

Room to Grow news

SPRING/SUMMER 2011



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am pleased to share with you this newsletter, my first as Room to Grow's new Executive Director. One thing that was immediately clear to me is that partnerships with other social service agencies are key to our success. We rely on a network of prenatal clinics to refer parents who can truly benefit from our program. Social workers from potential referral partners are required to visit our site so that they have a deep understanding of our program and its aims.

In addition, we have strong ties to organizations that provide critical services outside the scope of our program—such as job training and mental health counseling—to which we can refer our families. Our goal is to provide our families with the best possible resources, both material and informational, so that the children have the best possible start in life. Your support is crucial, and we thank you.

Andrea Salwen Kopel

Executive Director, Room to Grow, New York

DID YOU KNOW?

The journal *Psychological Science* recently published a study showing that the home environment accounted for approximately 80% of the individual variance in mental ability among 2-year-olds in low-income households, whereas for children from wealthier households the variance depended largely on genetics. This finding suggests that for low-income parents, home environment and parenting choices are extremely important. Room to Grow provides our families with parenting information, as well as stimulating and developmentally appropriate toys and books, to help level the playing field for the youngest children.

CLIENT SNAPSHOT: *Melissa Lopez and son Donovan*

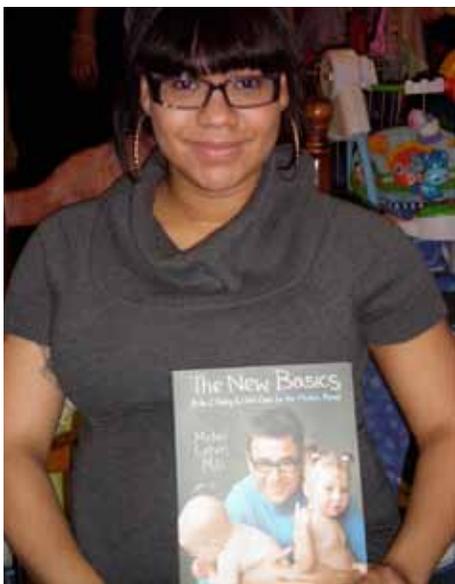
Melissa came to Room to Grow in December 2007. Though she was only 17 and had dropped out of high school, she was determined to be a good parent to baby Donovan.

From the very beginning, La Shell, Room to Grow's social worker, encouraged Melissa to go back to school. She helped her find a local GED program, which Melissa completed by Donovan's first birthday. Eight months later, Melissa was working and enrolled in an Associate's Degree program at a local college.

Melissa needed a lot of help establishing routines for her baby. La Shell helped her to set up calming, predictable bedtime routines for Donovan, and they discussed strategies to transition him from a bottle to a sippy cup. As Donovan grew, Melissa



learned how to set boundaries and limits. At 24 months, La Shell referred Donovan to Early Intervention for a suspected speech delay and empowered Melissa to be an advocate for her child when he was initially denied services. At Donovan's graduation from Room to Grow in December, Melissa reflected on her time in the program and marveled at the distance she and her son had travelled.



PROGRAM UPDATE

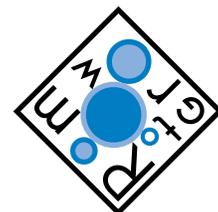
Partnership with Tribeca Parenting and Tribeca Pediatrics

Room to Grow is delighted to announce our partnership with Tribeca Parenting and Tribeca Pediatrics, founded by Dr. Michel Cohen. Tribeca Parenting is subsidizing the cost of attendance for Room to Grow moms for several of its popular parenting classes, including seminars on breastfeeding and sleep routines. Dr. Cohen also donated 300 copies of his book *The New Basics: A-to-Z Baby & Child Care for the Modern Parent*—enough for every Room to Grow family. Tribeca Parenting shares our commitment to providing comprehensive education and valuable resources to new

mothers and we look forward to working together.

New Referral Partners

Each year Room to Grow graduates approximately 100 families from our program. To help us enroll new families, we are delighted to welcome two new referral partners: the Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership's Community Health Workers Program and the Brooklyn Young Mother's Collective. These agencies are dedicated to improving the health of pregnant and parenting women and their children and we welcome them to our network of referral partners.



SAVE THE DATE

September 20, 2011 OPEN HOUSE

Join us for a tour
of our program space.

Meet our new
Executive Director,
Andrea Salwen Kopel,
give your feedback,
and find out how you can
get more involved in helping
Room to Grow fulfill
our mission.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: *Mary Taggart and Vicki Tisch*

Two evenings each month, Mary Taggart and Vicki Tisch are Team Leaders for NY Cares volunteers who help sort and organize our donations of baby items. Mary has been volunteering at Room to Grow since 2007, and Vicki since 2008.

Vicki beautifully sums up: "You see the results of your work immediately—giant piles of donation bags disappear! Bins full of clothes and toys transform into a lovely children's boutique! And you know your efforts support such a worthwhile cause. You are part of an endeavor that touches the lives of babies and families during critical developmental years."

Mary adds: "I love to see how enthusiastic the volunteers are to learn about the organization and how much fun they



have while sorting, since they know their work is making a difference. I receive several emails from volunteers telling me how much they enjoyed the project and would like to return. Receiving that feedback and knowing that our work will benefit so many families is such a rewarding experience."

Without Mary and Vicki, and all of the NY Cares volunteers, we would not be able to process the thousands of donations we receive each month. Thanks Mary and Vicki!

WHAT WE NEED NOW

A 20-year study shows that the number of books in the home is directly related to the level of schooling that children reach. Click on "Urgent Needs" at roomtogrow.org for a link to our Amazon registry to buy books, specially selected by our social workers, for children in our program.

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