

Company specializes in personalized care

By FRED POLLARD

ALTON - The area's Home Helpers, a personalized care company serving the Metro East and St. Louis areas, is celebrating its fourth anniversary.

"We started from scratch, opening the first franchise location four years ago this month," co-owner Bill Haug said. "We now have two more locations."

Home Helpers provides homemaker duties, transportation, personal hygiene care, rehabilitation services, medicine dispensing and companionship to residents in need.

"Statistics say 90 percent of seniors prefer to stay in their home environment," Haug said. "We like to see seniors be able to stay in their homes for as long as possible."



Services can be as varied as making beds and ironing clothes to grocery shopping, pet care or even a trip to the park.

Caregivers also provide a listening ear and a strong shoulder, the personal touches often needed most of all.

"We think that makes us different from our competition," Haug said. "Our caregivers are consulted and asked if they want to take a job. They are not told that is their assignment. I believe you are not doing right by either your client or your caregiver when it is not (a good match).

"Between the four of us here at the office, we have all had some kind of personal experience in dealing with home care."

Life experience also assists the 20-plus employees at Home Helpers to relate and work with clients.

"I am most involved with care and aid for veterans," Haug said. "As a Vietnam vet, it is something that is very dear to my heart. They often have a distrust of the government. They sometimes don't understand the assistance available to them, and will ask, 'You are telling me you are giving me money?'"

The staff also specializes in care for Alzheimer's patients.

"We work with Alzheimer's patients and we have a wonderful relationship with that organization," he said. "We also try to stay up with the latest trends and articles dealing with the industry. We have a regular library here on just about every type of disease. For example, many people do not know the

stages of Alzheimer's have expanded from five to seven stages. Many patients sometimes get disoriented or violent as the sun goes down. We have to be on top of things and know how to handle that kind of situation."

Each owner has his or her own niche in the business. Andy Lazor works with marketing and office administration, Sharon Held handles staff and scheduling issues, and Haug spends much of his time with public relations.

"I attend and often speak at many events, including those for veterans such as those at VFW halls," he said.

Haug says concerned family members can contact his company and they take things from there.

"Normally we receive a call or an e-mail," he said. "The first step is to go out and talk with the decision maker, usually the client and/or a family member. We spend as much time as we need to get to know each other. We display a caring attitude and do our best to answer all of their questions.

"All of us, the management, the caregivers, and the clients, are an extended family. We have never been fired by a client and we have never had to fire an employee."

Additional services include assistance with new mothers, respite care, and care for patients with Lou Gehrig's disease.

"It is an interesting and rewarding experience to be in this business," Haug said. "No two clients are alike. Each one is unique and they are all very special to us."

Home Helpers is located at 200 W. Third St. in Downtown Alton. For more information, call (618) 462-2762 or visit the website at www.homehelpersstl.com.