

but began looking for an option that would allow her more flexibility to devote time to her daughter. As a result, she founded Helping Seniors two years ago.

From her experiences in retirement residences, Giguère knew first-hand how stressful moving could be for senior citizens. Her company offers a relocation service to assist seniors in all aspects of their move. But Marie-Claude Giguère wanted to do more. She also offers seniors an alternative to moving: for those able to continue living independently, she evaluates their needs and provides referrals for services such as housekeeping, home nursing and snow removal.

People are often at a loss as to what they should look for when moving into a retirement residence. To assist in the process, Giguère has compiled a booklet, *The 65+ Key Questions You Must Ask When Looking For A Residence*. The booklet covers every aspect of residences, from budgets and locations to specific requirements like furnished apartments or kosher meals.

What makes Helping Seniors different from other relocation services is the personalized attention each client receives. Giguère has personally visited and assessed more than 100 retirement residences in the Montreal area. She evaluates the residence on the basis of many different criteria, including location, services offered, clientele, languages spoken, common areas and sizes of apartments available.

When clients contact Giguère, the first step is to meet with them and discuss their needs. She assesses them with a lengthy questionnaire, designed to find out exactly what they require and expect of a new home.

frightening. She says that looking for a residence "was the hardest thing I've ever done." Giguère's manner made all the difference in the experience. "Marie-Claude was professional, but more than just that. You get the feeling that she really wanted what was best for us."

After meeting with Giguère and assessing their needs, Cumas and her mother, Helen Gardner, were presented with four possible residences and ended up choosing the very first one they visited. Both mother and daughter "knew it was the right place" immediately.

Gardner now has been in her new home for several weeks and says that she is "quite happy in the new place. Everything turned out well."

While still in the early stages of her business, Giguère consulted with Dawna Weippert, co-ordinator of the entrepreneurship program at Youth Employment Services. Weip-

simple: "Remember your priorities and why you are in business in the first place." While she is now a successful entrepreneur, Giguère's priority is still her family and she is learning to juggle her growing business while raising a 3-year-old daughter and a 6-month-old son. She also encourages entrepreneurs to have a support system in place. Giguère's husband is not only fully supportive of her activities, he also acts as her sounding board.

For Giguère, Helping Seniors is not just about referring people to services that can help them. It's about the whole experience of being a senior today, and what can be done to ease the stress for everyone involved.

*For more information on Helping Seniors or for a free copy of The 65+ Key Questions You Must Ask When Looking For A Residence, call Marie-Claude Giguère at (514) 748-7485.*



HOWARD KAY

Marie-Claude Giguère visits with Helen Gardner (left), one of the clients for whom she found a residence.