

A special PLACE

BY LEAH BLACK

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A class in progress at Citibabes.

Now A Growing-By-The-Second Three-Year-Old Itself, Citibabes Offers Downtown Families A Wealth Of Educational Programs And Something More Important—A Community

Tracey Frost is at work, with her 10-month-old, Chloe, in her lap, and her 3-year-old, Natasha, excitedly hopping up and down beside her, holding a stack of art projects she created earlier that morning. Being the co-founder of Citibabes offers some delicious perks, and for Frost there's nothing better than being able to slip out of work mode and visit with her daughters in the middle of the day—even if it means spending more time with her Blackberry after her children go to bed at night.

When Frost and her business partner, Tara Lipton, opened Citibabes in November 2005, they received a lot of media attention for being the first private club of its kind—one specifically focused on the needs of moms and young children. Although it has been open only three years, the club, which is located in the middle of Soho,

has become a focal point in the lives of many downtown families for whom it is an oasis of education, convenience and, most importantly, community. Now, buoyed by its success downtown, Citibabes is in expansion mode, with plans to open up in Scarsdale next March and on the Upper East Side later next year. There are big plans at base camp as well, according to Frost, who reports that the club is in negotiation to add another 5,000 square feet of space to the Soho facility, allowing it to expand its offerings to kids up to age 10, with options like gym classes, a basketball court, and rooms for one-on-one tutoring.

There's one more important piece of news as well: Frost will be leading Citibabes into the future without Lipton as her cohort. In early summer, the organization announced that Lipton, who was a school teacher before becoming involved with Citibabes, was stepping

down from the day-to-day operation of the club while remaining one of its investors and educational consultants.

Frost's own background is in banking. Born and raised in Sydney, Australia, she moved to the United States in 1995 to pursue her career in commodity derivatives at Deutsche Bank, where she specialized in precious metal sales. Although Frost enjoyed her job and the opportunity it gave her to travel internationally, after 13 years she was tired of finance and wanted to try something different. "I was looking to do something related to women and families," says Frost, whose sister is a midwife, and whose sister-in-law is a child psychologist. And, to be honest, she adds, "I had had enough of working in a really male-dominated field."

It was through a mutual friend that Frost connected with Lipton, and together they zeroed in on the vision of Ci-