

## Julie Brown



ANORE LAMBERTSON FOR TIME

**OCCUPATION** Founder of Room to Grow, which provides free baby products to poor families in New York City

**GOAL** To reach out to a population she sees as woefully underserved

**QUOTE** "These parents want to shop for their children with a sense of dignity"

**V**ISIT JULIE BROWN'S COZY GROUND-floor space in Harlem, and you may be confused about whether you've stepped into a baby boutique or a parental-advice center. Actually, Room to Grow is a bit of both. Brown's 200 clients—all poor New York City families referred by social-service agencies—come to "shop" for merchandise like sweaters and shoes, toys and strollers. Everything is free—and they get two hours with Brown, a child therapist, in the bargain.

The nonprofit venture perfectly blends Brown's unusual mix of skills. At 27, she left a career handling multi-million-dollar paintings at Christie's auction house to get a master's degree in social work. Five years later, after working as a therapist, Brown founded Room to Grow by organizing collection drives and persuading baby-product makers like Crayola and Fisher-Price to donate goods. "Asking for donations, convincing someone of your point of view—I learned all that at Christie's," says Brown, 34. She also learned how to think big: she's planning an October benefit at Christie's with Uma Thurman as host and stars like Liam Neeson and Julianne Moore in attendance. She wants to expand next year to Kansas City, then Los Angeles and Chicago.

—By Rebecca Winters