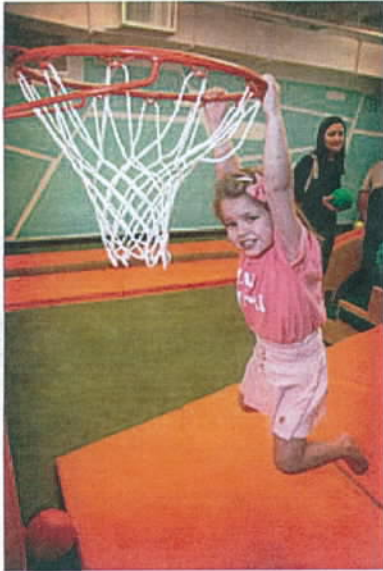


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## Room to grow

Two moms create a colorful play space for parents and kids to enjoy together



Indoor recreational spots—think Kidville, Citibabes and Sydney's Playground—have, in recent years, become must-visits for the city's youngest dwellers. So, it's no surprise that Chelsea residents and friends Allison Schlanger and Alison Qualter Berna, both parents of two-year-old twins, were regulars on the play circuit scene. But, they had one big pet peeve. None of the big spaces were in their neighborhood. Tired of commuting all over town, the duo decided to go into business and, last month, opened Apple Seeds, a large, brightly-colored indoor playground that offers yearlong memberships to families. Designed by ROTO Studio, the group responsible for the imaginative PlayWorks exhibit at the Children's Museum of Manhattan on the Upper West Side, the space is modeled after different New York City sights. Each section is geared for kids of a particular age range, but children—and their parents—can play anywhere they'd like. In the Central Park area, toddlers can lean against a soft bench and fountain cushions while propping themselves up on handrails. At "Construction City," kids can slide down a skyscraper playhouse or "drive" a stationary yellow taxi. The deli area features touch and sensory games (young visitors can feel fake flowers or create their own cityscape out of Legos), while a sports area lets active kids bounce, run and play. A staff member—referred to as a lifeguard—patrols the area, plays with the youngsters and decompresses the playground if it gets too crowded. And since kids are encouraged to be kids here, the play areas are equipped with wet baskets, designated spots for little ones to throw toys that they've put in their mouths.



The good news is that Apple Seeds is still growing. Yoga, music, art and science classes are set to begin in the spring. Plus, you won't have to be a member to take advantage of those sessions, which range in price from \$30 to \$40 per semester (access to the Playground comes at a higher rate of \$750 per year). Come summertime, families visiting the café can enjoy kid-friendly, non-allergenic and healthy snacks, like veggie and fruit puree, starter cereals, steamed vegetables and grilled cheese as well as soups and salads for parents. [Visit our Play Spaces resource guide for information on other indoor play areas.](#) Ages newborn to 5.—Chad Frade