joys seniors bring to our lives come hard decisions that may eventually need to be made regarding their ability to live alone. Some seniors suffer mental or physical limitations that make it difficult for them to safely care for themselves. In these instances, family members find themselves in the position of deciding who can provide the best care for their loved ones. Typically, this decision-making process – from recognition to solution – can take approximately a year and a half. Usually a female family member such as a daughter or granddaughter is the one who makes the final decision of care. In families where there is no daughter, this role often falls on the shoulders of the oldest son's wife (the daughter-in-law).

There are two types of caregiving scenarios to consider – choosing a willing family member to provide care or hiring a home care company to deliver caregiving services for seniors. “Deciding to become a family caregiver can be an incredibly rewarding experience,” says Leslie Knopp, Owner of Comfort Keepers of Northern Lower Michigan. Family caregivers often find their relationships with their senior loved ones enriched and satisfying beyond words. It feels good to give the gift of time. Even so, becoming a family caregiver can have a negative impact in some ways, as well. Many family caregivers experience financial difficulties by either having to miss work to care for their loved one or by supporting two households. Family caregivers also become susceptible to suffering depression due to the physical and emotional impact caregiving for a family member can have. Careful consideration of all parties involved should be taken before a family member takes on a caregiving role.

An alternative to family caregiving is to hire a professional and experienced agency to provide care and support. Comfort Keepers® is one such home care agency that focuses on serving the senior population. Comfort Keepers perform duties ranging from occasional housekeeping to daily companionship for seniors who need close monitoring.

Comfort Keepers is an expert in helping families make these crucial decisions. As a leader in the home care industry, the company has devised a list of critical questions for families to ask when interviewing caregiving companies. That list can be found here:

<http://www.comfortkeepers.com/information-center/news-and-highlights/in-home-care-for-mom->

and-dad. Choosing a company that best fits a loved one's needs and facilitates a safe environment for a senior in his or her own home is essential for success.

Comfort Keepers conducted extensive research among families and other home care resources to determine the best way to broach caregiving with a senior loved one. "Simply initiating the topic can cause tension and unease," says Knopp. This decision can inspire guilt for the person making the decision as well as resentment from the senior who needs care. Visit <http://www.comfortkeepers.com/family-education-center/starting-the-conversation> to find ideas that help families understand the core issues surrounding caregiving. This article also gives helpful insight as to how to discuss the matter without hurting feelings or making a senior feel uncomfortable.

In any event, deciding a loved one needs additional care can be a daunting experience. Deciding who can best care for a senior loved one is a very important decision. The end result should make everyone happy and provide peace of mind for all involved.

#### *About Comfort Keepers*

With over 560 independently owned and operated locations, Comfort Keepers is a leader in in-home senior care to promote independent living. Services include companionship, meal preparation, light housekeeping, grocery shopping, incidental transportation, laundry, recreational activities, personal care and technology products. To locate a Comfort Keepers in your area go to [www.comfortkeepers.com](http://www.comfortkeepers.com).