

Day care centres selective about television shows

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The morning opens with free, semi-organized time giving the children a chance to colour, play with dolls or spend time playing Nintendo.

After the last child arrives the kids get a snack. When the kitchen is cleaned up the children are given a craft project to work on. Several of her children are very interested in educational things so they are encouraged in their interest, Ms Caspar said.

At 10 a.m. the children are given some time to play outside. If it rains they stay inside and will watch a movie.

"We go outside twice a day. We exercise, we dance and I do some goofy things I'm glad only the children see," she laughed.

Before lunch the children clamour to watch the television show Arthur. Ms Caspar said she is selective about what they watch and how long she will allow the children to watch television.

"The kids love Arthur," she said. "I don't let them watch Power Rangers, otherwise I'd have a huge wrestling match on my hands when it's over."

Ms Caspar said she stresses nutritional meals and is willing to put in the extra time to make good quality food. Lunch can be anything from quiche to nachos. She provides a menu for parents to consider which gives the children three hot lunches a week.

"They all want real Kraft Dinner," she said, "but I prepare it home made. I don't give them anything from a can."

Ms Caspar said the children she cares for are all at different development stages. Age, she says, has little bearing on where they are developmentally.

When she first started her service she had some difficult children. Those kids gave her an opportunity to use some of her background skills and forced her to adopt policies for operating her service. She said she doesn't have to intervene often but will if a child's welfare is at stake.

"In one case I set the parents up with speech therapy," she said. "They were devastated when things weren't right but grateful to finally have the problem addressed."

After lunch the kids engage in play time, some are then taken to kindergarten classes while younger ones go along for a walk. According to Ms Caspar some children need an afternoon nap. Often it's simply so they won't fall asleep on their parents, who want to spend time with them in the evenings.

"The quiet time is good for the kids so they have some time alone away from the other children," she said. "It also provides me with a bit of a break to clean up and do some household chores."

After 3:30 p.m. the crew goes back outside for a few minutes, leading up to an afternoon snack at 4 p.m. Following the snack parents start showing up to pick up their children.

Occasionally the group will take a special trip. This summer they went to Centre Island and they have made trips to the library.

Ms Caspar said it is not unusual for parents to leave their children for as much as 12 hours per day, 7 a.m. through 7 p.m. They have no other choice if they are commuters, she said. The entire situation is governed by a contract.

"Some parents respect child care workers but others don't," she said. "I've had some children whose parents couldn't care less."

Ms Caspar said no matter who is taking care of the child, parents will have some problems as the child gets more attached to the care giver.

"It's important to talk with the kids rather than to them," she said, pointing out the interaction between children and care givers in front of parents can give parents clues about how their child is doing and the quality of the service.

"Parents need to look for the signs. If your child is not coming home with artwork you've got a problem," she said. "Another sign that something is amiss is a child who does not want to leave home in the morning."

Other things to look for in a day care are cleanliness and eating habits and menu, she said. "Pick up on the clues. There is going to be some level of things being out of place however, if it is dirty and unkempt they don't have enough respect for their own home, let alone your child."

Ms Caspar said she is lucky. Currently all her charges mix together nicely. The younger kids have the advantage of older kids being around, she explained. Sometimes groups of kids just don't click together.

"I'm learning. At first I wanted to fill spaces but now I interview the parents as much as they interview me," she said. "Day care is not for everyone. You have to be extremely organized and you need lots of patience."

Ms Caspar said she wants to have more children of her own so the day care arrangement is likely to continue for a few more years. She said the day she wakes up and does not want to see children will indicate it is time to move out of the business.

Group helps alleviate business obsession

• from HOME on page 4

"The purpose is to try and provide a service to those who are working at home," said Mr. Bridges.

That means getting the dirt on where to find everything from the best phone service to tax information.

It's also a way to get the dirt, period.

"Well, you aren't exactly standing around a water fountain when you're working at home, are you?" said Gillian Reynolds, a new addition to the club who runs a networking company from her home.

"It's nice to have that interaction."

With more and more people working from home, the WFHC is embarking on a membership drive these days, hoping to entice slave-to-the-computer types away

from their PC's for a while.

"Most people when they're starting their own businesses tend to get a bit obsessed with it," said Ms Reynolds.

Just getting away for an hour with others in the same boat can work wonders for the isolation of both living and working in the same space.

Country dwellers can be especially prone to the loneliness that can come with a home business.

"We live out in the country, we don't know our neighbours a lot of the time," said Ms Reynolds.

"People aren't talking over the back fence anymore."

While Ms Reynolds thought of joining WFHC for some time, a fear of being intimidated by hard-nosed business talk

kept her back.

It shouldn't have, she said.

"I thought it would be all these professional people talking about finance," said Ms Reynolds.

Instead, members include everyone from landscape architects and tax accountants to reflexologists and floral designers.

The one thing they have in common is a home office and a desire to talk turkey with others who do, too.

"More and more people with a modem are working from home," said Ms Reynolds.

"But you still need to communicate, don't you?"

For more information, call Don Bridges at 905-854-2475.

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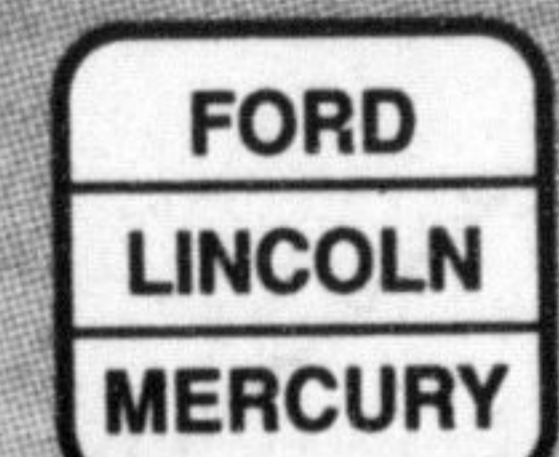
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