



Laura Abernathy

and most of her sitters were teachers who also were free during the summer months, so she began a sitting service for tourists

during the down time. Rapidly, she and her certified sitters became a popular and needed accommodation. They supplied in-room care for busy parents either vacationing or attending conferences and became the recommended sitter at Kingston Plantation eight years ago.

"We stayed very busy with in-room sitting," said Abernathy, taking a break in her comfortable living room, her laptop on pause. "Then they started asking if we could do groups of toddlers and infants. Soon, companies started contacting me, and then the military asked for childcare when they take troops on marriage retreats to counsel couples ready to be deployed, or just back from deployment. So, when they're in meetings, we have the kids doing crafts and games, and we go now from D.C. to Florida. We've had as many as six different groups in six different locations."

"When we take these families on various retreats, we need babysitting—someone to watch the kids," said U. S. Army Chaplain Tim Leever. "We've been doing this for about two to four years now, and it's a tremendous asset. It really helps so spouses can be cut loose for awhile and go off together. Laura is very flexible, and so she works very well with us."


One of the most challenging jobs for Abernathy's resort sitters was for 400 children in Myrtle Beach one weekend, when there was another group simultaneously in Asheville,

N.C., and Tampa, Fla. "It kept us hopping," Abernathy laughed.

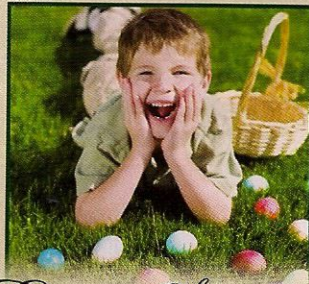
All the caregivers have thorough background checks, CPR certification and are mostly public school teachers who are off during the summer. There are 70 sub-contract employees on the list of sitters, available at a moment's notice, ready to load up and travel to the needed resort to entertain and care for the children.

"With this kind of sitting," said Abernathy, "families can be together

and have time alone. We do some conventions, weddings and the U.S. Marine Corps Ball when they come to town. The hardest part is getting to know them, and we get very close, and then they have to leave."

The resort sitters come equipped like a traveling daycare, said Abernathy. "All they have to bring are diapers and wipes. We have arts and crafts, games, blocks, puzzles, doll houses. It just depends on how many we have and what the ages are." 

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