



## Chulamama keeping moms hip with new Danvers store

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DANVERS — In 2007, Heather Roman and Noelle Moreno opened Chulamama, a designer maternity clothing store in Salem. Roman and Moreno, both mothers of two, felt there was very little for the pregnant, fashionable woman who didn't live in a big city.

So they sold Juicy Couture maternity jeans (\$188) and lacy nursing bras (\$36.98), with the business belief that if moms looked good, moms would feel good, and that is good for the baby. The store was a success and later expanded to include children's clothing and baby gear. Last month, they opened a second location at 85 Andover St. in Danvers.

We caught up with Roman recently.

### **How did the two of you come up with the idea of Chulamama?**

We met at a play group with our oldest children. We are both into fashion and style and spoke about how there are no options for maternity. There was no place to buy (designer maternity clothes) outside of New York City, and there are all of these moms north of Boston who want to feel like themselves and dress like themselves.

### **Why do you think fashion is important for pregnant women?**

It's important for every woman to feel good about themselves. Being a healthy mom is the best thing you can do for your baby.

### **Is it the same philosophy behind selling maternity lingerie?**

I always said the nursing bra was the lingerie equivalent of an orthopedic shoe. These bras are pretty, and they work.

### **What type of items do you choose for the store?**

It's about the meeting of style and function. We research products that do both.

### **Have the stores been successful?**

Yes, and we're online, as well. Fifty percent of our business is through the Web site.

### **What does "chula" mean?**

Chula means cool and hip in Spanish but also sexy.

### **How did you expand to selling children's clothes?**

At first, we were focused more on textiles, like blankets and diaper bags. But maternity only has a nine-month window.

### **What would you say Chulamama's style is?**

We try to be fashion-forward and unique. Such as with this (the Shampoodle tracksuit), only one other person in New

York City is importing this line. We try to be a little funky and fun.

**Is the "Mi Mama Es Chula" T-shirt popular?**

If someone buys a big-ticket item, we throw in a "Mi Mama Es Chula" shirt, and people kept asking how to get them, so we had to sell them. It's a popular item now.

**Any plans to open up another store?**

Noelle wants to move to the West Coast, so maybe we'll open a store on the West Coast.

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Heather Roman, one of two owners of Chulamama, stands in the new Danvers store. Staff Photographer