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UltraCare Services – Specializing in Non-Medical Home Care for People with Alzheimer’s, Dementia, Stroke, and Cancer



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“I always say it is not a shortage of money, it is a shortage of knowledge.” Leslee Deanes

CEOCFO: *Ms. Deanes, what is the overall vision behind UltraCare Services, and what is your focus today?*

Ms. Deanes: At UltraCare Services, our primary goal is to ensure the happiness and well-being of our clients, especially as they age. As people get older, we like to make sure that they are not just comfortable in their homes, but that they are taken care of. We aim to not only provide a comfortable living environment but also to offer the necessary care for those who may not have familial support. They are getting more of an assistant than a caregiver sometimes. Our focus is on preserving independence while ensuring our clients receive the assistance they require.

CEOCFO: *How have you developed that balance and what was your idea when you started UltraCare?*

Ms. Deanes: We do a lot of training but most importantly UltraCare Services had to realize we cannot teach a caregiver to be compassionate, so we are very decisive in who we hire. They must be extremely compassionate and willing to help others if they want to be an outstanding caregiver. It is not a strenuous process, but it is more of a personal process. Conversations and skill tests during interviews are mandatory because it shares more than just reviewing resumes; we assess a potential caregiver as someone we would trust in our own family’s home. I think that is the most important thing.

A caregiver's role is somewhat like a roommate situation, but with a notable distinction – you have the option to adjust as needed. In college,

being stuck with an incompatible roommate can have repercussions, even if only for a semester. What sets our approach at UltraCare Services apart is our commitment to collaborating with the clients and caregivers. We ensure they are comfortable with their assigned responsibilities, avoiding the practice of merely placing someone to fill a position. If necessary, we are transparent about our capacity, informing individuals when we don't currently have a suitable match. This transparency is a key factor that distinguishes our approach.

CEOCFO: How do you recruit caregivers today and what type of people are looking to provide this service; it is not the highest paying job?

Ms. Deanes: Caregiving is known for having the highest turnover rate globally. I categorize individuals into two types. Initially, I took a hands-on approach, personally meeting every potential hire. Although I now oversee nearly 600 employees, not all are consistently active due to factors like elderly clients going on vacation or hospitalization. While my initial skepticism about not personally knowing every employee was questioned, it has proven more sustainable than anticipated since I've owned the company for twelve years. I cannot know everyone but any caregivers that I do know works at least 7 hours a day and I was part of the process of them being hired.

Our primary source for finding caregivers is through word of mouth, which we consider the most effective. Referrals from our existing caregivers are the best, as they provide firsthand information about the job and qualifications. Many are hesitant to vouch for someone without assurance of their reliability. Additionally, my intuition plays a significant role; upon meeting someone, I can usually tell if they possess the qualities needed to be a successful caregiver. This intuitive ability, while a bit daunting, is a valuable gift of discernment, because you don't work with them in an office setting and it's so crucial to feel comfortable with sending a caregiver into an elderly person's home.

Despite not being a caregiver myself, I am inherently giving and compassionate. As an owner, I've had to assume a caregiver's role multiple times when caregivers requested time off, acknowledging the inherent challenges. It's not the most financially lucrative job and dealing with sometimes difficult or even mean-spirited elderly clients can be emotionally taxing. In such cases, I have had to candidly communicate with clients about the purpose of our service, emphasizing we are there to help, and remind them that they need the help so please respect your caregiver. Patients with dementia tend to be more verbally abusive due to them not understanding that they need the help and will cause turnover challenges.

In assessing potential caregivers, qualities such as coachability, trainability, and compassion are paramount. We often encounter individuals transitioning from roles like housekeeping, where they had minimal interaction. Clear communication during training is essential, as even those who enjoy cleaning may initially resist tasks outside their perceived job description. We emphasize that caregivers are not there to function as maids but rather to provide quality in homecare so that they are able to maintain in the home, fostering a genuinely happy living

environment for the elderly. Our overarching message to caregivers is that our primary focus is on being there to help while still providing quality care.

CEOCFO: *What is your geographic range?*

Ms. Deanes: I cover the majority of Los Angeles County.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about the business side of UltraCare?*

Ms. Deanes: UltraCare specializes in non-medical home care. Medical groups such as health plans usually do not provide in-home care as a benefit. They provide home healthcare which is some type of medical help in the home. A nurse is going to go out for thirty minutes to an hour or so. A nurse will work in the home for medical reasons but will not help with ADL's, change a diaper, or prepare a meal. We differentiate ourselves by offering a minimum of six hours of care, ensuring a comprehensive and personalized approach to our clients' needs with a care plan that is tailored for them. The type of clients that we serve are clients with Alzheimer's, dementia, strokes, cancer and seniors who needs assistance with their activities in daily living. I am a vendor with a couple hospitals, medical groups and organizations that service Veterans. Private pay is the foundation of my business. Private pay would either be their savings, or they have long-term care insurance. Long-term care insurance covers the caregiving aspect for non-medical care in the home.

Many individuals lack awareness of the caregiving industry. Although I am regarded as a veteran in this industry, I have a village of owners that I can communicate with as well as learn from. I am continually learning. Surprisingly, the State of California only mandated a state license in 2016; prior to that, agencies relied on background checks. It took until 2018 for widespread adoption of these regulations. Notably, I established and operated my business since 2011, navigating the industry's evolution for years before mandatory regulations were fully implemented. Originally, I started as a homecare franchise, I made the decision to leave the franchise two years ago.

CEOCFO: *Why?*

Ms. Deanes: While there's nothing inherently negative about the franchise, it became clear that it wasn't the right fit for the evolving landscape of our industry. I received a lack of adaptability to rule changes, and it became apparent that there were aspects that needed reevaluation. Choosing not to renew my contract was a strategic decision, driven by the belief that I am self-made and capable of steering UltraCare Services towards larger success. I didn't want to continue to pay royalty fees for a business name that never provided me with any clients. Had I not bought the franchise, I would have never been in this business, and I would never have bought this company or even thought about starting this type of company on my own because this industry was more about family/friends filling in when needed but never as a paid job. I am very thankful for the opportunity to start as a franchise but after looking at the numbers it just didn't make financial sense.

CEOCFO: *Business is going well; we saw your recognition in the INC 5000 and the VET100!*

Ms. Deanes: Yes, business is AMAZING!! I'm pinching myself as I see my hard work being recognized by the country. To be ranked #927 overall on the prestigious Inc. 5000 list for the first time submitting and being selected was such a magical accomplishment. I also am ranked #144 for the state of California and #79 overall in Health Services. INC 5000 is for the fastest-growing private companies this year, so this award speaks volume. Yes, I also was placed on the INC. VETERAN 100 list which came from UltraCare Services providing non-medical homecare to veterans. That was an honor, because my dad has a purple heart for serving in the Vietnam War and I am beyond grateful to help veterans who are in need especially since they gave their lives for our country.

CEOCFO: *What have you learned about the business side, how have you developed the business sense so that not only are you helping people in a meaningful way, but it is positive in the financial realm?*

Ms. Deanes: I did pharmaceutical sales for 25 years and loved that career. After being laid off during the recession in 2010 I started researching businesses. I bought this company on my 16th year of being a pharmaceutical rep. I worked both full-time being a top sales rep while growing my company for 9 years. In July of 2020 I decided to close my career as a pharmaceutical sales rep. and focused on my company. The best business decision I have ever made. I have had a real job since I was 12 years old. In 1985 I was making \$500 a week going door-to-door selling the Long Beach Press Telegram Newspaper subscriptions, and \$500 a week was huge in 1985. People adored who I was, I have always been authentic. I will pick up the phone for anyone; I'm always willing to help, be a resource, or provide information to help others be successful. I always say it is not a shortage of money, it is a shortage of knowledge. I think I was just blessed to have parents from both work worlds. Watching my mother showed me how to be successful in corporate America and my father showed me how to be an entrepreneur. They both never taught me directly I just was very observant and admired their work ethics and knew that I wanted to help people directly or indirectly.

My mother was from the corporate side, my father was from the entrepreneur side. At five or six years old, my dad owned candy stores, lounges and different things. I remember at 5 to 7 years old, I was behind the cash register ringing up and selling candy to people, all while I was standing on a crate to reach the cash register. It was crazy because it was what I wanted to do. I remember being in his lounge watching sports games. I laugh now about it when talking to my dad because I don't think I was supposed to be in there. While working at the lounge " People asked if they could have some Coke and I said, "Yes, it is 0.25\$." I wanted the quarter to have money to play Pac-Man. I would set up a full candy store in front of our home in the summers. I took my dad's extra candy supplies that were in the basement. My dad taught me at a young age that I was operating a business and he showed me how to calculate my profits after I deducted the costs. My father showed me how to reinvest into my summer candy store business. I feel I was born with an entrepreneur spirit as well as the gift to give and help others.

The biggest lesson I would tell anybody who is an owner/operator is you just cannot do it all. Even though they say in the first five years most businesses are forced because they might not have the finances to pay for a team. I was able to operate all by myself while working a full-time corporate job. And it wasn't a financial reason but mainly learning as I grew so that I could see what my needs truly would be. Now that I am larger and very established, I believe that it is important to make sure you have a CFO or a very knowledgeable CPA, a Director and an Operational Manager to manage the pipeline. We are a small family company, but mighty because most of my employees are in the field. We hire weekly; once they are hired, we have someone following up with them regularly.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about the UltraCare Charitable Foundation?*

Ms. Deanes: UltraCare Charitable Foundation started about six years ago, I was using my own private funds to provide care to seniors who could not afford care. When I would do home assessments, they did not understand the process of them having to privately pay for care. They were eating cat food, they did not have any diapers, and they did not have any cleaning supplies basically in need of daily essentials. I never raised a bunch of money for the organization, I created it to donate money from my company and gift it to UltraCare Charitable Foundation to help seniors who were in need in communities that could not afford care.

It was created for indigenous elderly originally; however, it has been for everybody because there are people in poverty throughout Los Angeles County but may not fit the "indigenous category" but needs some type of nonmedical homecare. It came from me walking into multiple homes and I was like there must be a nonprofit who does this. I searched for a few years and then decided to start my own foundation. I do not solicit or promote the nonprofit as I should because I just love giving back; however, I have hired someone who focuses on nonprofits to grow the funds to help as many elderly who are in need.

CEOCFO: *What is next for UltraCare?*

Ms. Deanes: I think what is next is expansion. I see global in my future, and I have been approached by government officials to start that process. This year 2023 I made a comment to myself that I was going to choose me and go above and beyond for the business. I took a severe hit during COVID, but it later became a blessing, my rewards have been reaped. The things that you are seeing from 2022, and 2023, have doubled. There has been a lot of hard work, sleepless nights, working most of the time during my vacations and sacrificing quality time that should have been spent with my husband and children. I think what is next is expanding my internal team so that I can have more clients, which will lead to hiring more employees. Continue to Elevate my Empire. Start building more business friendships. When it comes to business I tend to move in silence. Most of my family and friends really can't explain what type of services UltraCare Services provides, which makes it hard for them to recommend my company. This is the first time this year I have done interviews since being in business. I have built a team that will continue to help me grow and develop new niches within this industry.

I looked at UltraCare Services as a business for extra income for my children's college funds and extracurricular activities from the beginning of starting this business, because I loved being a Specialty Pharmaceutical sales rep. After working at my company full-time I saw how rewarding this company could be to myself as well as so many families who are need of a break for a few hours for respite care or if their family needs 24-hour care. Inc. 5000 has created a network of many possibilities for me to continue to keep growing mentally and financially. The connections have introduced me to endless opportunities and I'm very excited to see what is next for UltraCare Services in 2024!

The key is being in rooms where only God has placed you. Therefore, when I say global, that is what is next for me because I asked God to place me in rooms that only He could place me in. This year that was my prayer for me to start the new year. He has gone above and beyond. I pinch myself on days, not that I am not deserving, but as a black woman those opportunities are not always given even when you have the resources to make it happen. This industry is predominantly male-led, I do not play that card or the race card, that is not my issue because I did pharmaceutical sales for 25 years and I was probably the only black woman for the first ten years, in my area. It is knowing that women can bring value and treated equally at the decision-making tables. This is an industry a lot of people do not know about because when people ask for homecare most times they mean home health, which is medical care in the home. There is a difference and there is a need for both. A caregiver position is the largest turnover job in the country, yet it is a very rewarding job to help elderly be able to stay in their home. I want the world to view how critical and valuable a non-medical caregiver can be to a family who still works or lives out of state and can't provide quality care for their loved ones.

