

National

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**HAARETZ**

Thursday, December 19, 2013 Tevet 16, 5774

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JERUSALEM VIVENDI

by Ilene Prusher



Online Israeli mom group meets in person for the first time

Brand New Mamas, a successful Facebook group, holds its first-ever expo in Jerusalem, giving mothers the chance to talk about the things they usually won't online.

By Ilene Prusher | Apr. 11, 2013 | 7:39 PM | 1



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Dalit Rosin, the founder of Brand New Mamas, hosting the group's first expo in Jerusalem Thursday.

Photo by Ilene Prusher

It used to be that when a new mother found herself awake with a crying baby at 3 a.m., there was little she could do but suck it up and soldier on.

But when Dalit Rosin found herself up at that hour with a two-week old baby, she knew there were other mothers out there only a click away. So Rosin, who moved to Israel from London in 2007 and had worked at the Knesset before giving birth, decided to start a Facebook support group called [Brand New Mamas](#).

Almost two years later, the group has more than 1,300 members, the majority of them English speakers living in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. And, making a leap toward taking the group beyond its status as an online community, on Thursday they held the first “Brand New Mamas Expo” on the grounds of the International Cultural Center for Youth Gintot Ha’Ir in Jerusalem’s German Colony, drawing the local mommy crowd in droves and bringing vendors from as far away as the Golan Heights, where one American-born mother [makes tie-dye duds](#) for would-be hippie kids.

Besides the expected stalls of cool baby gear on sale – most of them by independent [mompreneurs](#) who started small businesses after becoming mothers – there were free workshops on topics that women rarely discuss in public. Sexpert Beverly Damelin held a workshop on “Recovering Our Sexuality after Childbirth.” Other freebies on offer included “New Baby, New Body, New Shoe Size – The Facts about the Postpartum You – What the Books Don’t Say” and “Communicating Compassionately with My Baby and Myself.”

Standing at a vendor’s table nearby was Tania Elfersy, author/editor of [Purple Leaves](#), [Red Cherries](#), a book of short stories, ideas for journaling, and a toolkit. The mini-essays take a brutally honest, moving and sometimes amusing look at what women go through on the way to becoming mothers. The British-born, Tel Aviv-based Elfersy put together the self-published book, which went on to win four awards and will soon be translated into Hebrew, while raising three children.

“An event like this allowing these new mums to connect is so important, because in these online groups we’re usually connecting on the level of our babies and their needs. But talking about how having babies impacts your sexuality, that’s still something people are afraid to bring up,” Elfersy says.

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Beverly Damelin, an expert in women's sexuality, given new mothers a talk about what to expect after giving birth. Photo by Ilene Prusher

Rosin's idea of turning Brand New Mamas into more than just an online community was already underway, and for very unfortunate reasons. Last year, one of the group's members, [Ayala Pamela Weisfeld](#), contracted breast cancer that has spread frighteningly fast. She died within five weeks of her diagnosis. A [huge outpouring of offers to help](#) and support her and her family sprung up during her struggle, in part because of the group. She passed away last August at the age of 40, leaving behind a husband and two children, aged 1 and 3.

"When I thought of the idea of the expo, I wanted it to be in someone's memory, and it was obvious that that person would be Ayala Pamela. Some of the proceeds will go to her husband and kids," explained Rosin, who now lives in Beit Zayit, a moshav outside of Jerusalem. Rosin, who is about two months away from giving birth to her second child, hopes to make the expo an annual event.

Her partner in the project, Carol Dweck Goldman, added: "We put this together to celebrate motherhood - and because there really isn't anything framework geared for mothers in the Anglo community."

And so, strengthened by the presence of so many mothers who share the enthusiasm for breastfeeding (a free lactation consultation was raffled off) and avoiding disposable diapers and [going green with cloth](#) instead (should I feel guilty that I continue to keep Pampers in business?) it was the most mommy-positive show in town. The DJ played, the babies snoozed and cooed, and the toddlers tumbled in the gymboree. A few lucky moms got 15-minutes massages. But some of us had to dash out early - to pick up the kids.

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