



Toys 'r' her: Burns in the Manhattan headquarters of Room to Grow.

Birth of a Parent

Onesies! Toys! Strollers! Advice and support! All free from a newborn organization.

TEN YEARS AGO, JULIE BURNS, WIFE of documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, left a promising career in the art world—which included a plum gig at the prestigious auction house Christie's—to get her degree in social work. She then began working with children, and noticed that the vast majority of the abused kids were born into poverty and deprivation. "I started to wonder how the lives of these children could have been different if they'd had a healthy attachment early on," says 38-year-old Burns. "I thought, *What if we supported mothers before their babies were born?*" At the same time, her own friends started having children. As she witnessed the abundance of resources many had, she came up with the idea of parents with plenty giving to those with less. So in 1998 Burns founded Room to Grow, a nonprofit group that assists the parents of underprivileged babies during

the critical first three years of development. Every three months—starting just before the baby is born—parents visit the organization's downtown Manhattan space, meet with a social worker, and receive new or "nearly new" essentials—from pint-size onesies and hand-knit sweaters to mint-condition strollers and colorful books. Donations come from

individuals, collection drives, and corporations, with the request that people give only what they would want for their own children. This year Room to Grow, which has helped nearly 700 families since its inception, will double in size and capacity. And a second location has just opened, in Boston. "Professionally speaking, nothing I could do would be more important," says Burns. "I feel connected to the families I work with. These parents show extraordinary strength and resilience in the face of so many obstacles." For information or to donate, log on to roomtogrow.org. —SUSANNE RUPPERT

"Most of us live our lives as if we're watching a movie—one that someone else is writing, producing, and directing. We sit back with our popcorn and Jujubes and say, 'I wonder how this will turn out?'... Well, guess what? The answer lies with you. You're Sam Goldwyn. You're in charge."

—FROM *BETWEEN TRAPEZES* (RODALE), BY GAIL BLANKE, MOTIVATIONAL MAVEN

GOOD
POINT