



Kristin Kopp '92

Major – Elementary Education

Company/Position – At Home Solutions, LLC, President/Founder

1. What have you been doing since you left Saint Ben's?

I volunteered for 14 months with the Christian Appalachian Project in Kentucky right after graduation. When I returned, I worked for a Foundation, non-profits and social service agencies serving seniors, adults and children with disabilities and families in crisis for almost 15 years. I wanted a complete life change after feeling burnt out and became a Flight Attendant for 4 years with NWA then quit to get back into "meaningful" work. I interviewed with other home care companies in the Twin Cities, knew I wanted to do it differently and create a more unique niche, and decided to start a local, non-franchised company on my own. At Home Solutions, LLC was launched in April 2006.

2. Explain your current profession.

I founded At Home Solutions, LLC to provide companion and hands on assistance for seniors and adults with disabilities in the seven county metro area. Our mission is to assist adults who need Caregiver, Home Management, Concierge and Home Health Care services to stay safe and as independent as possible long-term. We provide services either in our client's homes, assisted living, nursing home or apartment / townhome settings. Our youngest client was in her 30's and our oldest client is 98 so our main focus is adults, but we assist *any* person in transition that needs some Companion assistance either short or long term.

3. How did Saint Ben's prepare you for this?

St. Ben's was instrumental in encouraging me to seek work that has purpose. The Benedictine philosophy of listening deeply to others, understanding what they need, and figuring out how to be of service to them has set the precedent of how we operate today. Most of us have worked in big corporations and understand how easily it is to get "lost", detached and question our purpose in being there. I wanted to establish a different model – to support each member of our team daily with positive encouragement, high level of respect partnered with professionalism and competency. This is the key to our success and longevity of our employees. I still have one of my very first employees on board with us that I hired almost 3 years ago now!

4. What are some of the issues/challenges that you face in this position?

There are several thousand home care companies just in Minnesota alone. Our competition is enormous and we certainly have our work cut out for us to make sure people understand how we are different and to make ourselves unique. Because we are woman-owned, locally owned and operated (not a franchise) and have the lowest time minimums in town each week, we are ideally positioned to remain fluid and flexible. Our service lines can be easily adapted to provide exceptional service to our clients and families.

5. With an aging population – how will you adapt your business plan to meet increasing needs?

Our population in the nation, including Minnesota, is going to age rapidly over the next few decades:

- From US Census Bureau
- In 1900, 1 in 25 Americans were 65+
- In 2000, 1 in 8 Americans were 65+ (34 million)
- By 2030, 1 in 5 Americans are going to be 65+ (86.7 million) that's 17 times the current population of the state of MN now
- In MN (Transform 2010, MN Dept of Human Services)
- 1.3 million people will be over 65 by 2030 which will be 20% of our population

- 85+ age group will triple from 95,000 to 324,000 from 2005 to 2050

This is going to impact our transportation, workplaces, housing and health care. We are positioning ourselves to be here long term providing an array of non-medical and medical services to provide peace of mind for our families who are both close by and out of state. We continue to listen and ask for feedback from both our clients and caregivers as to what changes we need to make in our programming and training to keep them well informed and cared for many years to come.

6. Advice to other alums or students considering this field/profession/life choice?

Start volunteering or working in the field to make sure you are really interested in working with this age population. Not everyone is interested or has the ability to partner with older adults, which is fine. We are all different with various passions and interests. I meet people weekly who go into this field because of where the population trends are headed, rather than they really like or believe in the work. It's a disservice to both you and the families you are going to serve.

7. Advice in regards to starting a new business and the struggles you have encountered as a new business owner?

Get help right away, keep getting help (especially for the first 5 years) and don't be afraid to ask questions or change your business model to be successful and make it long term. I got advice and took classes right from the beginning and if I didn't do that I'd be sunk. Since we're not a franchise, I had to learn everything myself and create it all from scratch. Learn from others who have already been there, done that. It will make your life easier, keep you saner and your family and friends will appreciate it too.

8. Are you a volunteer in your community – if so, what organization?

I have volunteered ever since I was in grade school – this is something my parents, Lee and Barbara Kopp, expected from us right from the beginning. For the past several years, I have been a Meals on Wheels driver both in St. Paul and Edina. I am also on several boards as a volunteer: Minneapolis Area Senior Workers Association, Southdale YMCA, and Fireside Leadership Committee Chapter, a networking group of professionals. My goal is to limit these commitments for a while so I can focus more on our growth, but it has been a great way to get to know others both in and outside the senior field. When I started, I was in 13 networking groups; now we are still in 10.

9. What is your favorite memory from Saint Ben's?

I had a buddy through the "sister-student" matching program. It was Sr. Adrainne who cleaned our library on a daily basis. When I saw her I admired her hard work, attention to detail, how involved and interested she was in the students and her positive attitude. I have lost track of her, but we would often attend mass both at CSB and SJU together, go on walks, eat dinner and share our stories. She was a lovely woman, I'm sorry I lost touch with her.

10. Favorite Restaurant?

Fireside Pizza in Richfield, MN

11. Last book you read?

"Gone Tomorrow" by Lee Child

12. Favorite movie?

"Some Kind of Wonderful"

13. General advice to current students...

Many people after they graduate never use the degree that they studied 4 years for. I have always suggested to my nieces and nephews that they take time off before going on to secondary education to figure out what they want to do. I wish I would have done this as it would have saved a lot of poor decisions and money. I have changed careers about 5 times since then and finally feel I have found the right place for me to be.

College can give you a very well rounded education and experience to prepare you for many eventualities that are coming your way. I would encourage you to volunteer, get a mentor, and seek apprenticeships or internships to figure out exactly what feels right to you. Don't settle on what you think you "should" be doing. We only get to go around once – figure it out as early as possible and in the meantime know that what you are going through is the right thing for you at the time and is a great learning experience – how you respond to it can make you an even better person.

Here's a quote that I received lately that really hits home in regards to this:

There are many paths, but there is
always one path for you with a heart.
It's yours. No one else can point it
out for you, but your heart knows.

It's the path that feels right, even if
it looks crazy to others. It might; it's
not their path.

You know what you need to know,
but you may need to quiet your mind
to hear your heart whisper to you.

Turn off the noise, shut down the
chatter in your head, listen quietly to
your heart. It's been trying to talk to
you.

Learn what you already know. Do it.
Then you can remind others that they
know, too.

We are all learners, doers and
teachers.

The path with heart is a miracle!

- Wes Hopper, Daily Gratitude -

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