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people

# Company provides assistance to seniors on flights

**By Charlie Vick**  
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Doug Iannelli happened upon his current job after an unfortunate event.

A friend, suffering from a stroke, needed someone to travel with her. More than dropping her off at the airport, she needed a person with her from baggage check to landing.

Though she and Iannelli never wound up booking tickets together, he saw a need in the market for this. His business, Flying Companion, is the result.

"I'm looking at where a client needs to go," he said. "It can be anywhere in the country or in the world."

The business fits between flight attendants, who watch over the whole plane, and medical repatriations, when an insurance company puts a medical technician with someone flying home after getting ill or injured on vacation.

Iannelli is simply offering himself.

Some people need help with travel — not an oxygen bottle or potentially CPR, just help getting through an airport, lugging carry-ons, getting in and out of seats. Iannelli is working



**Muzel Chen/Staff**  
Founder and president of Flying Companions LLC Doug Iannelli talks about his business in Atlanta last week.

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— **Doug Iannelli**  
Flying Companion owner

to position himself here.

"I'm offering the whole package. That starts [from]

before they enter the airport to after they reach their destination," he said.

Asked if this was a relevant job for today's market, Manny Beauregard, director of Valerie Wilson Travel in Buckhead, pointed out which population demographic Flying Companions aims to share an armrest.

"We have an aging population that's growing," Beauregard said. "As that population ages, they are beneficiaries of

the biggest transfer of wealth in history. The baby boomers, the trillions of dollars they'll inherit, they'll have the money to do this."

Flying Companions sells travel packages. Ianelli indicated there were no set rates. He preferred to review a customer's trip and needs for determining cost.

"I think we all have harried

lives. This is a way people don't have to rearrange their lives," he added.

The 6-month-old business is the result of the 37-year-old's work in two previous airlines: a sales manager at Kiwi International Airlines, then in Miami for Alitalia Airlines. Ianelli's travel background goes back further, through a Florida Tech degree in the business of avia-

tion, to planning family trips as a youngster.

Asked if flight attendants should be as conscientious of airline passengers, Ianelli assented. "I think the airlines definitely need to look out for older people and look out of the special needs of all their clients," he said.

In the meantime he's willing to fill in the gap.