

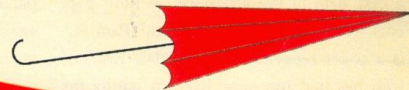
# search for **SUPER NANNY**

For Scarsdale's moms, working or otherwise, a nanny is a must. But how can you find that perfect, loving caregiver—and then hold on to her?

BY DEBORAH A. WILBURN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK VERGARI

## WANTED:

Nanny! Live in/out. Must be willing to adore our little ones. And do housework, even though we said you wouldn't have to. English-speaking a plus!



It's 7 a.m. On any given weekday, all over Scarsdale alarm clocks go off in the spare bedrooms of spacious homes and a live-in nanny gets up to begin her day, which won't end until 6:30 p.m. or later. If she doesn't live in, a harried parent is rushing to the train station to pick her up. She may or may not speak English, she may or may not like her job, which, of course, is caring for your children. In most cases, she's paid off the books and, in some cases, quite generously. And for many families, she's an indispensable member of the household.

When it comes to choosing child care, a nanny is hands down the most popular option in Scarsdale. Why? "Conve-

nience," says Susan Tokayer, founder and director of Family Helpers, a Dobbs Ferry-based agency that has placed nannies in Scarsdale and homes across the county. "Lots of parents just don't want to drag their kids out of the house at 7 a.m.," she says. "They also prefer the one-on-one attention their children will get."

Having a nanny on board also streamlines the morning routine, especially for working parents with children of varying ages. Instead of first schlepping a preschooler to a child-care center and then older kids to one or more schools, you simply give everyone a smooch good-bye and head for the Metro-North station. A nanny in the

house also means you don't need to miss work every time one of your kids gets an ear infection—and eliminates those frantic "get back here quick" calls because Joshua threw up during math class.

For Deirdre Verne, a college professor, mother of a preschooler and a kindergartener, and Edgemont resident, having a nanny is a must. "There's no school busing here," she says. "It drives me crazy."

In addition to the convenience, having a nanny simply provides a better fit for the Scarsdale lifestyle. Many school-age kids go to a variety of lessons and activities after classes, while younger children may attend a morning nursery program and then have

*\*Names changed to protect privacy.*



"The boys are awesome," says live-in nanny Lavena Sheppard of her young charges.

a play date in the afternoon. If both parents work, who will drive them? Pam R.\* is a court reporter and Scarsdale resident who has had the same live-out nanny for the past eight years, since her only child was 5. "At first my son went to Kids' B.A.S.E.



"Most nannies don't want to change jobs all the time. It depends on how they're treated."

after school," she says. "It was a wonderful program, but sometimes my son had other things to do, or he just wanted to come home and relax."

In Scarsdale, many moms have the room for nanny to live in—and many do, making it a closer relationship for everyone. "Because you're living there, it's more like you're part of the family and less like an employee," says Monica Day, a nanny who lived with a Scarsdale family until her boss was relocated to Amsterdam.

Given the number of kids in Scarsdale, it's a good thing that the vast majority of

parents opt for nannies. There are 3,476 kids age 5 and under living in our town, according to the U.S. Census. Even if you wanted to send your infant or preschooler to a child-care center, the pickings are slim, especially when it comes to finding one with working-parent-friendly hours. Tyler's Tots, located in neighboring Greenwich and a popular choice with Scarsdale families, is one of the few open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Perhaps you're expecting a baby and are planning to hire a nanny soon, or you already have a nanny and are curious about other women's experiences. (Who doesn't want to find out what the other mom is paying, how many hours her nanny works, and what chores she's expected to do?) But we didn't stop there—we also talked to nannies to find out what makes them stay, what makes them bolt, and how they really feel about their jobs. Their insights may cast needed light on this important relationship upon which many a family depends.

#### Nanny Locator

For first-time moms, the idea of hiring a nanny can seem daunting. For experienced mothers who have been through the process, it can be just plain exhausting. Even fictional characters have trouble navigating the



nanny circuit: In *Mary Poppins*, Mrs. Banks complains to her husband that Katie Nanna has suddenly left, without a word of warning. She asks Mr. Banks what she should do (this novel was first published in 1934, when presumably women couldn't figure these things out on their own). "Advertise, my dear," he said. "...I should get someone to put in the Morning Paper that Jane and Michael and John and Barbara Banks (to say nothing of their Mother) require the best possible Nannie...and at once."

Of course, Scarsdale moms know intuitively how to get the word out: by any means possible. Advertising is certainly one strategy. Some place free ads on Craig's List ([craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org)), or pony up to place an ad in a local paper like *Irish Echo* or *Pennysaver*. Others search for their perfect match at sites like [enannysource.com](http://enannysource.com), where families can post jobs and view resumes after paying a membership fee.

Nanny agencies are another source. "I didn't know where else to look," says Pam R., who used Family Helpers to find her nanny. "I didn't want someone off the street, and they do a full background check." Still, some moms are put off by the high fees, which