

Rent-A-WIFE

IN THE NEWS

Women's work, at last, gets done

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Part of a growing trend wherein more and more middle-class, double-income families are farming out to strangers all the little, mundane, household tasks that can make urban life such a pain in the cheek. While not a revival of the live-in servant tradition of their grandparents' day, young professionals nonetheless want all the advantages associated with paying someone to look after them.

But having a stranger routinely perform household chores can be a little unsettling at first, according to one man, who, with his wife, hired

[Laurel] Blackman of Rent-a-Wife four months ago to keep house while they were at work. "I was apprehensive about it in the beginning, especially because we have two dogs," he says. "And it was sort of strange to come home and find everything so clean and neat.

"But the thing is, it soon becomes almost addictive. You come to expect it."

It is by attending to "the little things" that Rent-a-Wife has become one of the best known and most successful businesses of its kind.

In order to make good on its claim that it can provide help for

virtually any task, the company recruits people with a variety of skills and interests. But the most important prerequisite, Ms. Blackman says, is attitude.

"They must have a genuine desire to be of service. That doesn't mean we encourage them to get friendly with the customer and drink beer on the job. But we're looking after somebody's lifestyle. That is what we're paid for."