

Everett couple finds perfect business fit

By [Kristi O'Harran](#), Herald Columnist



Looming Social Security and pensions weren't economically stimulating enough at the Everett home of John and Sue Smythe.

They started looking around for an investment that would supplement their retirement. Both say they found the franchise opportunity of their dreams.

"I don't think we ever wanted to retire in the traditional sense," Sue Smythe said. "We both enjoy intellectual stimulation. It keeps us feeling young. And it doesn't feel like we're working. We're doing something that feels good and makes us happy."

And when they do want to slow down, they'll have a manager run CMIT Solutions, offering information technology services to small- and midsize businesses. On Thursday, they received a Leadership Award from CMIT at a national convention for giving back to the organization and mentoring new franchisees.

John Smythe, 64, said he was a typical 21-year-old when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1965.

"I was just kind of rolling through life and not really giving it that much thought," he said. "The Army was a good experience."

Raised in the Bronx, N.Y., he spent two years with a helicopter unit in Germany.

"I learned in the service that others depend upon you. You have to be reliable and organized."

Smythe attended college in New York after the service. After graduating, he became a stockbroker and owned a bookstore and nightclub. In the mid-1980s, he met and married Sue.

Sue Smythe, 60, said they moved to Everett from New Jersey during the recession in 1991. They vacationed here and loved it, she said.

Three years ago, the couple decided to supplement their income. Sue Smythe had a background in information technology.

They opened CMIT Solutions, which seemed like a good fit.

It was.

They have more than 100 clients and a handful of employees. They do work for the Lake Stevens Sewer District, said the district's manager, Darwin Smith.

"Since partnering with CMIT, I can now not worry about whether or not my computers are working," Smith said. "I now can rely on my IT people (CMIT) to take care of my IT problems and to keep our system up and running in an appropriate manner. That is something before I couldn't rely on."

In the current recession, they have helped some clients downsize, Sue Smythe said, but canceling IT service would be like disconnecting the phone.

"Computers need attention," Sue Smythe said. "You have to keep some semblance of service as long as you are in business."

And how long will the couple work through retirement? They eagerly see no end in sight to their earning years.

Both said they hope to add more employees and serve more clients this year.

For fun, she reads and he runs.

"But most of our time is split between the grandkids and the business, which we love," Sue Smythe said.

Kristi O'Harran: 425-339-3451, oharran@heraldnet.com.