

Women rock the office

Adrienne Stephens,
Rocket City Sitters

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The sitters range from 18 to 65 years of age. There's a grandmother, some retired teachers, a few substitute teachers.

Collectively, they help form Rocket City Sitters, believed to be first sitting service for children in Huntsville when it was founded in July 2009.

It was formed by Adrienne Stephens and Erica and Nick Weseman, all friends since elementary school in suburban Dallas.

Among the owners, Stephens, 26, a 2005 marketing graduate of Southern Methodist University, is the only one who works full time at Rocket City Sitters.

Stephens moved to Huntsville about 2 1/2 years ago. Her first job here was with an advertising company.

Last September, she was laid off from the advertising company. By then, though, she and the Wesemans had already started Rocket City Sitters.

"I'm glad I had this to fall back on," Stephens said. "I decided to let this be my full-time job."

Part of the motivation for starting Rocket City Sitters: Erica Weseman and Stephens had done some babysitting in high school and college.

They were unaware of a similar service in Madison County. Maybe, they figured, people here would be interested.

"There's always going to be a need," Stephens said. "There will always be kids. There are a lot of young families from out of town. If you don't know anyone, there's no one to stay with the kids."

People here have been interested, all right. In just more than a year in business, Rocket City Sitters has babysat for about 150 families.

"We are always getting new families," Stephens said. "Word of mouth is the way we get a lot of new families, especially with school starting. People need someone after school."

"There are a lot of sitters who will walk kids from the bus stop, prepare snacks and help them do homework."

That's where having retired teachers, substitute teachers and teachers in training becomes an advantage.

"They have the experience you need," Stephens said. "They love working with children. That's one of the main things

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we look for. They have experience working with kids."

One of Rocket City Sitters' first clients was a family in Madison that needed a sitter for after school.

The family had three children. Both parents worked.

The sitter's after-school duties: walk the children home from the bus stop, give the children snacks, and do homework and chores until mom and dad came home from work. A year later, the family still employs Rocket City Sitters.

"It's been profitable, especially for the first year," Stephens said. "We want to expand into Athens and Decatur and continually build up (a base of) sitters and meet demand."