

Senior-care services: Home Helpers offers support, assistance to area seniors

By Cosby Woodruff • August 22, 2010



Stephen Davis discusses his business, Home Helpers, at the River Region Aging Expo held recently at Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery. (Mickey Welsh)

Stephen and Robyn Davis said a family medical situation that forced them to delay opening their senior assistance business demonstrated just how important such services can be.

Stephen Davis retired last year from the United States Air Force. His final assignment was at Gunter, and with Montgomery being his wife's hometown, they decided to retire here.

At the time, Robyn Davis' father was living with the aftermath of a stroke, and she had plenty of experience caring for him. That experience led her to search out career opportunities in the field, which led the couple to open the Montgomery franchise of Home Helpers, an in-home, non-medical assistance targeted to seniors.

The business was supposed to launch as the last school year ended, but her father died. Robyn Davis noted that a supportive family centered in Montgomery made it easier to care for her father, but also said many older people don't have such a network.

The amount of service varies from as little as respite care to live-in assistance. Respite care is relief for a permanent caregiver, usually a family member, who may need to attend to other things for a few hours.

Live-in care, as the name suggests, provides care around the clock.

Home Helpers employees can provide assistance from preparing and serving meals to cleaning to most other household chores, Stephen Davis said. Medical care is not included.

"This helps them stay in the home," he said. "Economically, it can be a much better way to go."

The services are covered by Medicare on a need basis. On Oct. 1 the company will become a contract provider in Alabama, making it easier to get Medicare benefits, he said.

"We are stepping in when family can't be there," he said.

He said the company and its services are not for every older person, including those who need more medical attention.

"This is one in a set of solutions," he said. "We are finding an increased need for something like this."

The month-old operation already has a handful of clients and about a dozen employees, he said. It will add more employees as its client base grows.

"You want to be prepared when you get that call," he said.

He expects to get the call more often as he builds a list of professionals willing to refer his service. That can include anything from caseworkers at hospitals to other senior service providers.

The company also offers a pair of products for seniors who need some level of assistance.

One called Med-Ready is an electronic medicine dispenser. A responsible person puts pills into slots on the dispenser and programs it to dispense them at a certain time.

The dispenser will alert the senior that it is time to take the medicine, and if the senior does not remove the pills in a specified time, the device will send a report to Home Helpers.

Each senior and his or her family can set up a call list of people to be notified.

Home Helpers also monitors how often the senior does not take his or her medicine on schedule and can suggest additional steps if it becomes too often, Stephen Davis said.

The company also offers a device called the Personal Emergency Response System, a panic-button device that allows seniors to summon help by pushing a button.

Home Helpers can be reached by calling (334) 358-4663.