

## Hospital Companions--Turning A Sad Experience Into Business Success



This is the story of two young women who turned a sad experience into a rewarding business opportunity. Cousins Kathleen Benner and Cheryl Formento lost their grandfather a year ago and were saddened by not being able to be with him during his hospitalization. It occurred to them that many families are in that position due to circumstances beyond their control. They conceived the idea of creating a program where patients receive the physical presence of a Companion at the bedside providing non-medical assistance, working in collaboration with the

medical staff and serving as the communication centrist among patient, family, physicians and others.

Despite their enthusiasm and determination, Kathleen and Cheryl realized that they needed business counseling to solve the myriad problems that would be encountered. With the help of SCORE counselor Henry Rodkin, they were able to develop their business model and launch their enterprise. With Hank's guidance, they established a test site at a major Chicago hospital and an appropriate website, determined a market-acceptable pricing schedule, and refined a system for utilizing laptop computers with webcams for patient-to-family communication.

In attributing a large part of the reason for their success, Kathleen and Cheryl had this to say:

"SCORE, and Hank Rodkin in particular, provided enthusiasm, guidance and re-assurance as we moved through our plan from basic idea to actual business model. His interest and concern, as evidenced by all that he did for us, assured us our idea had merit and our plan would succeed."

Their website can be found at [www.hospitalcompanions.com](http://www.hospitalcompanions.com)