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## Uber-Like Car Service for Kids, 10 to 18, Now Available in Darien: Cameron on Transportation

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Hey, soccer moms, tired of feeling like an Uber driver for your kids, shuttling them from school to practice, from playdate to home? Well, I have an answer and an app for you: [VANgo](#).

Launched last year by Connecticut native Marta Jamrozik, named as one of Forbes Magazine's "30 Under 30" and daughter of a working mom, the concept is simple: A ride app for pre-teens and teens with drivers who know about child care.

"All of our drivers are thoroughly vetted," Jamrozik said. "They need to have at least three years of childcare experience, a clean DMV record, undergo a background check, fingerprinting, reference checks and even an inspection of their vehicle."

VANgo, which provides insurance for its drivers, is operating in Fairfield County and Phoenix, Arizona, and hopes to expand to more cities this summer.

The company has 60 drivers in Connecticut who work part-time, averaging three to five rides a day. The service is available from 6 to 8:30 a.m. and from 2 to 10:30 p.m., shuttling kids between the ages of 10 and 18 from place to place.

Rides can be booked up to two weeks in advance or on as little as four hours notice. When the reservation has been accepted, the parents and children receive a text message to confirm the ride with information that includes the name, photo and rating of the driver and a description of the car.

Local trips start at \$17 with a \$2 discount for recurring rides. Pricing, Jamrozik said, is based on distance and time with the “vast majority” of the fee going to the driver.

“Our pricing is about 15 percent higher than Uber and Lyft,” she said, emphasizing that VANgo drivers are experienced with child care and 85 percent of them are mothers — and so far all of them are women.

Unlike other ride service companies, VANgo does not raise rates when demand is high. Tipping is allowed, via the app, and all charges are made directly to the parents’ credit cards so the children do not need cash.

A mother from Pound Ridge, New York, says she uses VANgo daily to get her three kids with varying schedules to school in New Canaan while she commutes to work in Fairfield. She said she struggled to find a nanny who was willing to work five hours a week split between the morning dropoffs and afternoon pickups.

The woman said she has peace of mind when she’s at work and receives a text message alerting her that the children have been picked up at school and are heading home.

The drivers also like the gig. A 50-year-old grandmother has been driving for nine months and loves the kids — especially their conversations. She wasn’t interested in shuttling people to the airport or picking people up after a night out at the bars, so VANgo was a perfect fit.

Jamrozik says she may expand the service to include parents and the elderly, but for now, she’s happy with the kids as her clients and their parents as customers.

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*Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at [CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com](mailto:CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com).*