



by Irene Hurst

• Director
USF Small Business Development Center
www.sbdc.usf.edu • hurst@coba.usf.edu

Boomer Care

Over 7,900 baby boomers turned 60 each day in 2006. Based on census data, the estimated baby boomers as of July 2005 are over 78 million. This trend opens opportunities for those in the home health care industry to strategically grow their business. Susanne Wise, founder of Take Care Private Duty Home Health Care in Sarasota, has done just that.

Wise earned her MBA while working as a nurse and raising three children. Independence, ability to chart her own course and disillusion with what she saw in home health care services motivated Wise to start her own business in 1995 with four employees and herself as the nurse.

Within 30 days she had so much business, Wise hired 25 more employees. Two years later, she opened her second location in Venice with over 100 employees. Within two years she started a third location in Bradenton, employing a total of 160 people. Wise has been able to grow her business organically through networking and building a solid reputation in the community. Currently, Take Care employs 600 people with annual sales near \$16 million.

Her experience as a nurse has set the foundation for the company to be client-focused. Says Wise: "I am a nurse first and business woman second. I'm very passionate about what I do as a caregiver. From the client's standpoint, my company has been trusted to take care of their loved one in their own home. I take that trust very seriously."

Wise started Take Care Transport in 2000 to meet the needs of clients, even though this service is a cost center from a business standpoint. Currently, this business supports itself, and she has upgraded the fleet of vans.

Major challenges are balancing the unpredictability of client needs with managing the number of qualified staff on her payroll; the ever-increasing cost of workers' compensation insurance; and high cost of liabilities, especially in the transportation business. To overcome those challenges, she has developed aggressive procedures for her employees to follow in providing services to minimize injuries to clients and staff. Take Care's employee turnover rate of 20 percent is half the industry average.

To keep a winning team, Take Care (www.takecarehomehealth.com) provides a flexible schedule, health and dental insurance, 401K, safety rewards, uniform compensation, bonuses and other incentives.

Wise also believes in being accessible to her employees and clients. As the owner of the company, she still takes calls from clients as well as their families. "Being successful requires commitment, passion and hard work," she says. ■