Alumni

A Childcare Network for Easy Playdate Planning

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PAL

Finding a good babysitter can be a struggle for any parent. All too often, the only option is to pay a near-stranger to supervise from the living-room couch. But what if there were an easy-to-schedule, more socially enriching alternative?

Amanda Raposo ’17BUS, a rising tech entrepreneur and veteran babysitter, thinks she can offer just that. Through her digital platform, PAL by Project Playdate, which she founded with her business-school classmate Courtney Bernabei ’17BUS, she has created a network of premium playdates for kids in New York City.

PAL is designed to function both as a marketplace where parents can “shop” for group activities and as an online job board for childcare professionals. Caregivers, all vetted by the company, offer events — tea parties, museum trips, yoga, or a few hours spent creating science experiments or speaking French — based on their skills and interests. Parents can sign up for those scheduled activities or create custom ones through members-only groups.

Because all playdates happen in groups of two or more, parents can split the cost of care. A session with seven kids, for example, might cost each parent ten dollars per hour. “Customers get better-quality care often at a lower price point than babysitting, and the childcare specialists get paid much more than the typical sitter,” says Raposo, who won first place at the Startup Columbia festival’s venture competition in 2018.



Amanda Raposo

For Raposo, PAL is more than just a solution to the “nightmare” of scheduling playdates; it also promotes social and emotional development. “A facilitated playdate unlocks certain learning opportunities,” she explains. “The more support you can provide for children at a young age to make meaningful connections, the happier and more successful in life they’ll be.”

For now, Raposo is focused on the New York market, but she eventually wants to expand to other cities. No matter how much her business grows, her goal is not to replace babysitters altogether. “There will always be a need for someone to run through daily routines with a child,” she says. “What we’re offering is a fun alternative that might encourage parents to take a little more time off for themselves.”

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