

Kids + COMPANY

Kitchener Waterloo Record

The Record

Pubdate: April 26, 2005 Page: C1

Section: LIFE Edition:

Final Length: 381 ID: 200504260064

Day-care centre has corporate clients

Byline/Source: JOHANNA WEIDNER RECORD STAFF

A new child-care centre is opening in Waterloo this summer just for corporate clients.

The facility is run by Toronto-based Kids and Company, which offers corporate-sponsored child care.

So far for the Waterloo location, they've signed insurance companies Manulife and Sun Life and the technology firm Sybase; other high-tech companies will also be meeting with Kids and Company. As well, they'll offer care to Toronto clients that have offices in this area, such as Ernst and Young, CIBC and Royal Bank.

Basically, Kids and Company partners with corporate clients that want to add child care to employee benefits, explained Victoria Sopik, founder and chief executive officer. Corporate membership can range from employers paying all the cost, to sharing the cost with employees, or having employees pay.

Construction has begun on the Waterloo location on King Street North in the former home of Roxanne's nightclub. It will have spots for 80 children from infants to 13-year-olds for full-time, part-time and back-up care. Back-up care is for when a family's regular child care is not available, like on

a school holiday or summer holidays.

Rates are typical to those charged in the community, Sopik said. At the Waterloo centre, the monthly rates are \$870 for infants, \$770 for ages 18 months to 2 1/2 years, and \$670 for preschool children up to five years. Back-up care is \$50 a day.

The big advantage is not the price, but that spots are guaranteed with six months' notice. Sopik said that feature is especially handy for mothers on maternity leave who plan to return to work.

Waterloo was picked because of the apparent shortage of child-care spots and long waiting lists, she said.

Corporate child care is big in the United States and is seen as a way for employers to attract and retain top people.

"Employers want to be seen as great employers," Sopik said.

Kids and Company offers perks like no late fees, hours between 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., use of any location, and webcams for parents and grandparents to watch the children. The centre plans to work with schools to arrange pickups for school-aged children.

"We just try to be as flexible as possible to meet the needs of working parents," she said.

Sopik, who has eight children with her husband, opened the first location in Toronto in July 2002 and now there are seven locations in that city serving 100 companies.

On top of the new Waterloo location, the company is expanding into London, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver.

jweidner@therecord.com

ON THE WEB: Find out more at www.kidsandcompany.ca.