



How Much Room for Self-Expression Do Your Residents Really Have?

By Meg LaPorte

The ability to express one's individuality is perhaps more prevalent than any other time in modern society. The plethora of social media platforms, the ubiquity of cell phones, and the abundance of personal accessories options such as jewelry and bags are some examples of how important self-expression has become in our culture.

So why is it that some of the more prominent accouterments of being older—assistive devices such as walkers, wheel chairs, scooters, power chairs, and canes—have only recently become customizable? “I am not sure why manufacturers believe the need for self expression is not important for seniors, but I think it's imperative that older adults get to express themselves in ways that seem to be reserved for younger people,” says Carol Rady, founder of [HDS Medallion® Designer CarryAll Bags](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner. Made in Massachusetts, HDS Medallion bags are designed specifically to function on walkers, wheelchairs, power chairs, scooters. With a range of colors, patterns, and styles to choose from, the bags give customers the ability to express their own unique style, says Rady. As one customer put it, they are “fabulously functional.”

“Seniors appreciate the ability to individualize their assistive devices. And they deserve to have something that is attractive,” says Rady, who points out that canes and walkers, which used to be made in just four basic colors, are now available in many different designs.

Feels Great

Since HDS Medallion began making their bags in 2011, Rady says she has received hundreds of emails and letters from customers telling her how much they appreciate the bags and how it has made them or their loved one feel. “These reactions are what keep us going,” she says. “When I get a testimonial saying that it’s the first time it made someone’s walker or power chair look so pretty and raised the person’s spirits—that joy affirms our purpose.”

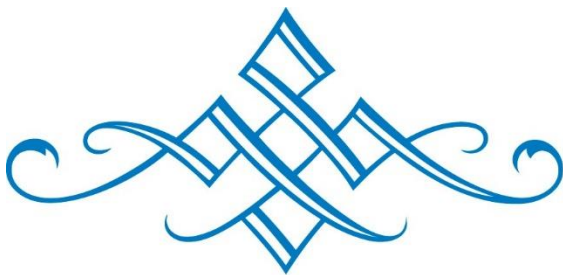
Among the most memorable testimonials for Rady is one she received from a woman who purchased a bag for her mother’s walker: “I wanted to get her an unusual walker bag even though she said she did not need one. So I bought one from you,” the daughter wrote. “Long story short, she loved it. I have never seen her enjoy anything so much in her life. She loved the attention she was getting from the other residents about it. It was her pride and joy.”

Just Enough Bling

Another customer wrote this of her experience of having bought a bag for a family member: “We purchased a very sophisticated bag with the right amount of bling for her birthday. She absolutely loves it and has had many compliments!”

D. from Chicago nails it with, “if you gotta be in a chair, let’s be stylish about it!” Or as another fan from Chicago expressed it, “if you can’t stand up, then stand out.”

Rady recently paid a visit to Villa Siena, a continuing care retirement community in Mountainview, Calif., where many residents had received the bags as Christmas gifts last year. She was touched by the reactions of the many women who were still using their bags nearly a year later. “I felt like I was treated like a celebrity when introduced as the woman who owns the company that ‘made your bags,’” she says. “This just affirmed our desire to work with any facility to help their residents obtain bags.”



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