

# Room to Grow news

WINTER 2010



## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Every one of us has been affected by the financial crisis, more so the families served by Room to Grow who are finding it harder to climb out of poverty. We are serving 340 children, an all time high, and responding to increased requests for food stamps, housing support, and other services as more families have suffered job loss. During this difficult time, Room to Grow remains a continuous source of support and encouragement, empowering cli-*

*ents to be the best parents and role models for their children. Room to Grow is grateful for the extraordinary generosity displayed throughout 2009, as our supporters rallied to provide the helping hands and funds we depend on. We hope that you will continue to be involved in our work.*

**Lexy Mayers,**

Executive Director

Room to Grow, New York

## DID YOU KNOW?

A recent study found that children from both English- and Spanish-speaking low-income families had better language comprehensive and cognitive development if they were read to before age three (Raikes, H. *Child Development*, July/August 2006; vol 7). Last year Room to Grow launched a Literacy Project so that in addition to giving families 10 age-appropriate books at each visit, we offer parents tested strategies and techniques to make reading aloud to their babies and toddlers a part of their daily routine.

## CLIENT SNAPSHOT: Karen and Jesus Argueta and son Brandon

**T**he Arguetas came to Room to Grow in 2006 having recently arrived from South America. They were staying with Jesus' brother, sharing a small room, a situation that became untenable when Brandon was born. With no hope of affording an apartment, the Argueta family became homeless and moved to a shelter.

At Room to Grow, the parents worked with determination and drive, eager to support themselves and their growing child. The turmoil resulting from their homelessness had an effect on the entire family. Brandon's speech was delayed, but Room to Grow provided strategies to help Brandon's speech improve, including links to community resources. Room to Grow also helped them navigate the difficult housing application process and worked



to ensure their access to the few benefits for which they were eligible.

The Arguetas graduated in December 2009, realizing many of their goals. Jesus secured work as a maintenance man, Brandon began Early Head Start, and Karen enrolled in ESL and a job training program. They moved into their own apartment. Brandon is on target for developmental benchmarks and no longer needs to see a speech therapist! Room to Grow will follow up with the family in May 2010 as part of our new Graduate Outreach Program.



The Family Holiday Party included live music as well as activities.

## RECENT HAPPENINGS

December 8 | 2009

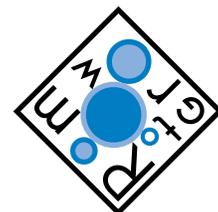
### Family Holiday Party and Toy Drive

This festive afternoon brought together our client families. Children participated in arts and crafts, took a picture with Santa, and danced to a rock-and-roll band. The party was organized by Shannon King Cave, Carrie Shumway and Mary Cannon, and staffed by many dedicated volunteers. Generous supporters purchased gifts for the children through a registry with RosieHippo.com. We thank all of the wonderful donors and volunteers who made this a very special event for our clients. It's not too early to help with the 2010 Party: Email [elaine@roomtogrow.org](mailto:elaine@roomtogrow.org)

November 19 | 2009

### Celebrate Room to Grow

Our annual benefit at Christie's raised over \$450,000 for Room to Grow. Chairs Uma Thurman and Cristina Cuomo, Steering Committee Co-Chairs Mary Cannon, Carrie Shumway and Melina Spadone Palmer, and Committee Members ensured that we had exciting auction items (over 100 lots!) and a full house of revelers (over 300 guests). ABC News Correspondent Deborah Roberts presented the Client Inspiration Award to graduate Hassania Alkhaddar, and Room to Grow Founder and CEO Julie Burns awarded Dr. Edward Zigler the Founder's Award for his tireless efforts on behalf of children.



### SAVE THE DATE

March–May 2010

## Scholastic Book Drive

Bring or buy a book for Room to Grow at the Scholastic Book Store and receive a 10% discount on any purchase. The drive continues until Memorial Day weekend at the Scholastic Book Store, 555 Broadway between Spring and Prince Streets. Please help us continue our commitment to early literacy with a donation.

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### What We Need Now

Please donate new infant and toddler toothbrushes, breast pumps, and utensils for our program on infant and toddler nutrition and health, or you can donate to these efforts financially at [www.roomtogrow.org](http://www.roomtogrow.org).

### SPOTLIGHT

This past fall Room to Grow reached out to high schools to recruit volunteers. One of the first responses was from a trio of Dominican Academy juniors who had seen a posting at their school. Nicole, Jody, and Victoria were looking for an assignment where they could, according to Nicole, do something to “help out and make a difference.” On the mid-September day they were scheduled to interview, the girls came across Room to Grow employees unloading baby items curbside and jumped right in to help.

Since then, the students have volunteered weekly, sorting and counting inven-



tory and displaying items for client families. In December they gave a very special gift to Room to Grow: without prompting, they donated their half days off from school in addition to their regular volunteer commitment. We thank Nicole, Jody, and Victoria for their eagerness in taking on an essential role at Room to Grow, and for their enthusiasm for helping others.

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