

# Labour of Love



JEANNEKE PHOTO

by Ryan LeClaire

*Michael Stark, Owner of Simcoe Huronia Home Services, Barrie*

It may not be flowers or a nice dinner, but Michael Stark's decision to register his business name on his mom's birthday was as thoughtful as it was significant.

Stark registered Simcoe Huronia Home Services on November 4th, 2002, in honour of his mother, Sheila, who was his inspiration to start his own business.

"It started with my mother coming from Toronto to Barrie. And she always wanted to remain independent, just like a lot of other parents who don't want to bother their siblings or friends with their household chores," said Stark.

"So I started helping my mom with a long list of chores that she had. Then she started telling her friends how good a job I was doing and so on...all of a sudden I'm getting phone calls from people that say 'I'm a friend of so-and-so, you're helping them with this, can you help me?'"

From there, Stark turned doing a few odd jobs for his mom and her friends into a thriving business in an emerging market.

"People want to keep their independence, but their age-related illnesses keep them from doing their chores, so that's where we step in...we do house cleaning, window washing, grass cutting and anything around the home to help keep people inde-

pendent."

Since 2002, Simcoe Huronia Home Services has built a reputation of dedicated reliability by only missing four appointments in seven years.

"And those four were because of freezing rain," said Stark.

They have also built a reputation for being friendly and never too busy to sit and visit with their clients, according to Stark.

"A lot of our clients look forward to the girls or me coming over...it's like a big happy family, to tell you the truth. We have a lot of laughs."

He added he's been treated to many great war stories from some his clients who served in World War II, which is why he's proud to work with the area's veterans. "They're getting to the age now where they need help. I'm a registered service provider for Veterans

Affairs. And what that means is, whatever services they qualify for, I can come in and do for them, and all they have to do is sign the sheet."

Stark is currently fighting his own battle in trying to help his clients pay fewer taxes. He refers to having to charge his clients the GST as "a thorn in my side," and wants to take his fight to the government.

"We're starting a petition and want to take those signatures and present them to the government. We want to tell them you shouldn't be taxing seniors for services in their own homes."

The petition will be online at Simcoe Huronia Home Services' website in June, along with a list of places where you can sign in person. Anyone interested in signing is encouraged to visit [www.homehelpunderstood.ca](http://www.homehelpunderstood.ca).