BRILLIANT 100 COMPANIES

[SENIORS]

THE WATCH-MEN

REST ASSURED LETS SENIORS AND THEIR FAMILIES KNOW THAT SOMEONE HAS THEIR BACKS

WATCHFUL EYES: TELE-CAREGIVER SANDY MARTINDALE

Keeping a senior in a nursing home is incredibly expensive. Bringing in a home healthcare aid may be more economical, but a nurse can't monitor each client 24/7.

That's the niche Rest Assured fills. The system sounds like something out of Orwell: A typical setup includes two-way video monitoring and an array of sensors that tell the Tele-Caregiver at Rest Assured's home base in Lafayette, Ind., how long a senior has stayed in the bathroom or if they've opened the medicine cabinet to take their prescriptions. It also measures the temperature, calculates carbon monoxide and even indicates when a client sits in a specific chair or goes to bed.

But the heart of the system is a little less big brother and a little more warm and fuzzy. Caregivers interact with clients, checking in at set times each day, appearing on a video monitor with reminders to take medicine. Some drop in digitally during dinnertime to keep their clients company. If there's a problem they can't handle remotely, they'll dispatch someone to the home or contact a family member.

"There are some people out there who say no way, but those people usually say no to homecare service in general," says Dustin Wright, general manager of Rest Assured. "When we tell them they can control what the caregiver sees and how much they interact and that this is a safety net for them, adoption is a lot easier."

The Rest Assured system was developed five years ago as a joint venture between the Wabash Center, which provides services to the developmentally disabled, and ResCare, a home healthcare provider that offers the system commercially, and in collaboration with Purdue University's College of Technology. But the concept is only now starting to take off. Many of the 400 systems installed so far allow children who live in another state or city to check in on their parents remotely, like the Rest Assured Tele-Caregiver.

"There needs to be a cultural shift in people's minds before the market adopts this," Wright says. "[But] the baby boomer generation is more tech-savvy than their parents. I would be shocked if we don't double business in the next year or so." —J.D.

MORE BRILLIANCE

ConnectAde This free website's step-by-step process helps people create a personalized Care Action Plan for hands-on assistance and care for aging parents.

ElderTreks An adventure travel company designed exclusively for ages 50 and up offers off-the-beaten-path, small-group trips in more than 100 countries.

MedCottage These pop-up "granny pods" are fully equipped, state-of-the-art modular medical homes designed to be placed on the family's property.

Omhu The brightly colored wooden Omhu Cane was inspired by Scandinavian furniture, bicycles, hockey sticks and skateboards.

Senior Cupid A dating site for sophisticated seniors.

Smooth Mooove This moving company offers personalized assistance to seniors and their families during every step of the relocation process.

Tree Rings Retirees and seniors provide telephone support to their peers on a variety of topics, from technology to banking and insurance.

vibrantBrains Modeled on traditional fitness clubs, these brain gyms help aging baby boomers keep their minds sharp with computer training programs that boost memory and alertness.

YourEncore Leverages the experience and knowledge of retired scientists and engineers across the country and connects them with contract-basis gigs.

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HANNAH STORM "GO AHEAD AND GIVE IT A TRY!"

Throughout my career I've learned that what seem like the biggest risks bring the biggest rewards. I decided to become a sportscaster in an era when women just didn't do that, then switched into another competitive field: network news. Along the way I fulfilled my goal of becoming a published author. If there's something you dream of doing—like starting a business—it's up to you to figure out how to make it happen. A few tips: 1. Find your spark. My first book, *Go Girl!*, was inspired by the fact that I had three daughters and couldn't find a sports guide for parents. 2. Devote consistent time. I wrote every night after my kids were in bed. 3. Think of the greater good. I dedicated some of the proceeds from my second book, *Notre Dame Inspirations*, to a journalism scholarship at my alma mater to make all the hard work extra worthwhile.

WATCH *THE EARLY SHOW* ON CBS FOR OUR MONTHLY SEGMENT, "IN THE FAMILY CIRCLE."

hang flyers on school and pediatricians' office bulletin boards. To publicize her part-time employment agency, Norwood printed cards with the question "What's Your Perfect Job?" and contact information for 10 til 2. She left them in health clubs and hair salons. Also, make cold calls, then follow up with a note and introductory coupon. Last but not least, "Ask every satisfied customer to refer you to someone else," says Kuc. Word of mouth is the cheapest and most effective advertising.

Increase your exposure. Position yourself as an expert in your field by leading free workshops at libraries, churches, synagogues and PTA groups, then hand out business cards afterward. For example, if you're a professional organizer, teach parents how to combat clutter or categorize school papers. "Donate your product or services to a community organization," adds Huff. An artist could paint a piece for a school auction; a baker might donate cakes to nursing home residents on their 80th birthdays. Publicize the event by sending a press release and photo to your local newspaper. For press release guidelines and tips, check out the Publicity Hound (publicityhound.com) and Press-Release-Writing.com (press-release-writing.com).

Grow at your own pace. Remind yourself that this isn't a race. It takes time to become profitable, but success comes with persistence. And remember, there's no one right way to grow. "We're all individual in the way we run our businesses," says Kuc. "Some women want to grow quickly and make a million; others are happy earning a comfortable living and feeling fulfilled." It's up to you—after all, you're the boss. ●

minding her business

ADRIENNE SIMPSON, 51, mom of a 19-year-old, Atlanta, Georgia

Launched Smooth Mooove Senior Relocation Service (wemoveseniors.com) in October 2002, a moving company dedicated to senior citizens and the disabled.

Earnings $1 million in 2006.

Inspiration "When it came time for my 70-year-old mother to move, she needed help figuring out what to bring, sell and give away. I couldn't find movers that assisted with prep and unpacking, so I did it all, from organizing an estate sale, to shipping designated items to family members and charities, to hanging pictures in the new place. Mom bragged to friends about how she didn't lift a finger, and my phone started ringing with requests to help other elderly people move."

Start-Up Strategies "I took workshops at the Atlanta Women's Economic Development Agency (WEDA) and Score, and joined the Better Business Bureau. Then I bought a used truck, computer, supplies and liability and auto insurance with about $20,000 in credit card advances and severance money from a previous job."

Money-Making Moves "I told retirement community directors about my services, and they started referring

potential clients. Seniors love that we treat them like family; handling the organizing, packing, transporting and setup—even making beds in the new place. It took me three years to turn a $40,000 profit, but I've had fast growth since then. Last year I entered the 'Make Mine A $Million Business' contest, sponsored by OPEN from American Express and Count-Me-In, and won! The prize was a year of mentoring and a $45,000 loan. I'm using the money to franchise my company so other moms can start this home-based service in their states."