



Students from DuPage Montessori in Naperville enter a Kids Kab after they get out of their summer school program Thursday in Lisle.

TERENCE GUIDER-SHAW / FOR THE SUN

## Rides for kids

Company makes it easier for working families

By Ashley Johnson  
FOR THE SUN

Kids Kab in Downers Grove doesn't operate like a traditional cab service. Customers can't just call up at the last minute — they have to register in advance. And most of the passengers aren't old enough to drive.

For 15 years, parents in Naperville, Downers Grove, Lisle, Woodridge and the surrounding areas have trusted Kids Kab to get their children to and from school, after-school programs, day care, birthday parties and even driver's education classes. Naperville School District 203, DuPage Montessori and Peter Pan Early Learning Center also have used the service to shuttle youngsters.

Kids Kab owners Dilip and Shilpee Desai don't take the responsibility lightly.

"This is not like pizza delivery," Dilip said. "This is somebody trusts

us with their loved ones."

The husband and wife came up with the idea after having difficulty finding a way to get their own sons to after-school activities. They initially hooked up with a Kids Kab franchise, but soon parted ways and started their own business.

### Building reputation

Dilip left his job in pharmaceuticals to run Kids Kab. Shilpee, who works at the University of Illinois-Chicago, handles the accounting, or as she said, "supervising," Dilip joked. "She's my boss."

Kids Kab started with two vans; now it has six. One of the first customers was the Avery Coonley School in Downers Grove.

"It's a relationship that's worked for the last 15 years," said Mary Kay Markunas, business manager for the school.

DuPage Montessori in Naperville has used Kids Kab on and off

### AT A GLANCE

#### Kids Kab

**Where::** 6224 A Main St., Downers Grove

**Hours:** 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Call:** 630-493-9KID

**Cost:** Rates vary based on frequency of rides, distance and time of day. Generally operates in a 10-mile radius.

for four years, primarily for summer programs.

Jan Crider, office manager for DuPage Montessori, praised the service.

"They're very punctual; they're very accommodating," she said.

Dilip stressed that safety is his No. 1 priority. Children carry photo identification and drivers only leave them with previously authorized caretakers.

"We don't trust anybody in this business," Dilip said.

From time to time, children arrive and there's no one home. In those cases, Shilpee and Dilip are willing to go the extra mile. Shilpee recalled taking care of a child until his parents could get home.

"We took him to McDonald's, fed him, took him home, baby-sat for two to three hours," Shilpee said.

That kind of service has helped them grow their customer base. Although the recession has affected business, Shilpee said they have kept prices affordable. Rates are flexible; Dilip said he takes individual circumstances into account.

### Worth the effort

Over the years, several parents have told him their children wouldn't have been able to do this or that if it wasn't for Kids Kab.

"My reward would be so many happy parents," Dilip said.

John SanFilippo is one of them. He started using Kids Kab a few years ago when his children's baby-sitter lived outside the bus boundary.

"It enables me to keep my kids participating in events that they otherwise would not be able to with me and my wife working," he said.

Danielle Shuman of Lisle has used Kids Kab on and off for two years. This year, Kids Kab took her 9-year-old son to summer school in Naperville.

"We've really had a positive experience," Shuman said. "They've been very flexible. We've had a great driver."

Thanks to Kids Kab, her son can participate in more activities, and she can relax knowing he's being transported safely.

"It allows me the flexibility to work," she said. "It just takes some of the stress out of my day."