



A Note from Executive Director, Vicki Hickman

Garage Sale or Humility Bootcamp? Adventures in Downsizing

Downsizing always sounds so virtuous—like you're about to become the next poster child for peaceful, clutter-free living. In theory, it's about simplifying life and letting go. In practice? It's about wrestling with folding tables, dodging rainclouds, and gently persuading yourself that you probably don't need to keep the lamp from 1987.

This June, I joined our town's Annual Community-Wide Garage Sale as part of my ongoing mission to declutter. I figured it was time to release some of the lovely (but long-unused) treasures we've collected over the years. And while it was more physically demanding than I expected, it turned out to be a surprisingly fun—and oddly freeing—experience.

Yes, laying out your life on card tables for neighbors and strangers to browse can be a humbling experience. (Apparently, my taste in throw pillows is not universally admired.) But there's something incredibly satisfying about creating space—both in your home and your head.

Todd, my sweet and sentimental husband, was quick to rescue anything with even a hint of family history. Every time I asked, "Do you need this? If not, do you want it?" he'd answer, "Yes! That belonged to my [insert beloved, long-departed relative here]!" And of course, once we'd decided to keep it, the question became: where do we store this treasure we don't use and can't display? Compromises were made, and we managed to whittle down our collection one reluctant decision at a time.

My friend Julie, a garage sale veteran and former retail wizard, co-hosted with me and brought her own stuff to sell—and her own stylish flair. She took one look at my displays before launching into full "store makeover" mode. She restyled the home goods section, folded shirts with military precision, and made my sad little card table look like a boutique pop-up. I provided comic relief and mimosas.

Of course, it rained off and on all weekend, which meant we got plenty of steps in doing the "garage sale shuffle"—moving items in and out of the garage like a two-person moving crew with questionable timing.

Some people came for the deals. Others came for the neighborhood tour, casually asking if our tractor, baby stroller (holding baby Roman at the time), or flowerpots were for sale. (Spoiler: they weren't.)

Sure, there were a few awkward haggles over beloved items—like when someone offered me \$2 for a keepsake that had proudly held court on my mantle for 30 years. But even those moments offered a valuable lesson: it's not about what something was, but what you're making room for next.

And there was joy, too. We laughed, met new people, swapped stories with passersby, and—most importantly—lightened our load. Some items went to new homes, some went to Goodwill, and a few went right back inside for now (baby steps, right?).

At the end of the day, downsizing isn't just about clearing out closets—it's about opening up life. Yes, it takes effort (and Advil), but there's something really gratifying about letting go, making space, and sharing a few laughs along the way. I may not be ready to open a thrift store anytime soon, but I'm a little lighter, a little wiser, and a whole lot more ready for what comes next.

-Vicki