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Public urged to tattle on nannies

Oct. 28, 2006. 01:00 AM

NEW YORK—Just as trucking companies put signs on their vehicles asking the public to report unsafe drivers, American parents can now put licence plates on their baby strollers to get feedback on the behaviour of their nannies.

Jill Starishevsky, a mother of two and a New York prosecutor, launched Hows MyNanny.com last week. The site sells stroller licence plates that have a unique number and include the website address so the public can anonymously report good or bad nanny behaviour.

The parents, who pay \$50 (U.S.) for a plate, receive an email alerting them to the report, which they access on the website (<http://howsmynanny.com//default.aspx>) using a password.

"It's a tool to empower the parents and to protect the parents and the children, it's not a tool to work against nannies. It's just a tool to give parents peace of mind," says Starishevsky, a lawyer who prosecutes child abuse and sex crimes.

The website poses questions to help parents evaluate what the service provides: "Would you want to know if your nanny spends most of her day blabbing into a cellphone instead of talking to your child; power shops for hours at a time, while your child sits virtually ignored and 'unstimulated' in her stroller; pushes, yanks or even smacks your child because they didn't listen." But the report might also show a nanny who "showers your child in love. affection and patience."

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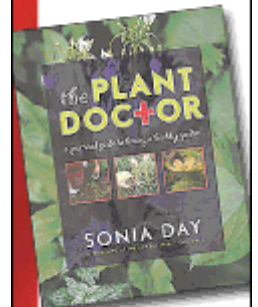
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Starishevsky says she came up with the idea after she saw a nanny in a New York City park who, for at least an hour, ignored the two young girls she was looking after.

"I was so frustrated," Starishevsky says. "How do I tell the mother that these kids could have run into the street, they could have been taken away at the hand of a stranger?"

"People keep asking me if this is because I am a mom do I want to do this or is it because I am a prosecutor?" Starishevsky says.

"My answer is, I think it's both."

REUTERS

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