

## HOUSING

# Crofton company puts a roof over your head

By GEOFFREY HAWKINS  
Business Writer

Should you ever need temporary housing following a fire or natural disaster, a Crofton company is there to help.

Klein & Co., a corporate housing service started by Jackie M. Klein five years ago, specializes in providing short-term housing to individuals displaced from homes nationwide.

Starting with personal seed money, the Friendship resident has built her business from scratch to an enterprise with a \$3.5 million in gross revenues last year.

Focusing on insurance claims is a niche in the relocation industry, according to Miss Klein.

Most relocation services specialize in servicing corporations' relocated employees.

"There are only three or four other national companies that do what we do," she said.

Miss Klein has a simple philosophy for keeping her clients as happy as possible in a stressful time.

"I want to provide service to my clients at the highest level," she said.

Klein and Co. generally works

with insurance adjusters. The company provides every thing in the apartment, from furniture and kitchenware to bathroom accessories and electronics.

Every need is covered, even foliage — a six foot ficus tree is included in the residences.

There are standard and executive packages, but Miss Klein said that most people are satisfied with just the standard package.

Prices begin at around \$2,000 per month for a standard apartment, she said.

Because Klein deals with individual claims adjusters across the country as opposed to the corporate office of insurance companies, the company must sell adjusters on its product.

A sales representative is often on the road meeting with individual adjusters to woo them on Klein and Co.

The sales job seems to have worked — currently the company has about 100 families placed in temporary housing, said Miss Klein.

Klein and Co. also has no contracts with apartment management companies.

This might make the job of



By Mark M. Odell — Capital-Gazette  
Jackie M. Klein, president of Crofton-based Klein and Co., looks over an apartment request for one of her clients.

quickly relocating families a little more difficult, but it allows for greater flexibility because Klein can find communities that meet the needs of its individual clients.

Miss Klein got her first taste of providing short-term housing when she was a legal secretary for eight years with law firms in California and Texas.

She left the legal community to join a relocation company in Texas, but was disenchanted with the level of service the company provided.

"If someone is going to pay for our service, they are entitled to good service," she said.

So Miss Klein decided to be different than what she had seen — "we're definitely a company that cares."

Klein and Co. opened in Houston, Texas, in 1995.

She moved the company, and her only other employee at the time, to the area in 1998.

Miss Klein went to high school at South River and college at the University of Maryland, and wanted to get back to this area, she said.

Since moving the business to Crofton, both her office and her workload has grown rapidly.

"Our company has about doubled every year, and I hope that it continues that way," said Miss Klein.

The office has grown from two to six employees in the last two years, but Miss Klein has more ambitious

growth plans in store.

"We will be opening a Denver office next spring, and Orange County, California after that."

Miss Klein said that Maryland, Texas and Colorado are the three states where she does the most business.

The growth hasn't come without some difficulties.

Like many small companies, the tight labor market forces them to be competitive with both salaries and benefits.

The longest tenured employee at the company has only been there a little more than a year, Miss Klein said.

But she has nothing but good things to say about her staff.

"My employees are so good, I am lucky."

While Miss Klein enjoys this area, she will be moving to Denver to open the new office. The Crofton office will remain open.

Despite the focus on insurance, about 20 percent of Klein's business comes from businesses relocating employees.