

IT'S A LIVING

An every day 'Girl Friday'

BY FRED SIMPSON
Staff Writer

If you're living on borrowed time, Lisa Dyer may be just the person you need in your life.

She's a 'Girl Friday' for every day of the week.

"I actually do wardrobing for quite a few men," said Dyer, who was catching her breath in between buying groceries for her clients, running errands and maybe even purchasing furniture on their behalf.

"Some of them don't have the time to go shopping or simply hate doing it."

That's where Dyer enters the scene with her year-old one-woman Borrowed Time service.

Borrowed Time, she says, is "dedicated to providing customized, personal services to help save your time."

People are very busy these days and it can be a hectic time keeping their household together.

"Our full range of services means there's no need for you to run all over town to get things done."

Operating out of Aurora, Dyer travels all over the GTA in a never-ending crusade to save her client's valuable time.

Borrowed Time offers a variety of services including gift buying, shopping, errands, outsourcing and co-ordinating services.

It's also one of very few personal assistant services in Canada and the only one located in York Region, said Dyer.

"People are very busy these days and it can be a hectic time keeping their household together."

Her customers include business owners, business managers, entrepreneurs, right down to single moms who "need an extra hand."

"One of my clients is a single mother with six children. She's also an actress, so it gets pretty hectic keeping the household together, so I do the grocery shopping for her," she said.

"I also did some Christmas buying for her as well, steering her to a lot of home services such as finding her a nanny, and finding someone to put up her Christmas lights."

A typical day for Dyer will usually see her start off grocery shopping.

"Morning is the time I usually do personal shopping, running errands, or even just mailing a letter," she said.

"I have people I shop for on an ongoing basis. They give me a standard shopping list and can fax additional lists to me."

"I not only purchase the groceries but I drop them off at the home and put them away if requested."

Dyer tries to leave afternoons for last minute requests or special jobs that may come up.

"I did a lot of Christmas gift buying last year for people who wanted to avoid the last-minute rush."

Dyer acknowledges that women tend to be "more hesitant" in letting someone else shop for them, but they soon learn to have confidence in her tastes.

But men are a pushover. "I've purchased everything for men from running shoes to a complete wardrobe," she said.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Lisa Dyer of Aurora runs a Girl Friday business called Borrowed Time and has a steady flow of customers who ask her to gift, grocery and clothes shop. Dyer even set up one man's new condominium, selecting everything from drapes to dressers and cutlery to linens.

On one occasion, a male customer had just bought a new condominium apartment and wanted "everything brand new."

"I spent 2-1/2 weeks shopping for him and buying everything from dishes, cutlery, glasses, furniture, right down to sheets for the bed."

She even chose colour combinations for the ceiling, walls and floors.

"I got to know his tastes and basically I bought everything sight unseen for him. I had to return only one item, a larger dresser, to the store," she said.

Dyer agrees that buying for people can be nerve-racking at times.

"You have different type personalities to deal with," she said. "That's why it's very beneficial for someone to hire me on an ongoing basis so I do get to know them and their lifestyle."

Borrowed Time is more than just a shopping agency, it also offers other services.

"I won't dust your furniture for you," said Dyer, "but I can pick up the phone and refer someone to you who will do it."

She does recall that on one occasion she was in a private home waiting for the delivery of a new bed.

"The delivery people had said they would set it up but left without doing it. So I put it together myself."

Nothing to it. Dyer came up with her "personal assistance" idea while employed as a

store retail manager. She has more than 16 years of specialty retailing and promotion experience.

"It was especially bad at Christmas with a lot of people obviously frustrated shoppers," she said.

"I put together a service where people could phone and give us their list and then we would do the shopping for them."

"All they had to do was come into the store and pay for the articles."

It was then that Dyer got the inspiration to go into full-time business herself.

"I thought offering a personal shopper service would be a great idea."

It was. Business is good.

"People are getting busier and busier all the time and that's where I come in," she said.

Dyer now has 15 regular ongoing clients and at any given time has from one to 50 projects on the go.

She is also her only employee at the moment but hopes to expand in the near future.

Most services range from \$20 to \$30 an hour, and gift certificates are available.

As for who shops for the busy Dyer? "My husband," she smiles.

(For additional information on Borrowed Time and the services it offers, call Lisa Dyer at (905) 726-9904 or e-mail dyer@sprint.ca)

Markham Youth Theatre auditions for Superstar

Markham Youth Theatre is gearing up for the millennium with five shows.

On Feb. 18 is *You Laughin' at Me?*, an improv comedy cavalcade. Tickets are available through the MYT hotline at (416) 410-4001.

Next is the much anticipated third annual spring production of *Jesus Christ Superstar in Concert*. Auditions are this month for singers and musicians. Call the hotline to set up a time.

This summer, MYT hopes to once again have two productions at the Civic Centre's outdoor amphitheatre. In June, *Playing in the Park 2000*, a collection of original one-act plays, followed by Shakespeare's *Lovers in July*.

The fall mainstage production will be the The Who's legendary rock opera *Tommy*.

Vancouver Chinese Performing Artists

Hotel, the French comedy written by Georges Feydeau and Maurice Desvallieres, will be performed by the Vancouver Chinese Performing Artists entirely in Cantonese at Markham Theatre for six shows only, Jan. 27 to 30.

This co-production with Network Production & Communication is part of Markham Theatre's multicultural programming initiative that began last year with the sold-out run of Ray Cooney's *Run For Your Wife*, performed by the same troupe.

The classic farce plot, revolving around two couples staying at a hotel and the ensuing attempts at secret affairs, is guaranteed to bring the house down with laughter. This production was recently performed to critical acclaim in Vancouver as part of the Millennium Celebrations.

The Vancouver Chinese Performing Artists troupe was established in 1995 with a mandate to provide theatrical entertainment to the Chinese community in Vancouver. Over the past five years, the society has performed a number of dramas and comedies — the most successful being *Run For Your Wife* — which included the Markham Theatre run.

The society is comprised of film and television actors who have attracted Chinese fans from around the world during the span of their careers. Gigi Tsui, Chik Sum Sam Wong, Y.T. Patricia Leung, Kai Shu Ngai, Ngan Mei Soo and Wai Keung Poon bring their talents to Markham Theatre and promise to grow their loyal fan base with their outstanding comedic talents.

Show times for *Hotel* are Jan. 27 to 28 at 8 p.m., Jan. 29 to 30 at 2:30 and 8 p.m. Ticket prices are \$38 and \$55 and are available by calling the box office at 305-7469, Monday through Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Quartette with Stuart McLean

Quartette with Stuart McLean promises a performance of outstanding musical talent and remarkable storytelling at the Markham Theatre, Feb. 1 and 2 at 8 p.m.

Caitlin Hanford, Gindy Church, Gwen Swick and Sylvia Tyson join voices and hearts as Quartette. Together they create a musical mosaic of R&B, soul, cajun and gospel, all solidly rooted in folk and country. Since its first appearance at Toronto's Harbourfront in the summer of 1993, Quartette has become one of the most dynamic and inspiring musical collaborations on the Canadian music scene.

This wonderful music by Quartette will be interspersed with performances by the award winning writer, journalist and host of CBC Radio's Vinyl Café, Stuart McLean, one of Canada's best known and loved storytellers, with many popular best-selling books to his credit.

Tickets are \$29.95 and are available at the box office, 171 Town Centre Blvd., Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., or by calling 305-7469.

Annual skating party next week

Cedarena is celebrating its 73rd annual skating party next Tuesday from 7:30 to 10 p.m. This event is for adults 18 years of age and over. Admission is \$5 and includes hot chocolate and doughnuts. There will be door and spot prizes as well.

To get to this event, take Hwy. 7 to Reesor Road (formerly 10th Line) then two miles south to Cedar Grove. For more information, call 294-0038.