Donna Reynolds searches for a set of sheets on sale at Kohl's on Tuesday for a client in Coralville. Reynolds' service business does just about any errands or tasks clients ask her to do.

Up and running

Marion woman takes on clients' to-do lists

By Cindy Hadish
The Gazette

MARION — Donna Reynolds doesn't wish she could be in two places at once, but she knows many people who do.

The 43-year-old Marion woman's impressive time management skills and high energy level are a perfect fit for her home-based business that is nearing its anniversary.

Home Run Errands began in February as a service for busy couples or the elderly who need shopping done or dry cleaning picked up, house sitting for vacationers and many other options.

The idea came from a need Reynolds observed among the elderly people she visited.

When taking communion to homebound church members, one woman commented that her smoke detector had been beeping for a week. Others needed light bulbs changed or just companionship.

"It started with that," Reynolds said.

She took out a loan and printed brochures that provide a rate scale from $6 for a quick errand — under 10 minutes — to $75 for 20 hours.

Her brochures and a slogan on her car, a boxy white Scion, tout the message: "We will do just about anything as long as it's legal and ethical."

Some would-be clients don't heed the message.

Reynolds laughed as she described a call from one man who wanted a companion. Reynolds said she plays cards and visits the elderly as part of her services, but the man wanted something more.

"I told him, 'I don't think you want me,'" she said, joking that her "errands" listing is next to "escorts" in the phone book.

Teenagers who see the phone number on her car have also called, asking if she'll deliver alcohol for parties. Some have called at 2 a.m., requesting beer.

"I don't do that," Reynolds said, adding she turns down jobs that seem suspicious.

The majority of her clients are working couples who don't seem to have enough time to get everything done, and small businesses that need deliveries, but can't spare an employee to leave the work site.

"She's great with our customers," said Amy Householder, manager of Via Panera Catering, an arm of Panera Bread. Reynolds has delivered food for the northeast Cedar Rapids caterer since August.

A somewhat disheartening sign of the times has also been a boon for business. People who formerly relied on neighbors for house sitting aren't as trusting, Reynolds noted.

One couple found that a neighbor had been going through their mail while they were away, she said.

Reynolds also works part-time as a food broker, placing new items in stores, but still has time to do her own and others' errands.

"It's so effortless for me," she said, adding that only on her busiest days has she contemplated hiring her own employees. "I'd like a whole fleet of Scions running around."

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Farmer deaths expected to draw attention to safety

By Kerry Sill

BUFFALO, N.Y. — A report released last week by the Farm Safety Foundation of New York showed that 14 farmers died in agricultural accidents in the state in 2018, the highest number of deaths in 10 years.

The report, which was released on April 15, found that the majority of deaths were caused by machinery accidents, followed by accidents involving pesticide exposure.

The Farm Safety Foundation of New York, which is a nonprofit organization, said it has been tracking farm deaths since 1990 and that 2018 was the first year in which more than 10 farmers died in agricultural accidents.

The report also found that the number of farmers killed in agricultural accidents has been on the rise in recent years, with 10 farmers dying in 2011, 12 in 2012, and 13 in 2013.

The report calls for increased safety regulations and training for farmers, as well as more research into the causes of farm deaths.

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Food, fuel costs push inflation to 17-year high

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The consumer price index rose 0.2% in April, driven by higher costs for food and gasoline.

The Labor Department said Tuesday that the cost of food rose 0.5%, led by a 1.3% increase in the cost of fresh and prepared foods. The cost of energy rose 0.7%, driven by a 5.1% increase in gasoline prices.

The overall index rose 2.4% from a year earlier, the fastest pace since 2008.

The core inflation rate, excluding food and energy, rose 0.1% in April and 2.1% from a year earlier, which is the highest rate since November 2012.

More information:

The consumer price index is published monthly by the Labor Department and is used to track the cost of living for urban consumers.

The core inflation rate is calculated by excluding food and energy prices from the overall index.

The overall index is adjusted for seasonal factors and is used to help determine how much people are paying for things like rent, utilities, and transportation.