

Woman Entrepreneur of the Year finalist: Judith Cuppy

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by: Stephanie Hannum | BT Editor



Judith Cuppy is president/owner of Senior Home Companions Inc.

Judy Cuppy had just moved to Sarasota when the idea came to her while walking along Siesta Key beach. After watching her grandmother spend 18 years in a nursing home and missing the joys of her home, Cuppy thought that people should have a choice to stay in their home. And, thus, a second career was born for the president/owner of [Senior Home Companions Inc.](#)

“After many personal trials, the thought came to me and I figured it was a win-win situation,” says Cuppy. “I am proud that I started the company all by myself.”

That idea became a company that capitalizes on Florida’s plentiful natural resources: active older people who want to do something meaningful while earning extra money and retirees who need help to remain independent. Senior Home Companions, Inc. serves 12 counties in the state of Florida, which includes 321 active caregivers that serve 185 active clients.

To endure the current economic climate, Cuppy has spent more funds on advertising as well as making sure not to raise the company’s prices. In addition, Senior Home Companions Inc. lowered its minimum hour requirement from four hours a day/three days a week to two to three hours a day/three days a week.

“Making that adjustment allowed us to get our foot in the door with more clients, and most of the time, our timing increased,” says Cuppy. “It gave us more exposure.”

The entrepreneur has had a busy year meeting the goals she set for her business last year. Senior Home Companions Inc.’s Palm Beach and Martin county branches are now nurse registries, which allows them to provide more skilled care.

"It may not sound like a lot, but becoming nurse registries is quite a process," says Cuppy. "We are now able to provide medical help, which is a big need. My goal is to change all of our branches, eventually."

Senior Home Companions Inc. now has 29 Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), which is a 50% jump from last year. Cuppy has also committed herself to the Sarasota community. She is involved with the Sarasota Women's Alliance, the International Women's Forum, UNIFEM, Tiger Bay Club and the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe — and she been appointed to the Senior Advisory Council by the Sarasota County Commission.

"I'm a community person and believe that what you take from the community, you give back in time, talent or treasure," she says.

At a glance

Address: 3902 Somerset Drive, Sarasota

Start Date: 1992

Number of employees when started: One. All of our caregivers are independent contractors.

Number of employees now: Seven

Advice for other small business owners: "Be active in the community and always be on call. A missed call is a missed opportunity."

Biggest challenge? "Matching up the right caregiver with clients, for personality and duties. Another challenge is staying on top of and in tune with ever-changing technology."

Where do you see your business a year from now? "I see all of my locations becoming nurse registries and not homemaker companion agencies. That will allow us to provide more skilled care."

Best place to go for a power lunch? "I like the gossip lounge at the Bijou."

What was the first day on the job like? "Very quiet. I had a card table, a chair and a typewriter and that was it. I did everything on a typewriter for about three years and then technology took over, and I was developing computer programs that were compatible for what I needed."

If you could have any job for the day, what would you do? "The one I have currently. I like what I do. If you like what you do, you never work a day of your life."

Who is your business hero/inspiration? "Linda Novey-White — she came up with an idea and went forward with it. She went into hotels and restaurants and put on a wig and a disguise and checked on the personnel and how things were being handled. She went on to open major hotels. She was a really neat gal — she told it like it was."

What is one advantage of having your business in Sarasota? "Sarasota is best place in state of Florida to live because of the culture, beach and the people. It has such a friendly atmosphere."