

Working from home can be lucrative

People can work full-time, but on their own schedule

BY DAVE DAWSON

Barrie's Elayne Whitfield-Parr is one of about 90 virtual assistants in Ontario — a number she expects to grow rapidly in coming years.

"What people need to realize is that you can make a really good income, working from home as a virtual assistant," said Whitfield-Parr.

She believes in the concept so much that she co-founded the Canadian Virtual Assistant Connection, (www.cvac.ca) the largest association of virtual assistants in Canada.

"People who are interested in becoming a virtual assistant can join for free, and then get marketing, budgeting advice, there's a mentoring program and for \$30 a year, you can get health benefits," Whitfield-Parr said.

But the real benefit, she said, is freedom.

"What most people like is they can work full-time hours but on their own schedule. It doesn't have to be 9 to 5," she explained. "For example, we have a boat that I love to be on. It has Internet access so I can be out on the boat and still be connected and, if needed, work. That flexibility is great."

Whitfield-Parr, along with more than 5,000 other virtual professionals around the world, will celebrate the first International Virtual Assistants Day May 19.

"More than 90 per cent of virtual assistants are highly skilled working mothers who choose to start their own businesses in order to achieve a better work/life balance," said Whitfield-Parr. "That makes this day of observance important as it allows those people who work at home to be honoured and recognized for their efforts."

For more information on virtual assistants or the Canadian Virtual Assistant Connection, call Elayne Whitfield-Parr at 730-0436 or e-mail ewhitfield@executive-assistance.ca.