

My Why (a bit long) It's Wise to Know Who You Are Working With...

My journey began in 2010 when my mother, then 80, needed more care, and my sister June and I stepped in to support her. This experience opened my eyes to the aging process, the increasing need for assistance with daily activities—and the challenges it brings. I also saw firsthand how society often silences older adults and how ageism is still very real. One vivid memory is of my mother's doctors addressing me with their questions instead of her, despite her sharp mind. It made her feel invisible, which no one, regardless of age, should ever experience. I realized that older adults have so much to offer; their wisdom is invaluable, and we need to listen to their needs and wishes. Someday, we will be in their shoes.

Throughout my career, I've worn many hats. As a senior myself now, I've gathered a wealth of life and work experience. In the past ten years, I founded a nonprofit organization called Harmony Café, which promotes health and provides access to healthy food for those in need. I also obtained my real estate license and currently lease apartments. In this role, I noticed more and more adult children are looking for safer housing options for their aging parents. One man shared a heartbreaking story about his friend's father, who suffered a fatal fall in his home. He worried constantly about his own parents' safety in their old family home, unsure if they were secure. I understood his concerns but didn't know how to guide him at the time.

It struck me then how fortunate my mother was to have a safe apartment and family support, but not every family has those resources. This topic kept coming up, so I began researching services in my area, but I struggled to find the right solutions. I was part of a Facebook group focused on helping seniors with moving and decluttering services, and after eight months, I discovered there was specialized training for helping seniors age in place safely with modifications and support services. That's when I found my niche in the senior living solutions market.

While moving seniors is an option, what about those who don't want—or can't afford—to move? After much thought, I decided to become a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) through the National Association of Home Builders, backed by AARP. I also earned certification with Age Safe America.

This led me to found **Nest Wisely LI**, where we specialize in helping older adults age safely in place. While many companies offer home modifications and safety

products, there's a need for a more holistic approach—one that includes home safety and wellness evaluations, comprehensive plans, and access to the right resources. Aging in place isn't always the best option for everyone, especially those with serious health issues requiring intensive care, but for many, it is a viable option. My top priority is to ensure older adults have the choice to age in place, in a way that honors their wishes and makes them feel heard.

I believe it doesn't have to be expensive to live safely at home. Some clients may afford high-end upgrades and technology, but many cannot. My team and I are committed to recommending only the modifications necessary for safe living, while keeping their budgets in mind. We also connect seniors with limited incomes to outside agencies and nonprofits that may help with home modifications. Although resources can be limited, and waiting lists long, we strive to remain reasonably priced and flexible to meet each client's needs. All companies we partner with for modifications and resources are thoroughly vetted to ensure they are ethical, trustworthy, and provide high-quality work.

With the right modifications, support services, and family help, many older adults can thrive while aging in place.