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Parents have new choice for child care

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A problem arose for the von Gompertz family on a business trip to the Monterey Peninsula. While visiting with corporate clients during the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am golf tournament in February, David von Gompertz brought along his wife and two young children. His wife was invited for a day of golf, but with two small kids in tow, she found herself in a bind.

So David von Gompertz rented a room at Marriott of Monterey for the day and called Corporate Kids Events, a Monterey-based operation that provides games, arts and crafts and, most importantly, credentialed caretakers to watch over and care for his children.

"The woman arrived with a box of art supplies, a bag of toys and credentials up the wazoo," von Gompertz said. "She was smiley, seemed happy to see my kids. She offered to take them to a matinee or to the park and promised to stay by their sides. She said she'd map out an agenda so we'd know where they were at all times. She dressed them, changed them, fed them and got them to take a nap.

"The bottom line is they liked her. They were happy. And so were we."

In an era when families are struggling to bridge the gap between corporate travel and quality time, Corporate Kids Events is a welcomed alternative designed with an age-old adage in mind: The family that plays together stays together.

The operation, established locally three years ago, is the brainchild of husband-and-wife team Garen and Susan Gouveia. Before moving to the Peninsula, the two worked extensively in childcare near Lake Tahoe — Susan ran a similar program, and Garen was director of childcare at Tahoe Forest Hospital. They said they were in constant demand for individual contract services, both private and corporate.

The need and the opportunity on the Peninsula were clear, said Garen, president of the operation.

"We moved to the Peninsula ... because we knew it would be a prime location for the needs of business and leisure travelers," he said. "We also knew it would be a great place to raise our own child."

Corporate Kids Events was designed to provide accommodate and care for children whose parents are attending large group events and want to bring their children along but can't be with them throughout the entire trip. The 50-member staff can care for as many as 1,000 kids.

The Gouveias have traveled across the U.S., as well as Cabo San Lucas and the Bahamas, to set up programs.

"In this day and age, with all the crises you see in the media, it's our job to go a step above other services and provide quality entertainment, enriching activities and, most of all, security," Garen Gouveia said.

All employees are fingerprinted, CPR-certified and have background checks before they are hired.

"Our staff are not 14-year-old couch-sitters who watch TV while the kids do their thing," Garen Gouveia said. "We call them VIP childcare professionals. They show up in a staff shirt, with a tote bag filled with arts and crafts and games. They might teach guitar, foreign languages or art. This is not baby-sitting."

The program is working so well for Embassy Suites Monterey Bay that the hotel established a Corporate Kids Events office on site to better serve the needs of their young guests.

Hotel General Manager Greg Keebler said Embassy Suites made a corporate agreement with the company "because their business plan matches exactly the profile of our customer."

"Satisfying our need for quality childcare is what they bring to the table — it is their mainstay to provide more than just baby-sitting," Keebler said. "They cater to kids and family. Their ability to put together managed care over an extended period of time is excellent for our group travel. Families can become so disconnected through business travel, it's nice to be able to bring them together."

For more information on Corporate Kids Events, call 659-1877 or visit

www.corporatekidsevents.com.

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