

Roberta Borsella Farnum

HOME INSTEAD SENIOR CARE

2008 WOMAN BUSINESS OWNER OF THE YEAR

"We want to be leaders in changing the way we look at aging in our society," says Roberta Farnum, co-owner of Home Instead Senior Care in Charlotte/Mecklenburg County, and NAWBO's 2008 Woman Business Owner of the Year. "The goal of the company is to help seniors age gracefully in their homes, wherever home is." After eight years at the helm of Home Instead, an international franchise that operates in 12 countries, Farnum is working hard to reach that goal.

As people live longer, and the baby boomer generation reaches senior status, caring for the elderly is becoming more and more important to families across Charlotte, and the country. "We're such a youth-oriented culture," Farnum says. "And we feel that Home Instead can play an active role in changing the whole perception of aging."

When Home Instead opened in 2000, the company was one of the first to delve into the field of non-medical care for seniors at home, offering respite to family caregivers and helping elderly clients remain independent and at home for as long as possible. Services include companionship, personal care, meal preparation, laundry, errands, light housekeeping and transportation. One-third of Farnum's clients are in assisted living or independent living facilities, while others live in apartments or in the "empty-nest" homes where they raised their families.

Home Instead Senior Care in Charlotte/Mecklenburg County employs over 250 caregivers and has served more than 1,600 local seniors and their families. With two offices in the county, the Charlotte/Mecklenburg franchise is one of the largest in North America.

Aging By The Numbers

According to Evercare, a coordination program for the aged, the ill and the disabled, approximately 37 percent of family caregivers spend more than 40 hours a week providing care; and 30 percent spend 20 to 39 hours per week doing so. As the industry that cares for the elderly must continue to grow at a pace that can keep up with the needs of families searching for options available to help older family members age gracefully and "in place," the

demand for quality care has become more and more important.

"We've always attracted great people at Home Instead," Farnum says. "What the aging industry really needs is to recruit and retain this type of dedicated caregiver. We have to look at the realistic requirements of the aged and those who care for them. We may very well have a caregiver shortage crisis on our hands soon."

Looking To The Future

"Needs have changed over the past few years," Farnum continues. "We are moving more toward personal care, which might include daily activities like bathing, grooming, eating, toileting, ambulating." As a result, Home Instead has obtained from the state of North Carolina a license to provide personal care services that may be carried out by certified nursing assistants or in-home staff aides.

In addition to directing her Home Instead operation, Farnum was instrumental in starting the North Carolina chapter of the National Private Duty Association, which helps guide best practices in the home care industry. The impetus to start the Association was, in fact, to help educate the consumer that not all in-home caregivers are the same and are not necessarily licensed by the state. Caregivers who work through Association members must be properly employed by those member companies, to ensure that all caregivers are bonded and insured. They are, therefore, subject to extensive background checks.

As Farnum continues to advocate for high standards in the caregiving industry, her work



Aging Gracefully And In Numbers

1. An estimated 36.8 million people — 12.4 percent of the population — are 65 and older.
2. The U.S. population age 65 and older is expected to double in size within the next 25 years.
3. By 2030, almost 1 in 5 Americans — some 72 million people — will be 65 or older.
4. The 85+ population is projected to double from 4.7 million in 2003 to 9.6 million in 2030 — and double again to 20.9 million in 2050.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2006), www.census.gov

has taken on a more personal meaning. Now in the position that so many of her clients' families face, she and her husband recently moved her almost-90-year-old mother-in-law to live with them in their home, where Farnum is proud to be able to share in the respectful and loving care of a family member. >