

NOW MOM- PRENEURS

Four New York women who are managing to nurture both family and career

When the going gets tough, moms get going.

Far from assuming the fetal position and allowing the economic crisis to crush them, some local mothers with bright entrepreneurial spirits are determined to seize opportunities and provide for their families.

Four in particular have managed to increase their earning potential without sacrificing any precious time with their kids. How do they do it? Determination, the Internet and a little less sleep, for starters.
Jane Ridley and Leah Chernikoff

PARENTING
THROUGH THE
CRUNCH

4 QUESTIONS FOR ...
a nutrition adviser



RICHARD HARRIS

6 QUESTIONS FOR ... a child model's mom

How did Lee get into modeling?

He followed in the footsteps of Isaac and his sisters, Tatiana, 19, and Nataysha, 18, who have always done musical theater, acting, TV and modeling. He did a catalogue shoot in Oahu when he was just 8 months old and ended up on the cover. He was such a cute baby and loves the camera. He impersonates and he's funny.

Why the move to New York City?

Two years ago, we were visiting Isaac and saw that the agency Willy Kids had an open casting. Lee met the president, Marlene Wallach, and she signed him up. His Polynesian heritage means he has a very unique look.

What type of modeling does Lee do?

A lot of print work for Gap, Benetton and the Children's Place and he's on three TV commercials, for Macy's, Tylenol and Kellogg's. Shoots can last from one hour to eight hours. He earns anything from \$150 an hour for print to thousands for a national commercial which brings in royalties.

How does he attend so-called "go sees" and jobs as well as school?

We homeschool Lee via a DVD-based curriculum. He's a very bright boy in the fourth grade who reads at an eighth-grade level. We bring along my laptop, and he does schoolwork in between his modeling work and after he's done. The flexibility helps a lot, but I keep him very social with activities like soccer and chess.

Any advice for parents of aspiring models?

It has to be as much your child's passion as your own. Too many times I see parents who



THOMAS MONASTER/DAILY NEWS

Kim Au

AGE: In her 40s; lives in midtown

JOB: Chaperone for her 10-year-old son, Lee, a child model

TIME ON THE JOB: Ever since her oldest son, Isaac, now a 29-year-old Broadway actor, started singing and dancing as a tot in the family's native Hawaii.

want it more than their child.

What happens to Lee's earnings?

All monies go into a specific account for his future. Lee wants to be a doctor, so he's saving for medical school. But whenever he does a job, I allow him to take some money out to buy something special, like an electronic or a board game. It's important to teach him the value of money and saving.

Want to get your child into modeling? Check out Wallach's site, www.justaskmarlene.com.

How did you come up with the concept for Tender Shoots Wellness?

Tender Shoots Wellness is a boutique lifestyle practice. I work mostly with expectant and new moms and teach them about nutrition, culinary practice and yoga. I had a background in plant sciences and grew up working in a restaurant. And when I became pregnant, I didn't experience any of the complications that experts assured me I would experience. I didn't have morning sickness, I didn't gain weight — it was only 14 pounds at time of delivery that I gained total, and people asked, "How's that possible?" And I just ate really well, did yoga, I tried to remain stretch-free and practice breathing techniques. I thought, "Wow, there's got to be a way to make this information more accessible to moms in a way that they can feel pampered, empowered, and make comprehensive lifestyle changes."

So your pregnancy inspired your work?

While I was pregnant I had ideas, but my business didn't really coalesce until my son's birth. Having a foundation in nutrition and growing up in a restaurant, I had a hunch of what I was supposed to be eating. I was able to manage cravings, so if I was eating a seaweed salad, I would think, "Why do I want seaweed? I guess I need iodine, and I'm probably looking for some Vitamin B." I could see those correlations. Those are the things I teach expectant mothers. You don't necessarily want ice cream if your body wants calcium.

So if I was an expectant mom, what would you offer me?

I would meet with you, probably come to your home because I believe in people feeling comfortable — and do an hour consultation. People fill out forms — one is about

Latham Thomas

AGE: 28; based in Manhattan

JOB: Founder, Tender Shoots Wellness

TIME ON THE JOB: Tender Shoots officially launched in 2006, but Thomas has been doing the work since 2004.

nutrition, one for yoga, and one is about culinary services. We'd talk about correlations between lifestyle and diet and your goals and a plan to achieve them. We'd meet every other week for about an hour. And I offer prenatal cooking classes called "Bun in the Oven." We make supportive cuisine — like if you're suffering from swelling, or edema, we could create a really nice salad for that. Or if you're experiencing fatigue or anemia, I'll create a menu to help with those common ailments. Some moms I'll keep on as clients after they give birth — they might want to get enough caloric intake to breast-feed but also try to retone the body.

How do you balance being a mom and an entrepreneur?

I sometimes don't know how I do it, but I manage to take my son, Fulani, to school, pick him up and in between, I'm writing menus, I go to clients' homes to cook, and then I teach prenatal food classes around the city as well. And two evenings a week he goes to his dad's house, so I work really late those nights so I can pack in more clients. Every night that we're together we're home by 6, and he helps me cook and goes to bed at 8:30. He loves to cook and always asks if he can help pick out things for my clients.

5 QUESTIONS FOR ...

a blogger



LINDA ROSIER/DAILY NEWS

Nicole Feliciano**AGE:** 38; based in Brooklyn**JOB:** Founder and editor, Momtrends blog (momtrends.blogspot.com)**TIME ON THE JOB:** 2 years**Why did you start blogging?**

I was working in fashion prior to having kids. I worked at Ralph Lauren for seven years, but the hours were grueling and unpredictable. I wanted something to do freelance. I found the parenting writing fit so easily with my life because I'm in it. I have two daughters, the younger one is 14 months and the oldest is almost 4. So either testing products, reading and research — it's all things I want to know about. So in 2007, I figured out software on Blogger and launched my own blog called Momtrends, and right now I have about 10,000 readers a month.

And your blog looks pretty successful — you have lots of advertisers and tons of reader comments. How did that happen?

I really wanted to find my voice, and I would say last summer, when the blog was up for about a year, I switched to having an editorial theme for the month. It worked out so well because I was

able to organize, pitch ideas easier, and it made more sense for content. When it got more continuity, readership picked up. When I hit the 5,000 reader mark, that's when I started putting up ads. So I dipped my toe in the water with doing Google ads, which are easy to pull in but not tremendously lucrative. And last fall I started asking some of the people I wrote about if they would buy banner ads. That's when the blog started to become more profitable. Now I have sponsors for newsletters and banner ads on the blog, and I have advertisers approaching me.

How do you find time to maintain your blog while being a mom?

The great thing about blogging as a parent is you can do it anytime, anywhere. I'll drop my oldest daughter off at preschool and I'll have the baby in the stroller and she'll fall asleep, and I'll go to a Starbucks and have my laptop with me, and while she takes a 45-minute or hour nap, I'll bang out a

post and answer e-mails.

Any tricks to keeping your kids occupied while you're working and they're not napping?

I always have a stack of stickers or paper nearby, so if I have to take a phone call at the last minute I have a secret drawer that I go into with my stash. I'll give the kids the stickers and paper and let them go wild. I just worry about the mess when I'm off the phone. For the older one, I'll turn on the sink and put three different bowls in there with food coloring in each bowl and leave a slow stream of water going, and that buys about 20 minutes.

How do your kids inspire what you blog about?

I'm not like Kathie Lee Gifford — I don't mention every bowel movement that my kids have. But I do want to let other moms know that I'm in the same situations they are. I've had vomit in my hair, picky eaters. I've had the hunt for the perfect soap that doesn't irritate my kids' skin, that's also good for the environment, that also gets stains out.

5 QUESTIONS FOR ...
an online merchant**Why did you launch your own company?**

I was unexpectedly laid off from my software marketing job when my daughter, Jillian, was 10 weeks old. I was devastated because I am the worker bee of all worker bees. Then, like a lot of mothers faced with a closet full of barely used infant clothes, I started selling on eBay. eBay charged me a fee whether I sold them or not. I thought, "I know about writing for Web sites. Why don't I do this myself?"

How did the business grow?

I began with a small inventory of baby clothes in the basement of my ranch-style home. Now we stock 25,000 items of clothing, gifts and toys and ship between 300 and 400 orders per week. Luckily, my husband is an elec-

trician and built me lots of shelves. We've gone from \$6,000 annual sales to \$300,000.

Any tips for wanna-be online entrepreneurs?

You will never be successful if you don't hire an expensive-but-worth-it search engine optimizer. Someone who knows the science of setting up your home page with the key words that get traffic. If a customer googles the words "baby clothes," my site appears in the top 10.

And mistakes that they can learn from?

In the early days, I'd get an order from a place like Nigeria for 100 of one particular item. Instead of thinking, "that's not legitimate," I'd get so excited, I'd send them off. Of course it wound up that the credit card was stolen and I was liable for something like \$500. Now I trust my instincts and haven't had a chargeback in a year.

How do you juggle your job with motherhood?

I couldn't go back to the 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. corporate world. I love taking my daughter to the bus every day and I'm her class mother. But it has its stresses. There is a fine line between being at work and being at home. After Jillian's gone to bed at 8 p.m., I'll often go down to the basement and work until 1 a.m.

Donna Bliss**AGE:** 47, of Nesconset, L.I.**JOB:** Founder of online baby clothing store MyMiracleBaby.com**TIME ON THE JOB:** 8 yearsHOW
TO BE A
BOSS-
MAMMA

The key positive of being a "Mompreneur" is flexibility, according to New York WOR 710 radio commentator Liz Hamburg, founder of Upstart Ventures. The "serial entrepreneur" has launched products and companies in communications, technology, entertainment and media.

She recommends the career path for any parent looking to make their own hours, plan their own vacation time and take off whenever they need to.

1 Look into recruitment agencies that offer flexible time and/or job sharing, such as www.momcorps.com.

2 Follow your passion: If you are a great baker, start selling your baked goods in town. If you design clothing, do hair, knit beautiful sweaters, think about turning your passion into a new business. Start slowly — sell to neighbors, friends at local craft fairs, school events, etc.

3 Find a partner: Join forces with other women looking to start something new. Ideally, find someone with complementary skills. If you are a great marketer, find someone with a financial background.

4 Network: Look into local women's networking groups and online groups such as www.makeamillion.org.

5 Get help creating a plan: Local agencies can often provide free help. www.SCORE.org (part of the SBA — a group of retired executives) provides mentors and helpful advice. Check with your local university — sometimes they have business students who can help.

6 License your idea: If you have a great idea, but don't know how to create a business around it, there are groups like www.mominventors.com that license ideas and then take over manufacturing and marketing.

7 Sell on e-Bay: In 2007, New Yorkers alone sold 12,621,651 items for a total of \$1,045,503,913.