

Parents journey to find perfect home day care

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Parents using home day care say it is convenient for them and provides a healthy environment for their children. In many instances, the home day care provider becomes part of the family.

"To me she's really special, almost like a second mother. She's just like part of the family," said Livonia parent Deborah Wanamaker about her provider, who also lives in Livonia. "She doesn't do it for money; she loves the little ones. I count my blessings every day."

Wanamaker is one of the lucky ones.

She found her provider while on maternity leave, just two weeks before returning to her job as marketing director of the Livonia Mall. After placing a newspaper ad, and making repeated inquiries, her cousin guided her to a "wonderful woman" who "really goes all out" for her young charges.

Finding good, quality home day care has given Wanamaker peace of mind.

"I really am glad," she said. "He'll learn to share and be around other people. He'll learn to interact. I'm hoping that I've chosen the right way to go."

FARMINGTON HILLS resident Dawn Aubrey began looking for day care when she was three months pregnant.

"I kept asking people I knew. It was just a matter of asking anybody and everybody," said the Southfield executive. "I started so early, the people I contacted couldn't commit." Aubrey checked Michigan Department of Social Services listings, found a newsletter in which to advertise, and finally found a licensed Farmington Hills home day care provider who is "on my way to work. It works out very well."

Aubrey is able to visit with her child during her lunch hour each day. "If you really want to go back to work, you can't give up," Aubrey stressed.

She spent her lunch hours calling day care providers and spent her evenings visiting homes, trying to find the one that was right.

"If you keep looking, you'll find the right person."

That "right person" for several area parents is Denise Glosa, a provider in Farmington Hills licensed with the state as a family day care provider. Glosa has played both sides of the board, first as a working mother for 18 months, and now as a provider.

She said there has to be a familiarity, or bond, between parents and provider when choosing a home day care setting.

"You don't just get along with everyone," she said. "If you feel comfortable, the kids will, too. Your child's an extension of you, not anybody else."

THOSE THAT leave their children in Glosa's care "are good parents," she said.

Glosa holds monthly meetings, or conferences, with her parents to let them know about their children, and she encourages parents to be a part of the home day care setting. Glosa, the parents and children frequently do things outside of the home as a group.

She also encourages parent communication.

"They shouldn't be intimidated," she said. "Say it — it's your kid above and beyond all."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

David and Carol Smith looked at other child care programs but decided to go with nanny Laura Clouse to care for their child, Cathy.

Live-out nanny provides unique home care option

By Neal Haldane
staff writer

Laura Clouse bristles at the thought of being compared to "Mary Poppins."

But at the same time, Clouse is proud of her role as a nanny and the training she received to take care of children.

The 25-year-old woman works for David and Carol Smith of Farmington Hills taking care of their 8-month-old daughter, Cathy. "I enjoy it," said Clouse. "It's a job but it's more than that. I want to be with kids and watch them grow. It's what I want to do."

"It's so rewarding watching kids grow and develop." Clouse is a live-out nanny. That means she watches Cathy while the Smiths are at work but doesn't live in their house.

"I prefer to be a live-out nanny, because I have more time for myself," she said.

The Smiths provide medical benefits, two weeks of paid vacation and contributions for Social Security and unemployment.

Nanny care is the most expensive option available for child care. Costs range from \$220 to \$350 a week plus benefits, said Marguerite Michels, founder and director of the Nanny Academy of America.

Even with the cost, the Smiths decided it was the best option for their little girl.

THE COUPLE started thinking about child care when Carol was pregnant.

They looked at professional day care outside the home but were not comfortable with that type of arrangement.

"We wanted the baby to stay at home," David said. "We preferred she'd stay home. That way she could make friends in her own neighborhood and would be friends with the kids she will go to school with."

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The Smiths also wanted the more individual attention a nanny would bring.

They interviewed two people and came away impressed with Clouse's attitude, training and references from working as a nanny for a Dearborn Heights couple.

And both sides said things have worked out well since Clouse began working in August.

But even though the Smiths carefully planned and prepared for a nanny, Carol admitted leaving her child in the hands of another person was difficult.

"I've been working for 20 years and that's the way I'm used to living," said Carol who, along with her husband, works as an engineer for Ford Motor Co. "It was a tough decision when it came to do it. I was raised by a mother who stayed home."

"But I feel my daughter is well taken care of," Carol said. "And I don't have to give up my career to take care of her."

Carol doesn't think having someone else care for her child is bad. In fact, she said, having a nanny works out well.

"Everyone gets to spend some time with her and enjoy her. Laura can go home at 6 when I come home. I'm happy to see Cathy."

And Laura is pleased with her duties.

"I FEED her. I play with her." Clouse says. "I take her for walks. All the little things. If they want me to take Cathy to her grandma's, I do. I have a log where I write down what I do every day."

When Cathy is napping, Clouse writes letters or reads. Nannies are becoming more in demand, said Michels of the Nanny Academy.

For \$1,200, people can take a nine-week course to learn how to become a nanny, Michels said.

She started her academy 18 months ago but got the idea earlier while looking for child care options for her two children.

"I couldn't find someone who was trained in first aid, CPR and play activities," Michels said.

So the academy trains students in those and other child-development areas. The academy also acts as a referral service to match nannies with families.

"We have a lot of families on a waiting list," she said. "They want this individual attention."

The academy also is a member of a professional organization — American Council of Nanny Schools. The organization was created to set minimal standards for nannies schools, Michels said.

Clouse, who took a similar nanny course offered through Delta College, expects to continue her work until she gets married.

"It seems like there are not the nannies for the jobs available," Clouse said. "But parents can trust their children with us because they are getting good care."

And even though Clouse believes in the nanny concept, she said she would rather stay home with her own children.

"I guess I like kids so much I would want to be home to watch them."



TOM ARNETT/staff photographer

Deborah Wanamaker said her child care provider is almost a second mother to her son, Brett.

Day care at home becomes one of most popular options

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children, and "group day care homes" where providers may care for up to 12 children. Michigan is one of eight states to have such guidelines, according to recent news reports.

Heads of both regional 4-C organizations stress the importance of licensing, and placing children in a licensed facility. "We have to provide a healthy, quality environment for our children," said Carol Quarterman, head of the Wayne 4-C.

BUT LOCAL zoning pressures from some communities are causing problems for even state-licensed home day care providers. Many are forced to go "underground" and not

register with the state Department of Social Services or their local cities.

Providers in cities including Farmington Hills, Livonia, Detroit, Jackson, Troy and others have faced similar problems during the past year, according to Darlene Feldman, a licensed group day care provider in Farmington Hills. Feldman also founded Parents to Legalize In-Home Child Care, an educational and political group that fights for the rights of home day care providers throughout Michigan.

"We're really looking out for each other," said Feldman, who faced an attack from her neighbors and the city this year because of reported excess traffic from her day care ser-

vice. Day care zoning issues have come before zoning boards, city councils, and are being argued in the courts in some cities.

"I'm on trial for being licensed — that's what's going on in the tri-county area," she added. "My heart goes out to these people. The pressure of not knowing what to do... I know how it affects your family."

Quarterman said zoning issues have become a societal concern. "The broader issue that really concerns me," she said, "is if children cannot be cared for in home settings, then where is it we really want our children to be, as a community?"

CUCIETTI SAID her Oakland County Child Care Association was formed more than 10 years ago as a discussion and support group, but zoning problems that evolved in the early 1980s made the issue more political.

There are a "handful" of similar support groups forming throughout the state. Cucietti said one is organizing in Western Wayne County.

Despite some community concerns, home day care providers still believe they give quality care at a reasonable price in the most comfortable setting. Home care groups are smaller, the home environment is familiar and adaptable, and the setting can be more flexible, providers say.

Groups provide home day care information

Following are resource telephone numbers for parents searching for home day care providers in Wayne and Oakland counties. They are also resource numbers for providers:

- Michigan Department of Social Services, (617) 373-8300.
- Oakland County Community

Coordinated Child Care Council, 858-5140.

• Detroit/Wayne County Child Care Coordinating Council, 579-2777.

• Oakland County Department of Social Services, 858-1484.

• Parents to Legalize In-Home Child Care, 851-9027.



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