

They'll even gas up your car

Name the task, and concierge services will take care of it for you

BY MICHELLE MYERS | CONTRIBUTOR

Think concierge services are only for guests at ritzy hotels or tenants in Park Avenue condos? Quite the contrary.

There are a couple of companies on the North Fork whose services include such menial tasks as taking your clothes to the dry cleaners, filling your car with gas or accepting delivery of an urgent package.

"It's all part of being a full-service house-minder," said Alan Kahn, owner of North Fork Caretaker in Cutchogue.

Mr. Kahn started his business about a year ago after moving to the East End full-time.

"I had been coming out here for 30 years and bought a house about eight years ago," he said. "All that time as a weekender made me realize this was a service that would be really useful to second-home owners."

Of course, caretaking services are not new in areas with a lot of second homes, but what is innovative is the range of jobs caretakers will take on. In the case of Mr. Kahn's company, two hours of concierge services are included in a standard monthly house-minding contract.

Mr. Kahn's monthly service also includes a house check once a week. "The real part of the service is the protection of the house itself," he said. "Especially in winter. If the temperature goes below 20 degrees, I'm at your house."

Mr. Kahn also offers concierge services to seniors on an hourly basis without requiring a contract requirement. (He calls it his "Second Son" service.)

"I'll check things like propane and oil levels, windows and doors. It's really peace of mind for weekenders," he said.



JAY WEBSTER PHOTOS

Alan Kahn, owner of North Fork Caretaker, inspects a central air conditioning unit at a home in Cutchogue, one of the more common tasks his concierge business sees to for second-home owners.

"I have a new client who told me he wasn't sure how things are done out here in terms of diagnosing problems and calling in the right people to handle them," he said. "That's where I come in handy because I can act as a go-between with homeowners and vendors."

The peace of mind that caretaking can provide is particularly valuable in winter when second homeowners either close up their homes or come out on an irregular basis.

"I can't do plumbing or electrical work even though I have some experience, because I'm not licensed, but I can put the client in touch with people who can," said Mr. Kahn.

The concierge services offered by both companies really run the gamut. "I'll take on virtually anything I'm permitted to do by law," said Mr. Kahn. "One very common request I've had is to

FedEx a forgotten Blackberry, but I've also delivered Christmas trees and made sure the boat was ready for the summer."

On a final note, Mr. Kahn says that while concierge requests can be fun — the oddest mission he's had so far was to travel to Oyster Bay to check out an exotic car for a client — the real point of a home minding service is to provide protection for homeowners.

"It's a cost versus value calculation," he said. "Many people might consider scaling back in this economy and if you're lucky, nothing will happen. Yes, there's insurance, but the deductibles are huge and the hassle of repairing some disaster that could have been avoided makes having someone minding your house good value for money."

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