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Visiting Angels

Senior Home Care in Pottstown



Ten years ago, as the Great Recession was just beginning, the mother and daughter team of Doris and Alycia Wertman, undaunted, made a decision to go into business together.

Doris was a seasoned entrepreneur. For 18 years she ran her Schwenksville-based American Maid Cleaning business from her home, where she could be available for her children and attend their events and activities. By 2008, with her children grown, she was ready to move on to the next challenge. "I felt I'd grown my cleaning business to the point where I didn't want to take it any further," she said.

Doris's daughter Alycia was also at a crossroads in her life. With a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Liberty University, she had spent two years working with teens with psychological and behavioral disabilities. "My upbringing with a Christian background and going on mission trips in high school gave me the heart to want to serve people or help in some way, so I went to school for psychology," she said. "I wasn't really sure after I graduated what I wanted to do, so I worked at a special needs school, and I really enjoyed working with the students, but I didn't feel it was meant for me long term. I had also watched my mother be a business owner for years, and I really thought that was appealing, being your own boss, making your own hours. I was considering going back to get a master's degree in counseling or doing something else when we decided to look at business opportunities together."

The Wertmans initially considered several options until they decided to attend an open house event to learn more about Visiting Angels. Headquartered in Bryn Mawr, with 650 franchises across the U.S. and beyond, Visiting Angels is a well-established, nationally known and respected name in providing senior home care services.



Alycia Wertman and Doris Wertman, Co-Owners Visiting Angels, Pottstown.



Shelly Oxenreider, Staffing Coordinator and Becky Whorley, Scheduling Manager

"We went to a Visiting Angels open house and saw a great need and the opportunity to serve our community, Doris said. "We could work together, and we could also be helping people. We thought that would be so rewarding. We've both always loved the elderly. This just fit right in perfectly for us. We wanted to be able to help them avoid the trauma of leaving their comfortable homes and at the same time provide the quality care they need. We found Visiting Angels to be the perfect avenue to be able to reach out and fill that need in a loving and supportive manner."

Interestingly, as part of the decision-making process of whether to acquire a Visiting Angels franchise, Doris and Alycia took personality tests to see how well they would work together. They were told that their strengths were the complete opposite of each other — and as it turns out, in a good way. Their opposing strengths proved to be complementary rather than conflicting, as Alycia excels in her administrative/financial role in the business, and Doris relishes her role of working directly with clients and their families. "I do all the client care, which I love, love, love," Doris said. "I love getting out and meeting our clients and sitting down with them, finding out what their needs are, doing an assessment, creating a schedule and writing up a care plan and bringing that back to the staff."

"She's a great face of the company," Alycia confirms. "She is wonderful with making the connections with the family. She is just so great at that. I enjoy being behind the scenes making sure everything runs smoothly."

In addition to Doris and Alycia, the current office staff includes Becky Whorley, Scheduling Manager, and Shelly Oxenreider, Staffing Coordinator. "Becky has been awesome and plays a vital part in

what we do on a daily basis," Doris said. "Shelly is our staffing coordinator. Her focus is on hiring and retention. We are always looking for qualified caregivers. They both do a great job."

This year, 2018, Visiting Angels Pottstown is celebrating its 10th Anniversary as the area's leader in non-medical, senior home care, serving families in Montgomery, Chester and Northern Berks Counties. They provide in home Alzheimer's and dementia care, errands/shopping, light housework, medication reminders, meal preparation, hygiene assistance and much more to seniors and adults, so they can remain independent in their own home, no matter where that home may be. Every home care situation is different, and Visiting Angels Pottstown offers flexible arrangements, an array of options, and expert services to clients from a few hours each week, to 24/7 live in care.

Overall, the growth and success of the business over a short ten-year period is remarkable, but the path to success was a challenge in the beginning, as the Great Recession wreaked havoc on the economy.

"It seemed like it would be a recession-proof opportunity and that there was going to be a great need for (senior home care services) in our area," Alycia said, noting that Pennsylvania had the second highest per capita senior population in the country.

Nevertheless, as would be expected with any new business trying to get established in a down economy, things started out slowly. Working out of a small office on Porter Road in Pottstown, Visiting Angels began to acquire clients and establish a reputation for excellence, thereby generating referrals and increasing the number of clients they served. They began adding employee caregivers along the way.

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COVER STORY

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Visiting Angels caregivers are employees, not independent contractors. "They are absolutely employees. We really stress that with all of our clients," Doris explains. "We are 100 percent employee based at Visiting Angels, which means we are bonded and insured and pay Worker's compensation and withhold taxes."

"And we run their background checks," added Alycia, who also manages HR for the company. "We make sure all our caregivers have their TB shots and their required training certifications. We make sure all that is done and up to date. We meet all the state and corporate guidelines."

The business steadily grew from its early beginnings and in 2010 Doris and Alycia hired a scheduler to handle the increasing volume. In 2013, Visiting Angels Pottstown relocated to larger offices at their current location on East High Street in Pottstown, and they expect that continued growth will necessitate another move to larger office space in the near future.

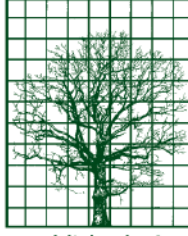
The range of services provided by Visiting Angels Pottstown fall under three umbrellas: Personal Care — which includes bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting and transfers; Housekeeping — light housekeeping,

laundry, meal preparation, etc.; and Companion Care — "The fun stuff," according to Doris. "After all the work is done you might want to make them some lunch and sit down and eat with the client, because that's always so important, keeping them mentally and physically engaged. It may be one short visit a week, or it may be 24-7. We do it all."

Doris and Alycia recognize that each client has a unique set of needs, and care should be unique as well. Doris and her team work closely with families and other health care professionals to create a care plan that addresses all of each client's individual needs. As those needs change, they will adapt that care plan to address any changes in the client's health or well-being.

"With all that is in their care plan, we place journals in the home so that if the daughter or son is only dropping in once or twice a week, the caregiver has notes there for them," Doris explains. "They can see how mom's day was. Did she eat? Did she get in the shower cooperatively? Once Alzheimer's hits they don't want to get a shower anymore. We deal with all kinds of issues."

Doris and Alycia also stress that Visiting Angels Living Assistance services are provided by experienced caregivers who understand the importance of providing quality care with compassion, dignity and respect. They believe in treating each client like family. Providing



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"We all want to be home as we age, even throughout our final days, if at all possible," Doris said. "To do that with dignity is much easier if a caregiver is going into the home providing care one on one. Our caregivers truly have the desire to have that relationship with the senior and make that personal connection. They really enjoy the bond that is formed, providing in-home care with Visiting Angels."

Visiting Angels services begins with an in-home assessment and then by matching

each client with a caregiver who has the skills to care for them.

Doris also points out that caregivers and office staff are in regular communication with each other and with each client's family to discuss the care being provided. They also have a system of follow up and monitoring that includes frequent phone calls and at home visits. This system of monitoring helps Visiting Angels to ensure the client is well cared for and that they are getting along well with their caregiver.

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COVER STORY

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Visiting Angels also empowers the caregiver for each client to follow up with the office or family if they notice any changes in the client's health or well-being. They have the skills and training to notice even the smallest changes in demeanor.

Employment Opportunities

Visiting Angels is always looking for qualified, reliable, compassionate, caregivers with a desire to make a meaningful difference in someone's life. "We're always told we should hire before the need is there, so we try to always be one step ahead," Doris said. "We're always hiring. We don't just want to hire anybody. We want to hire people that we know are going to be consistent and do a good job," she said, adding "We really emphasize retention. Our Staffing Coordinator's job is to provide incentives. Our clients like to see the same caregiver on a regular basis, so we really strive to have consistency and make our caregivers feel appreciated.

"It definitely takes a special person to be a caregiver," Alycia added. "We give them a lot of credit. They are wonderful people."

Speaking of wonderful people, Doris and Alycia are grateful for the support and encouragement they received from fellow members of the Pottstown Rotary Club as they established and grew their Pottstown-based business.

"When we first came to Pottstown, we really didn't know the area." Doris explains. "We saw Rotary as the ideal opportunity to get to know other business owners and get established in the town. It's actually worked out really well for us. I know some people join Rotary for business leads. We didn't necessarily do that. We went there to form relationships. That's also helped us to get involved in the community which in turn has given us the opportunity to give back.

"We didn't have any idea what kind of relationships we'd be able to build through Rotary" Alycia added. "We've been able to make close friends. It's been a really great experience. Rotary has helped us grow as business owners and as leaders. I think that's one of my favorite parts about being a business owner. It is constantly challenging you to grow as a person, overall. You need to look at yourself and work on yourself at all times."

"We are thankful to have had the opportunity to serve the Pottstown and surrounding communities," Doris said. "It has sincerely been an honor and a privilege to assist families in the area when they find themselves at a very vulnerable time in their lives. As family, Alycia and I both know on a personal level, how great the concern is to be certain our loved one is treated with dignity and respect."

Visiting Angels Pottstown is located at 2151 E High St Suite A, Pottstown, PA 19464; Phone: 610-906-1924. For additional information, please visit: www.VisitingAngels.com/Pottstown.

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