

Widgets by day

layettes by night

Walking into Titzy's, a boutique catering to pregnant and nursing women and their pre-school children, is an experience that delights the senses. The store welcomes customers with colorful murals, spacious aisles, toys, art, as well the products themselves, clothing and accessories designed to make mothering babies and toddlers a whole lot easier.

"My sister and I always wanted to open a boutique," says Jodway, BBA '97, MBA '06. "By the birth of my second child, I just wasn't ready to go back to the corporate world; plus having two children in daycare didn't make financial sense anyway."

Jodway had enjoyed a successful career. With a position secured even before graduation, she started out as a market researcher with Ducker Research. Later she took on consultant duties with The Epitec Group and advised firms on how to maximize their profitability. "But I always had in the back of my mind, why am I telling others how to make money? Why am I not taking my own advice?" Jodway recalls. After the birth of her first son, she cut back to working just three days a week and started her MBA at DeVos. She finished her coursework on schedule, and all that remained was participation in a simulation to earn her diploma. But Baby Number Two had other plans for her—little Jenevieve decided to make her debut during the week simulation was scheduled. Jodway had to wait an entire year until the next

Alumna Itzel Jodway's simulation experience transformed the hypothetical into reality.

simulation in order to get her degree.

But she didn't sit idle during that year. Jodway and her identical twin sister, soon-to-be business partner, Tiffany Brenner, started making their plans to open Titzy's. The name Titzy's is certainly unusual. A clever combination of the two sisters' names—Tiffany and Itzel—it was the brainchild of Jodway's husband, Jason Jodway, also a Northwood graduate, who earned his BBA in 1999 with a major in Banking & Finance/ Management.

There were many issues to consider as the women researched the feasibility of Titzy's. Sitting at the table, side-by-side, with laptops open, they pored through websites together. Both had experienced the frustrations of obtaining maternity goods through the mail, only to pay expensive shipping fees coming and going when products were not acceptable and had to be returned. They also knew that their market area, metropolitan Detroit, didn't serve the price point they were targeting. Higher end goods were available and so were lower end, but attractive goods at a mid-market price range simply didn't exist.

By the time simulation started, Jodway knew Titzy's could be successful, but she hadn't yet fine-tuned the details. But from the first day of simulation, Jodway knew she had found how to answer the questions that needed to be asked in order to formulate her and Brenner's business plan. During the day, she and her co-

partners charted and mapped the future of the Widget Company. When she went to her room at night, she took the lessons of the day and applied them to Titzy's. What pricing formula made widgets profitable? Back in her room, Jodway applied the same formula to her products to determine how much markup would generate the maximum sales volume and still turn a profit. How much capital did the Widget company need? In her room that night, the same questions, the same formulas were adapted for Titzy's. All week long, whatever happened to the widgets was applied to Titzy's, and by the end of the week, a business plan was born.

Jodway's simulation experience took place in early Septem-

Far left:
Middle:
Below:

ber 2006, and just a year later, in October 2007, Titzy's held its grand opening. "We turned a profit our first month," Jodway proudly reports.

It's easy to see why. Starting with the business acumen gained from a Northwood University education, then honed at the corporate level, these two savvy, hardworking young women have created a business that is a joy for the consumer, but backed up by solid research and planning.

Jodway and Brenner are proud that almost none of their wares are made in China. They have contracted with stay-at-home moms to create many of the boutique's accessories.

Art on the walls, appropriate for nurseries and young families, is created by local artists. "We feel strongly about mothers being able to spend time with their young children," says Jodway. "By working with these talented young women, we all win—Titzy's, the moms and their children."

From fitting rooms designed to accommodate nursing mothers and babies, to child-height clothing racks that allow mom and child to browse together, to displays spaced far enough

apart for strollers to easily get by, and most importantly, clothing and products that are safe (think organic cotton), functional, and fun, Jodway and Brenner have created a business that serves a niche market and serves it well. • LM