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## CEOs Shell Out Nearly 6 Figures To Secure the Perfect Nanny

By Del Jones

A single employee's resignation disrupted the life of Boston Beer Chairman Jim Koch.

It wasn't the CEO. It wasn't the chief financial officer. Rather, it was the nanny of his daughters, ages 8 and 10.

Tom First understands. He's the founder of Nantucket Nectars, a company he sold in 2001 that is now a \$100 million division of British food giant Cadbury Schweppes. Jessica Glenn, 25, is nanny to his children, 2 and 6.

"No disrespect to my vice president of marketing, but I consider my kids a bigger asset than anything in my life," First says.

Millions of families face upheaval caused by child care issues. Rich, poor and the middle-class dream of Mary Poppins or Mrs. Doubtfire. Few find the dream nanny, but just about everyone experiences a child care nightmare at one time or another. CEOs are no exception. They are not insulated from a nanny gone sour, and their combination of anxiety and wealth is driving annual salaries of the best-paid nannies toward \$100,000.

"There are people in Boston with JDs (law degrees) who make less than some nannies," Koch says. He

and his wife, Cynthia Fisher, a biotech entrepreneur, have been through a string of nannies and at one time started recruiting University of Boston figure skaters because their lives are disciplined by the rigor of 5 a.m. training sessions.

"We always looked at it as our most important hiring decision," Koch said.

***Fewer CEOs take the inexpensive road because they are more sensitive to legal and tax issues, and understand the risk of being sued for exposing unsuspecting young women to a harsh work environment.***

**Joseph Keeley  
College Nannies & Tutors**

Salaries of top nannies aren't the only thing being driven by the CEO search. Those at the high end also get benefits such as health insurance, meals at fine restaurants, country club passes, cars with free gasoline, education stipends, cellphones, working trips aboard corporate jets to places like Hawaii and personal trips compliments of the CEO's

frequent-flier miles. All that, plus room and board in a mansion, can make leaving the profession a lifestyle decision.

CEO nannies are in such demand that they often get unsolicited offers like a scene out of *Desperate Housewives*. Angela Rheingans, 28, has been with the same Milwaukee family for eight years but is often approached by strangers in parks and has found notes slipped under her windshield wiper at the children's school offering "to double whatever I'm making."

But Rheingans says she is bound by a sense of professional loyalty, not to mention 3½ weeks of paid vacation and a new Nissan Frontier four-wheel drive — although she says she gets to keep the truck even if she resigns tomorrow.

In May, at 9:30 p.m. on the night before Mother's Day, Boston nanny Michelle LaRowe, 30, says she got a frantic phone call from a stranger. The caller said she was the wife of a CEO and begged LaRowe to be her Mother's Day gift. She promised LaRowe whatever salary and benefits it took to make it happen. "I directed them to an agency that could fulfill their request," LaRowe says.

"I'm always approached. I have three standing offers," says Ingrid Hale,

37, nanny to the daughters, aged 21 months and 3 years, of David Gochman, CEO of Academy Sports & Outdoors, a Katy, Texas-based retail chain that has more than \$1 billion in revenue. Hale, who has 14 years of experience, makes \$60,000-plus working 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. She figures she could top \$80,000 with a typical schedule.

Why are high-end nannies so special? It starts with education. CEOs want college-educated nannies with degrees in such fields as education, nursing and child psychology and are willing to pay for it, says Katherine Robinson, founder of Beacon Hill Nannies in Boston, which places 300 to 500 high-end nannies a year.

Hale, for example, has a degree in early childhood education. Robinson recently placed Shannon Lucas with technology consulting firm Analytics CEO Mitchell Burman, who says he and his wife liked that Lucas has been an assistant teacher at a Montessori school. The Burmans have a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old and are expecting a baby any day now.

Robinson says her agency finds potential nannies by recruiting at 200 colleges that offer majors in early childhood education, elementary education, child development, special education, child psychology, child development and child life studies. While most start in the \$30,000-a-year range, she says, the best can more than double that with a few years of experience and good references.

Why do college-educated women become nannies? For one, at the high end the money is comparable to, or better than, teaching. Trained educators often find more satisfaction in the development of two or three children over several years than they do facing a fresh crop of 30 students every fall.



In addition to college degrees, many high-end nannies know how to swim, are certified in CPR and regularly attend nanny seminars to hone their skills. Most at the high end have been through exhaustive background checks and psychological exams.

Movie stars such as Angelina Jolie, mother of a newborn, may be the most famous employers of nannies. But celebrities often prefer nannies who don't speak English because they don't want bathrobe secrets leaking to the *National Enquirer*, says LaRowe, who makes \$80,000 a year working for a CEO in Boston.

LaRowe says she has talked to celebrities and the nannies of celebrities. She says that celebrities will brag to each other about how little they pay their nannies. CEOs brag about their nanny qualifications. CEOs manage people for a living, pay the best and are "fabulous to work for," LaRowe says.

Still, in the best neighborhoods there are many nannies, typically uneducated immigrants, working for substandard wages, says Pat Cascio,

president of the International Nanny Association.

But fewer CEOs take the inexpensive road because they are more sensitive to legal and tax issues and understand the risk of being sued for exposing unsuspecting young women to a "harsh work environment," says Joe Keeley, who is franchising a company of nanny agencies in major cities called College Nannies & Tutors.

Keeley is a 24-year-old former collegiate hockey player who was hired one summer as the nanny of two athletic boys in St. Paul. "My roommates were digging swimming pools. We all came home from work tired, but I was tired from playing golf at the country club."

Members at that country club were always asking Keeley where they could find a nanny like him. That gave him the idea for his nanny franchise, although male nannies remain so rare that they border on being statistically non-existent. In 18 years, Robinson says, she has placed fewer than 20 men.

Keeley said he succeeded because he did more than babysit. For instance, he traveled with his boys to summer hockey camps. Money is not an issue, so a common theme among high-end nannies is keeping the children busy doing high-quality activities. If children in LaRowe's care express an interest in, say, music, she will research the best classes in the area and audit a few to find the very best.

"I don't do this because I can't do anything else," says LaRowe, who has a chemistry degree from Bridgewater (Mass.) State College. "If I were a chemist, I'd want to win the Nobel Prize. I commit myself (to) ... raising emotionally, physically and spiritually healthy children. I have an objective eye, and my views aren't tainted with umbilical-cord emotions."

Most nannies to CEOs sign confidentiality agreements never to discuss their families in detail. Those interviewed requested permission to speak to USA TODAY, including Myrna Alphonse, 34. She says she can reveal only that she takes care of five children in Washington, D.C., ages 7 to 16.

"This family did not know what they needed," says Alphonse, who has a degree in psychology from the University of North Carolina. "I told them if the dryer broke down, I could call and get it handled. I would take the car in for servicing."

She manages the housekeeper, lawn crew and personal chef. "They saw the value," says Alphonse, who makes \$70,000 a year, plus health insurance, paid vacation, sick days and an education stipend that she is using toward her master's degree.

Alphonse also home-schools the younger children, which is a growing

trend among high-end nannies. Other nannies are starting to specialize. LaRowe has been nanny to five different sets of twins. Lisa Stipe, 39, was a nanny for 18 years before specializing in newborns. She just finished taking care of 3-month-old Emily Shull for Wise Foods CEO Tom Shull and wife Dorothy in Connecticut and is headed to Dallas where she will be taking care of twins to be born in July.

She charges \$300 to \$450 — a day. "I'm booked four to six months in advance," she says.

Being a high-end nanny is not an easy life, Cascio says. Sixty-hour weeks are typical, and nannies often must work on Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Stipe works 21-hour days. "I take care of the baby at night so the parents can sleep. I make their lives so much more peaceful, that's why I enjoy doing it. I have a real talent to read babies and to figure out what they are trying to tell us."

Cascio says she spoke to one new nanny who was excited that she was going to Europe for two months but found out that meant two months in a hotel room with two small children while the parents went out or relaxed in a separate room.

Robinson says one executive couple insisted on a nanny with "no personal or social life." Robinson asked them: "So you want Jeffrey Dahmer?"

It's not easy for single women to meet single men with children in tow, LaRowe says. It's even more difficult to find a man who can provide the lifestyle to which a nanny can grow accustomed. "It's hard to go back and drive the Civic," Keeley says.