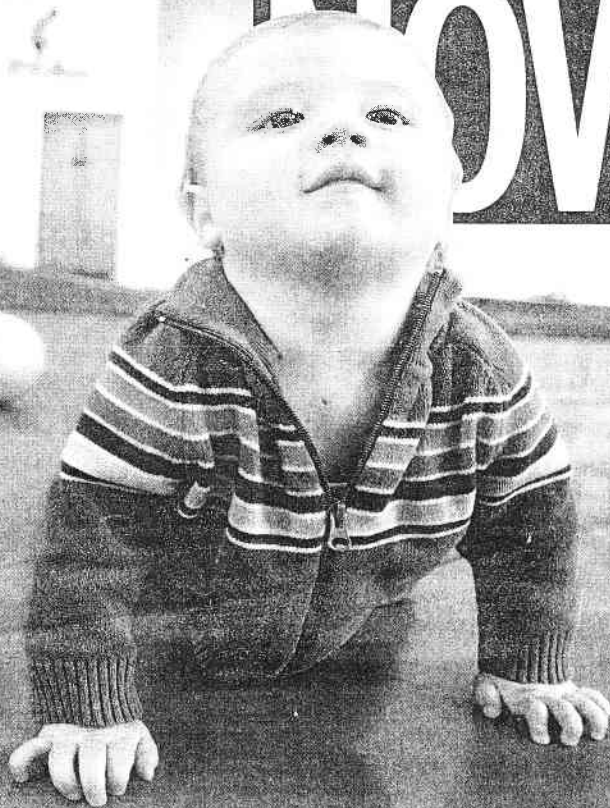


Alex Schatz, 10 months old, with instructor Patrick Thompson at The Little Gym on the upper West Side. Photo by Julia Xanthos

NOW

PARTY PEOPLE



When the small set is ready to get wild, there are pros to help you out

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

When it's cold outside, parties for kids become a lot trickier. Just the thought of a dozen kids climbing the walls of your apartment is enough to send you scrambling to check your insurance policy. That's why many parents are celebrating children's birthdays at designated party spaces. A string of businesses catering exclusively to kids now offer party packages with a range of options.

Ian Axelrod, owner of The Little Gym — a gymnastics-style franchise that just opened its doors in Manhattan — says his coaches shine a friendly spotlight on the star of the show. "That's what a birthday party is for," says Axelrod. "Making the birthday child feel special."

Which is just what these New York birthday specialists aim to do.

THE LITTLE GYM

(212) 799-1225, www.tlgyupperwestsideny.com

ACCOMMODATES 12 to 30 kids.

AGE RANGE Can be adapted for kids 1 to 12 years old.

PARTY STAFF At least three people.

TIME 90 minutes.

FOOD Bring your own or they can order in what you like.

ACTIVITIES Stretching to music, then exploring gymnastic equipment like the balance beam, plus tumbling, vaulting and more, all supervised for safety.

BIRTHDAY STAR MOMENT Party begins with Opening Circle, to celebrate the birthday child; kids also get a T-shirt.

KIDVILLE NEW YORK

(212) 772-8435, www.kidville.com

ACCOMMODATES Very flexible (their locations are huge).

AGE RANGE 2 to 10.

PARTY STAFF Three to five people.

TIME 90 minutes and up.

FOOD Kidville offers its own catering, for adults and kids, or you can provide.

ACTIVITIES Kids can choose from themes like hip-hop party, Big Apple Circus party, pajama party and more.

BIRTHDAY STAR MOMENT T-shirt for the birthday child.

BROOKLYN PLAY SPOT

(718) 852-2494, www.brooklynplayspot.com

ACCOMMODATES Up to 12 recommended.

AGE RANGE Babies/preschool and kids up to age 7.

PARTY STAFF At least one person.

TIME Up to five hours.

FOOD You provide; kitchen available.

ACTIVITIES Board games, trucks and toys to play with, tepee, train set.

BIRTHDAY STAR MOMENT Special attention throughout.

THE ARTISTRY PROJECT

(718) 858-0217, www.theartistryproject.com

ACCOMMODATES 6 to 12 kids; only parent or parents of birthday child should stay, due to space restrictions.

AGE RANGE 4 and up.

PARTY STAFF At least one person.

TIME 90 minutes and up.

FOOD You're responsible.

ACTIVITIES Themed parties including tissue-paper collage, watercolor, print-making, mixed-media sculpture and more.

BIRTHDAY STAR MOMENT Birthday kid gets a \$20 gift card good for a class.

NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM

(718) 694-1600, www.mta.info/museum

ACCOMMODATES 12-20 kids and

four adults.

AGE RANGE 4 and up.

PARTY STAFF At least one person.

TIME 90 minutes and up.

FOOD You provide the food.

ACTIVITIES Guided tour of the museum, hands-on workshop such as building a train, creative mosaics and more; goodie bags and party favors optional.

BIRTHDAY STAR MOMENT Birthday kid is focus of tour guide's attention throughout.

CARMELO THE SCIENCE FELLOW

(718) 722-0000, www.carmelothesciencefellow.com

ACCOMMODATES Up to 25.

AGE RANGE 4 to 10.

PARTY STAFF Three people.

TIME 2 hours.

FOOD You provide the food.

ACTIVITIES Magic, small animals and a number of experiments, including making glow-in-the-dark slime, fake snow and Silly Putty, all of which the kids keep.

BIRTHDAY STAR MOMENT Carmelo keeps the birthday kid the center of attention while entertaining the group.

INSIDE: Who's watching with the children? Parents as the best television guide