

Parents

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daddy

The child-care field may be dominated by women, but that hasn't stopped three devoted fathers from opening their own successful day-care businesses. Here's the scoop on these nurturing men.

day

By Greg Melville

CARE

Michael Olberding, 33
Sacramento, California

Family: Wife Candice, daughters Kaylee, 3, and Michele, 2

Previous job: I worked as a veterinary technician and was studying to go to veterinary school. But I was getting burned out from my job and also wanted to spend more time with my own kids. Since I've always been good with children, running a day care seemed like an obvious choice.

Number of kids in his care: I provide part-time care for ten children, ages 11 months to 7 years.

On running a daddy day care: Some people look at me funny when they hear what I do, but once they get to know me, they can see that I have tons of patience and can be just as nurturing as a woman.

Best moment: At the end of my certification class, I attended a ceremony organized by the county. Of the 100 child-care providers there, I

was the only man. All these women kept telling me how great it is to have a guy in the field.

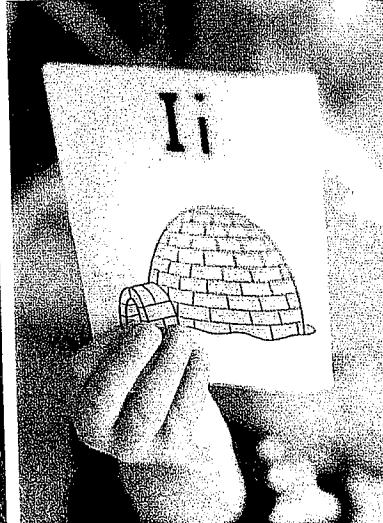
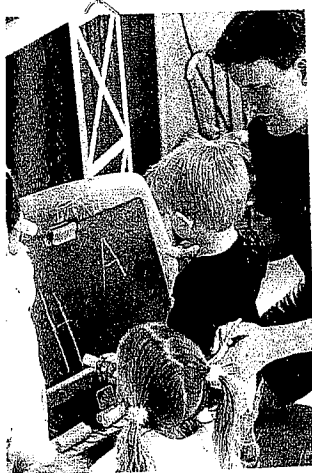
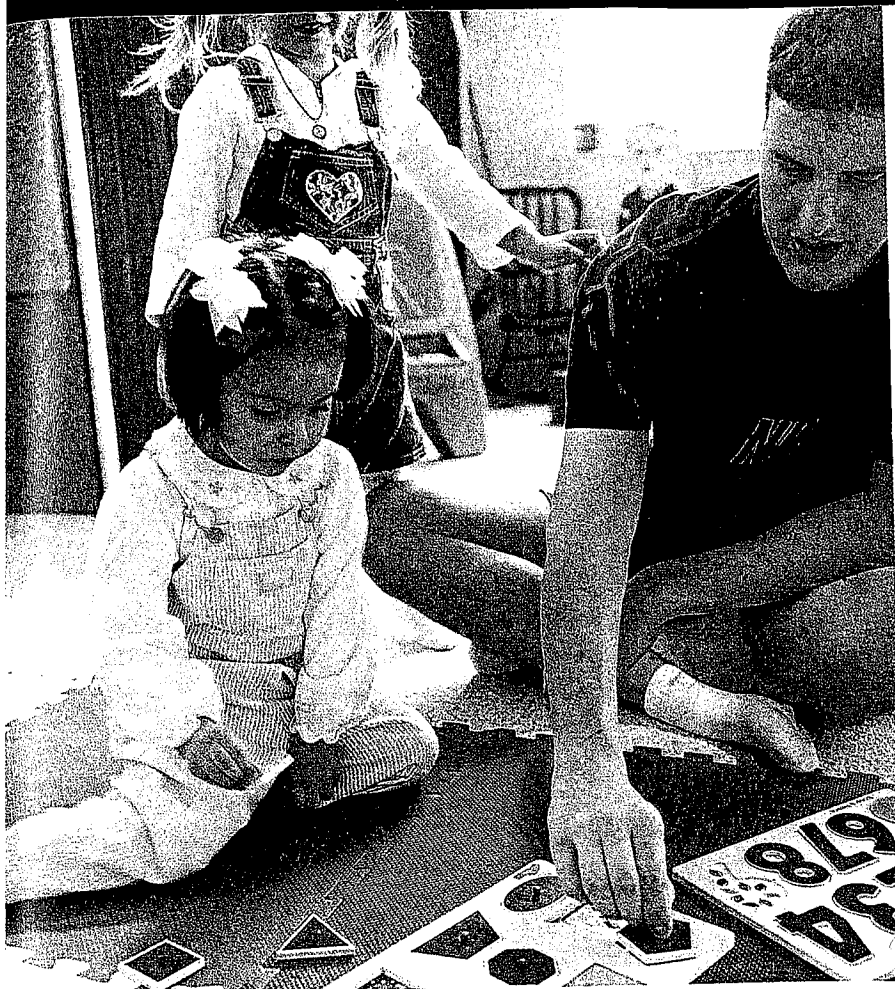
Most rewarding part of the job: Seeing the kids get so excited when they spell a word correctly or count to ten for the first time is the kind of payoff you just can't get with most jobs.

Top tip for dads: Don't assume your wife is better at parenting. And if she is, it's your job to improve your skills until they match hers.

Funniest moment: The aunt of one of my day-care kids came to the front door and asked to speak to the woman in charge. "That's me," I replied. She was really surprised at first, but she was cool after that.

Future goal: I plan to keep running (and maybe even expanding) my in-home day care. It's such a fulfilling job that I can't imagine giving it up.

"Once people get to know me, they can see that I have tons of patience with kids."



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Matt Bach, 32

Bloomington, Minnesota

Family: Wife Andrea, children Hannah, 6, and Benjamin, 3

Previous job: I drove a delivery truck. After Hannah

was born, we decided I'd be the one to stay home since my wife was making more money than I was. Then my cousin needed someone to look after one of her children, and I volunteered. I realized that I enjoyed watching kids, so I took classes, got licensed, and started a day care in my home.

Number of kids in his care: I watch nine children (ages 1 to 5), mostly on a part-time basis.

On running a daddy day care: One mother was considering using my day care, but she was concerned that I couldn't be as compassionate as a woman. She later admitted that I'd changed her mind after she saw me playing and interacting with the kids!

Best moment: I was teaching sign language with flash cards. One 2-year-old boy didn't seem to be paying attention at all. Then, when his mom picked him up, he showed her ten different signs—everything from sky to bunny rabbit. Sometimes I'm amazed

"When kids don't want to leave my house at the end of the day, I know I've done a good job."

by how much kids retain.

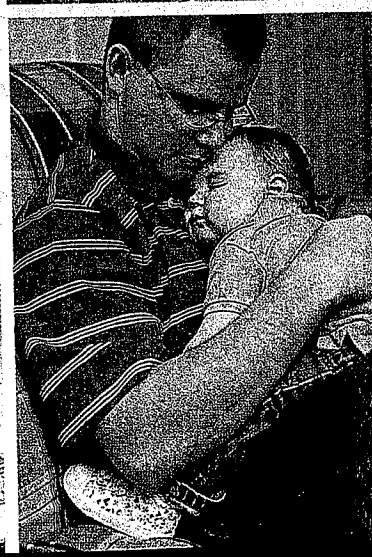
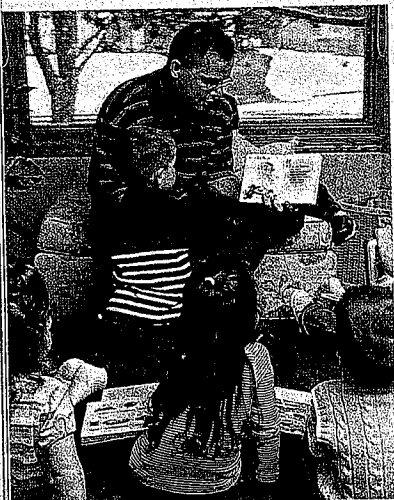
How I get the kids to eat new foods: I keep putting the food in front of them. The kids may initially turn up their noses, but eventually they'll get curious and take a bite. I did that with chicken potpie. Everyone resisted it at first, but now it's one of their favorite lunches.

Potty-teaching trick: I set an egg timer to go off every 15 minutes. When it does, I put a child who's being toilet-taught on the potty. If she's successful and pees in it, I give a small reward.

Most rewarding part of the job: When kids don't want to leave my house at the end of the day, I know I've done a good job.

Top tip for parents: Try to get into a routine. I plan every moment—from taking off the kids' jackets in the morning to cleaning up the room at the end of the day. Children really appreciate having a schedule to follow.

Added perk: Of course I love working with kids, but I've also discovered that I really like being my own boss. As long as families keep coming to me, I'll keep caring for their children.



Family: Wife Lila, twins Clara and Danny, 2½

Previous job: After I lost my job as a software

programmer, I was looking for a career that would let me spend more time with my children. My wife works in the state office of child-care services here in Massachusetts, so opening a day care just made sense.

Number of kids in his care: I watch six kids between the ages of 6 months and 3 years, some full-time, some part-time.

On running a daddy day care: I've learned that dads can do everything moms can do—except give birth and breastfeed!

Best moment: One of my clients had twins, and one of her babies had to stay in the NICU for a while. One day, she dropped off her older son before heading to the hospital, and she started to cry. All of the kids at my center came up and gave her a hug. They're still working on the alphabet, and they haven't quite gotten the hang of the whole "no hitting" rule, but they know that sad people need hugs—and that's a pretty good thing to know.

Favorite rainy-day activity: We recently had an indoor toddler Olympics with events like the three-meter dash and shot put with a beach ball. We even tried to do the triple jump, but the kids found it a little confusing.

How I get the kids to calm down: Pratfalls are good. If a child's upset, I can distract him by falling over or doing silly things. I also get a lot of mileage out of peekaboo and having the kids wash their hands—every child loves playing in water.

Favorite parenting books: I swear by *The Happiest Baby on the Block*, by Harvey Karp, M.D., and *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*, by Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D.

Most rewarding part of the job: Two of my clients are single mothers. They've told me that they really appreciate having me as a positive male role model in their children's lives.

My perfect day at the center: Every day starts off as the perfect day, and then hopefully no one throws up! □

Jim McNulty, 33
Arlington, Massachusetts



"Dads can do everything moms can do—except give birth and breastfeed!"

