

Buckley's for Seniors offers care for area's aging residents **By KATHRYN STREETER**

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"My stress level is way down because I have Buckley's for Seniors" says Becky Choi, 44.

Although it was the right decision to have her father Keewhan Choi, 75, who suffers from dissociative amnesia, move in, driving him around was overwhelming. Choi found peace of mind when she found Buckley's for Seniors, a small business designed to meet the cornucopia of needs experienced by our eldest or disabled citizens.

Now employee Maggie Rettig, 62, of Old Town, does the driving and Choi doesn't feel one ounce of guilt. The relief that came with employing Buckley's was as real as the stress it replaced.

Attorney Buckley Kuhn, 32, president of Buckley's, dreamed the business into existence early in 2005 with long-time friend Tamara Clarke. With a staff of 14 part-time employees and a rapidly growing clientele which spans the D.C. metro area, Buckley's has found their niche based on the belief that established models of senior care had some holes: "We simply fill in the gap between existing service providers," says Kuhn, whose belief in the viability of Buckley's was cultivated while working at an elder law firm.

Multi-tasked

Working hand-in-hand with the retirement communities and in-house nursing care, the fully licensed, bonded and insured Buckley's meets the demand for sophisticated, yet still everyday kinds of tasks. At \$45 per hour, services run the gamut, including ordering a gift or product; overseeing home maintenance; and designing stimulating activities, services which "seniors were still largely forced to rely on family and friends who could lend a hand when free."

Sixty-percent of Buckley's clientele reside alone or with family, while 40 percent live in assisted living facilities. Unofficial partnerships with numerous facilities such as The Gables in Mt. Vernon and several Sunrise homes around the metro

area have been "mutually beneficial," said Clarke, "and we are proud and grateful to have earned such an impeccable reputation with such institutions and take very seriously the trust and responsibility that's been placed in us."

Personal attention

Formerly a manager with AT&T, Maggie Rettig says, "From my perspective, what is unique is the personal attention that Buckley's staff can give individual clients and tailor outings to that particular client's interests."

Though retired from the military, Inez Bailey, in her late 80's "still likes to go out." Her niece Deborah Dorsey says, "but she needs someone by her side. What would happen to Aunt Inez if I lived out of town?" she asked, applauding the help which Buckley's offers for those challenged with caring for their aging loved-ones.

Rettig, who has lunch dates with Baily regularly drives other clients to doctor appointments and grocery shops for others, will soon be going on museum excursions with a new client. "Buckley's provides a wide range of services, tailored to individual client needs," she said.

Brimming with personal testimony, Buckley's is riding high because of personal connection, not mere competency. Once, Rettig arrived to fetch retired biostatistician Keewhan Choi with an article relating to his field, an act he deeply appreciated.

What's the motivation? "It's the knowledge that I can make a difference in someone's life - sounds pretty corny but it's true," said Rettig of her commitment to her clients.

Clarke, who describes her job as "exhilarating," says that many of their clients have poor vision or hearing and so want help with phone calls, mail, bills and driving. "They hire us on just to be their eyes and ears for a bit," Clarke said.

When a medical condition requires a nurse, Buckley's will gladly drive client and nurse to any desired location, be it Target or a haircut appointment.

The service seems a salvation to many like Choi, who says that now she's free to focus on her business without compromising her father's care. "Buckley's offers him independence if he wants it," Choi said.

Growing so rapidly can present its own dangers and Kuhn is looking to the future. "We are working to ensure smart growth and to establish a lasting foundation."