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By Carly Weber

Big night out? Find sitter online

All the parents Jenny Neymeyer knows have the same go-to baby sitters for big nights out, such as New Year's Eve.

"Aunts, uncles and grandparents," said Neymeyer, 30, a Marion mother of 2-year-old Maya.

One friend's parents even offered to drive from Chicago to watch the kiddos.

Not everyone, though, has built-in baby sitters nearby. That leaves some parents who want to ring in the new year with champagne instead of Cheerios scrambling for in-demand sitters.

Now online child care sites, like SitterCity.com, make it easier to find reliable sitters any night of the year - even New Year's Eve, even in Eastern Iowa. A search within a 50-mile radius of Marion turned up about 100 sitters, many of them University of Iowa students.

"If you can, take the grandparents every time, but if you can't, we've got you covered," said Genevieve Thiers of Chicago, SitterCity's CEO and founder.

Parents can post jobs or browse profiles of potential sitters and contact them directly. Thiers suggests a keyword search for "New Year's Eve" to find willing sitters.

Before "SitterCity launched . . . all you could do was tap into your local networks, and if you couldn't find anyone, you were out of luck," she said.

Even if they found a sitter, parents often opted to stay home to avoid paying inflated New Year's Eve rates, some more than \$30 an hour.

Now that online databases have flooded the market, supply's met demand and rates are down. Still, expect to pay time and a half or double for a baby sitter on popular nights. Around here that's between \$7 and \$20 an hour.

"You have the early birds that (book) in the beginning of December," Thiers said, but the week before New Year's Eve is the busiest.

"Weekly site traffic will double or triple," Thiers said