

Mom's illness led to start of business

By CAMI JONER
Columbian staff writer

Dan Jackson thought he was ready to retire in 2005, near the end of his 12-year stint as chief financial officer for Portland-based preschool chain KinderCare Learning Centers. So when the company was purchased early that year, Jackson stayed on for an 18-month-long transition, then left his 50-plus-hour-a-week job in mid-2006 to help care for his aging mother, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. The experience — helping with his mother's meals, medications, errands and appointments — gave Jackson the idea to pursue a new business opportunity aimed at providing similar help to a growing population in the market for personal home care.

In mid 2009, Jackson launched a franchise of Home Helpers/Direct Link, which specializes in personal home-care services and also provides emergency response units that monitor homebound people. Despite stiff competition in the home-care market, Jackson said he sees a lot of potential in his new enterprise.

I LEFT BECAUSE: We (KinderCare) were acquired by Knowledge Learning Corp. I stayed on for about a year and a half and then left under the new ownership structure. Everyone left after some time of transition work.

I WAS OUT OF WORK FOR: Three years. I filled the time taking care of my mother, who was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's. I started looking into senior-care possibilities and came across Home Helpers. That made me realize that there

are a lot of seniors out there who, unless they have family nearby, must find it difficult to stay at home.

I RELIED ON: My wonderful wife, Faye Jackson, who is still employed as a school nurse. She supported me as I studied to become a certified senior advisor. She has supported this endeavor and may join me after she retires.

THIS NEW GIG IS: Challenging. Being a small-business owner, you have to do it all, whereas, being a chief financial officer, I had all the tools I needed to handle the payroll and finances. I wear all of those hats now.

ONE THING I MISS ABOUT THE OLD JOB IS: Interacting with people who are all working toward the same goal. Of course, now, it's quite different. I operate from home. But as a national franchise, there are other people you can bounce ideas off of and talk to.

ONE THING I DON'T MISS ABOUT THE OLD JOB IS: The commute into Portland. I did that for too many years.

ONE SURPRISE ABOUT MY NEW JOB IS: I've discovered more about what my strengths are and are not. For example, marketing is a very important part of the job and it's one that I constantly struggle with.

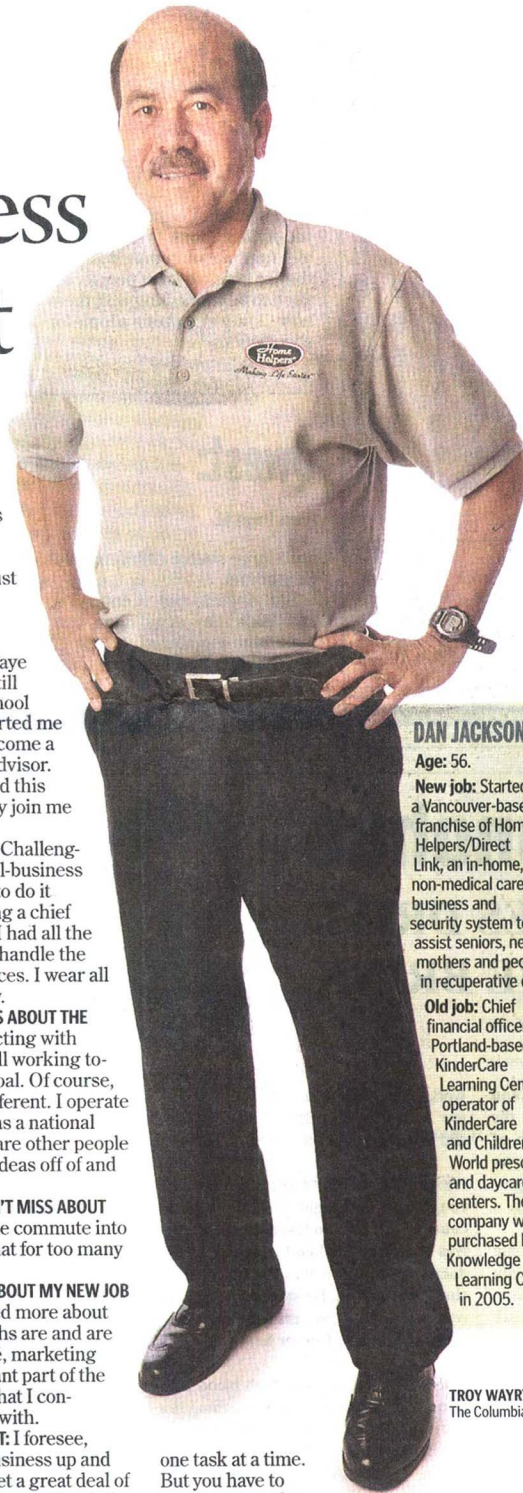
I AM LUCKY THAT: I foresee, once I get the business up and running, I will get a great deal of satisfaction from providing help to others and employment to my staff.

THE HARDEST PART OF THE JOB TRANSITION WAS: Getting into the mind-set that it all rests on your shoulders. If you don't do it, nothing's going to happen.

I LEARNED THAT: You have to tackle things one day at a time,

one task at a time. But you have to continue to make progress in order to become successful.

MY ADVICE: If your option is to start a new business, make sure you are prepared for the amount of work that it will take. If you were looking for a 40-hour-a-week job, starting a new business probably isn't the way to go.



DAN JACKSON

Age: 56.

New job: Started a Vancouver-based franchise of Home Helpers/Direct Link, an in-home, non-medical care business and security system to assist seniors, new mothers and people in recuperative care.

Old job: Chief financial officer of Portland-based KinderCare Learning Centers, operator of KinderCare and Children's World preschool and daycare centers. The company was purchased by Knowledge Learning Corp. in 2005.

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