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Q&A with **CHRIS GERARDI** Owner, Home Helpers branch**AGE 55 EDUCATION** Bachelor of arts from Northern Illinois University

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Staff photo by Mark Busch

Carrie Gerardi (left), caregiver, Chris Gerardi, owner of Home Helpers, and Carol Phillips, vice president, check out a Direct Link In Home Emergency Monitoring System June 3.



Q + A WITH
Local man
lending home
help **PAGE 3**

Personal ambition drives business launch

By Sarah Small ■ ssmall@mysuburbanlife.com

Woodridge resident Chris Gerardi recently launched his own office of Home Helpers.

Home Helpers has 500 offices nationwide and provides home-care assistance to the elderly, and other people who need living assistance. His office was launched on June 1, and Gerardi is currently operating from his home, but plans to move into an office space in the future.

Q Why did you decide to open your own office of Home Helpers?

A I felt a calling to pursue a personal venture that serves a real need in our society. Our seniors, and others in need, deserve all the support we can muster to assist their desire to live comfortably in their homes and pursue a genuine quality of life. My father died unexpectedly in 1984, and we moved to Woodridge so that we could take my mom, who had Parkinson's disease, into our home and care for her. I empathize with the choices families have to make to ensure their loved ones are cared for compassionately yet need to maintain a sense of normalcy and independence for everyone involved in the situation.

Q Have you seen your number of clients grow? Do you expect it to change in the coming months and years?

A We do expect our business to grow, for several reasons. Generally, people

want to remain in their homes as long as possible. This is their comfort zone, they are established in the community, and they want to maintain a sense of independence. There can be financial challenges with alternatives like assisted living or nursing homes. Home Helpers provides an alternative choice for care.

Q Do you think the economy will be a factor on the success of your business? If yes, how so?

A We do not believe the economy will be a factor to any great extent although every business will be challenged. We truly believe that care giving is not purely a financial decision, as it may make the difference in someone's life and in the quality of life for an entire family.

Q What are some of the most common challenges you see your clients facing?

A Improving and maintaining their intellectual and physical health and wellness so they can enjoy the quality of life they deserve. Client families often become very stressed in accommodating the needs of their loved ones. Often times we see family caregivers suffering more than those they care for because of the mental, emotional, physical and financial hardship of supporting other family members.