



LET'S GET PERSONAL:

ASSISTANTS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

BY DANA SHAVIN

For some people, the heart of luxury lies in their surroundings — in beautiful homes, fine cars, exquisite meals or travel to exotic locales. For others, luxury lies in enlisting the help of qualified professionals to help manage the specifics of day-to-day life.

Whether it's a professional organizer to get your home or office whipped into shape, a personal concierge to help you plan an event or clean your airplane hangar, a trainer to get you ready for a marathon, a gardener to beautify your estate, a professional pet sitter to walk Fido, a personal stylist to help you look your best, or your very own pilot to fly you and a friend to dinner, help is out there. And the feeling of having your very own team of assistants is, well, luxurious.

Chatter interviewed local professionals who offer such practical tastes of the good life, should you end up with the budget — or just a need — for such services. They may just be more affordable than you think.

PHOTO: TIM BARBER



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ANDREW TAYLOR NEWMAN

PILOT, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR CRYSTAL AIR INC.

License and qualifications: Commercial pilot with 23 years of experience.

Services: Personal, charter flights to destinations near and far.

Cost to hire him: A few hundred dollars per person for an average flight, to thousands of dollars per person, depending on the customer's needs.

WHO TYPICALLY HIRES YOU?

Individuals and businesses, from small to Fortune 500.

WHY DO PEOPLE HIRE YOU?

Convenience. We can fly into small airports in a number of cities. There is simplified security, there are no lost bags, you're not sharing the flight with others, and you can pretty much name your departure time.

Also, time. We can fly from Chattanooga to Memphis in less than a third of the time it takes to drive — and at about the same cost per seat as Delta — and you can leave within 15 minutes of parking your car.

Also, adventure and uniqueness. We have taken countless people on vacation, flown people to see the local fall colors, and in August we took people up to watch the eclipse [from 14,000 feet in the air].

ANY MEMORABLE ON-THE-JOB TALES?

We have flown numerous birthday flights and taken World War II pilots flying after they haven't flown in years. We even had a wedding in an airplane several years ago.

CHRISTIE NEIDICH

EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGIST AND OWNER OF CORE BODY TRAINING

Training/qualifications: Four-year degree in exercise physiology, certified by the American College of Sports Medicine and American College of Exercise, member of IDEA Fit, certified Nike Athletic Total Conditioning Instructor, completed Yoga Alliance 200-hour teacher training, underwent sports-specific myofascial release and massage training, certified in advanced cardiac life support.

Cost to hire her: \$60-\$100 per hour.

What to expect: Defining of goals, cardio body composition testing, behavioral modification and lifestyle coaching, postural alignment, dietary counseling and personality analysis.



PHOTOS: ERIN O. SMITH



WHAT KIND OF PERSON TYPICALLY ENLISTS THE HELP OF A PERSONAL TRAINER?

People who are unable to achieve results on their own, or who feel they lack motivation or self-discipline, or those with injuries who need guidance. Most are looking to eliminate some kind of pain or discomfort, to lose weight or to look and feel healthy as they age. I also work with athletes who have reached a plateau and are looking to improve their performance.

WHAT DOES A DAY IN YOUR LIFE TYPICALLY LOOK LIKE?

Wake up at 4:45 a.m. and eat a breakfast of protein and fruit while outlining client plans. I typically train from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. without interruption. After work, I meet up with my husband and dog and go for a 4- to 10-mile trail run. I prepare a big vegetable stir-fry or a salad topped with fish, steak or chicken; then I spend the rest of the evening meditating with some work in my garden.

DO YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULARLY UPLIFTING TALES OF TRANSFORMATION?

Years ago I started working with a woman who'd had a brain tumor removed. She suffered right-side paralysis and had difficulty walking, talking and using fine motor skills. Today, at 70, she travels and is able to jump rope and play ball with her grandchildren.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PERSONAL TRAINER?

I was midway through my bachelor's degree in pre-physical therapy when UTC started the exercise science program. I took one course and fell in love. I did my internship at Erlanger Cardiac Rehabilitation Center, and was hired post-graduation.

IF YOU HAD ONE PIECE OF ADVICE FOR PEOPLE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Do something that makes you happy — in your job and in exercise. Surround yourself with people who make you happy, as well, including your personal trainer.



KATIE AND ATALAY COKBERKIT

PERSONAL GARDENER,
WHOLE EARTH GARDEN SERVICES

Services: Landscape and garden design, creation and maintenance, custom woodworking (raised beds, arbors, fences, trellises, composting systems, hand-built tables and platforms).

Training/qualifications: Katie has a bachelor's in agriculture from University of California – Davis and is a certified Tennessee Master Gardener. Atalay is a Certified Tennessee Naturalist with experience in construction, carpentry and farming. Together they created an off-grid home on the Mediterranean, and here in Chattanooga they are creating a Certified National Wildlife Habitat at their home.

Cost to hire them: \$25 per hour, each. Larger installations, woodworking, etc., may be quoted by the project.

WHAT KIND OF PERSON TYPICALLY ENLISTS THE HELP OF A PERSONAL GARDENER?

Either someone who doesn't know much about gardening but appreciates a beautiful, diversified garden, or someone who knows a lot about gardening but needs extra hands to expand it and keep it maintained.

WHAT DOES A DAY IN YOUR LIFE TYPICALLY LOOK LIKE?

We begin and end each day in our own garden, where we have herbs, vegetables, fruit trees, pollinator-friendly flowerbeds and a blueberry hedge to tend to. From there, every day is different. Some days we are focusing on one project, such as designing and installing a new flower bed or clearing out an overgrown landscape, and some days we visit multiple gardens and take care of weeding, pruning and fertilizing, depending on the customers' needs and the season.



WHY GARDENING?

We both realized that treating the land with proper care and love was absolutely essential to our survival, both personally and as a species. We feel we have an important role to fill in this community and on the planet, but most of all, we love it because it connects us to the land, to other people and to each other.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR PEOPLE WHO FEEL "LOST" BUT AREN'T READY TO HIRE A GARDENER?

Just start! Don't ever believe you can't do it. And don't worry if a plant dies. Gardening is constant experiential learning; and like most things in life, we learn from our mistakes. Doing a program like TN Master Gardeners is a great way to learn more, and so is volunteering for a local community garden or farm such as Crabtree Farms or the Chattanooga Food Bank.

PHOTO: BRIND SMITH



NICOLE KELLY
PERSONAL SHOPPER & STYLIST



Experience: Buyer and lead sales associate at Alice Blue/Hanover Blue

Qualifications: Kelly has 10-plus years of retail experience. She helped a friend open Alice Blue in 2011 and Hanover Blue in 2014, and routinely visits NYC, Las Vegas, Atlanta and Charlotte to help the owner stock the stores.

Cost to hire her: \$50 per hour, with a two-hour minimum.

WHAT KIND OF PERSON HIRES A PERSONAL STYLIST?

Business owners with very little free time; people who love fashion and shopping and simply want a little help; people who hate shopping.

DO YOU ONLY WORK WITH WOMEN?

I have helped a few men, which is a very different experience. Most women don't find a shirt they love and want it in every color.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL CONSULTATION LOOK LIKE?

First I ask about the client's lifestyle. Then I want to know: Are they looking to fill a hole in their wardrobe? Bored with their current look? Had a recent size change? Shopping for a special event? Simply need help with their current wardrobe? Then I love to start

with a closet edit, which helps build trust and create a good working relationship. I shop for clients at local boutiques, online and out of town, depending on what the client needs.

ANY COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS?

I often hear people say they can't afford a personal stylist, but in the long run it can actually save you money. I can teach you to be a smarter, more efficient shopper and point out ways you can get more out of your wardrobe. (It's also a wonderful gift to give someone!)

WHAT IS YOUR STYLE PHILOSOPHY?

My goal is not to change a person's style, but to improve it. Also, I am a big believer in getting a lot of wear out of your clothes. I say always buy something you can wear again and again. I love fashion, but I truly love people and helping people feel good about themselves.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE PEOPLE WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH FINDING THEIR PERSONAL STYLE?

Wear what you love. Dress for yourself and no one else. Think quality, not quantity. Everything doesn't have to cost a fortune.



KATIE BENSON
PERSONAL CONCIERGE,
SECRET TO THE GOOD LIFE

Services offered: Cleaning, event planning and setup, errands, deliveries, turnover services (getting rental or vacation homes ready for the next person), organizing.

Cost to hire her: Dependent on the service. "A few minutes on the phone with us will get you a free quote. We will work within a customer's budget."

HOW DID YOU START THE BUSINESS?

When my parents divorced, I moved out and immediately went to work. I worked at a hang-gliding park cleaning cabins, managed a horse barn, and worked at a retreat center. I acquired a lot of diverse skills and felt I could be of service in many ways to many people. I only hire people who love the work as much as I do.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THE BUSINESS?

Helping people and making their lives easier. We are passionate about what we bring to the table.

WHO TYPICALLY HIRES YOU?

Homeowners, renters, businesses, builders, real estate agents, etc. We have cleaned/organized car dealerships, salons, barns, vehicles, boats and even airplanes and hangars! We were once hired by a client's 8-year-old daughter to organize her playroom (with her mother's permission, of course!).

WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL WORKDAY LOOK LIKE?

The days vary but might include cleaning, organizing, running errands and taking the dog to the groomer or a package to UPS. Some of my team members have regular customers and do the same thing for them each time they work, but almost everyone on the team works with multiple clients in a day.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL PEOPLE THINKING ABOUT HIRING AN ASSISTANT?

It's hard sometimes to allow others to help you out, but it translates into more time to do what you love and are good at.





HOWARD STURMAN
 PROFESSIONAL PET-SITTER,
 A TRUSTED FRIEND
 PET SITTING SERVICE LLC

Qualifications: Carries liability and bonding insurance and is licensed by the city of Chattanooga and Hamilton County to operate his business. Member of the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters since 1999.

Cost to hire him: \$16-\$18 per visit, depending on the number of pets and what is involved. Each visit is roughly 20-30 minutes. "I do not stay overnight, but I do make early morning, afternoon and night visits."

WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU?

After 23 years in retail management, I had a mid-life crisis. I remembered a keynote speaker saying the average person faces 2,000 Mondays over 40 years of working. If you're not happy with what you're doing, that's a lot of unhappy days. So I took my love for animals and my business background and purchased A Trusted Friend Pet Sitting Service in Florida. Fifteen years later, I sold my extensive client list and relocated to Chattanooga. Shortly afterward, A Trusted Friend Pet Sitting Service "part two" was born.

WHY DO PEOPLE HIRE YOU?

A professional pet-sitter provides peace of mind. Many new clients have contacted me after a bad experience relying on friends, neighbors and even relatives who don't adhere to feeding or walking schedules, or sometimes forget entirely.

My mission statement is "I treat everyone's home and pets as if they were my own."

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR LIFE LOOK LIKE?

The schedule varies each day and week. I am out walking dogs morning, afternoon and night in all kinds of weather. I typically care for dogs and cats but also have taken care of the occasional bird, hamster and guinea pig. I once took care of a llama!

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Over the years, people come to treat me as a member of their family. There have been instances when clients booked me so they could take their child to college, and we reminisced about how young the child was when we first met. In other instances, people have sought my guidance when dealing with a sick or aging pet or the decision to euthanize, and we have cried together.





JULIE BESTRY
 CERTIFIED
 PROFESSIONAL
 ORGANIZER,
 BEST RESULTS
 ORGANIZING

Services: All aspects of organizing, from closets to kitchens to offices, with a specialization in paper and time management.

Average cost to hire her: The National Association of Professional Organizers often quotes a nationwide range from \$65-\$200 per hour, with the high end more likely to be seen in the larger cities and Bestry's services generally at the lower end, though pricing is dependent on the customer's needs.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME CERTIFIED?

Applicants must meet basic educational requirements, agree to adhere to the Board of Certification for Professional Organizers' Code of Ethics, and must be able to document at least 1,500 paid work hours involving client collaboration: teaching, training, demonstrating or transferring skills to clients.

WHY ORGANIZING?

I love helping people understand what they need to keep and what they absolutely do not need to keep. Seeing people's lives improve dramatically when they are empowered to get control over their space and time is truly rewarding.

SAY, ARE YOU HARD TO LIVE WITH?

Maybe, but probably not because of my organization skills.

WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANIZING?

EVERYTHING should have a place to live, but not everything has to live with YOU. This means creating systems for storing and locating all the materials of life and work to create a serene, productive environment. When I work with a client, we find the appropriate places, via charitable donations, recycling or resale, for outgoing items to "live." Most people are afraid that disorganization indicates some underlying flaw, like laziness, but disorganization is not a character flaw — it's merely a mismatch between the systems and skills we are currently using and the actual lives we are trying to lead.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A P.O.?

Helping people find things that have been hidden from them. During any given work session, we always find money (forgotten checks, folded money, spare change, gift cards, etc.) and things of value. I worked with one client whose mother had unexpectedly moved from her home to assisted living and we found a treasure trove of family genealogical records — bank books, passports and all manner of photos and documents — dating back to the late 1800s. Conversely, some people keep their old plaster dental impressions from before they got their braces. Trust me, you can let these go! **CM**

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