

# Coral Gables

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## Spanish lullaby-singing dolls on shelves for the holidays

BY CINDY NAPOLES

Baby Abuelita Productions, a South Miami-based manufacturer of Spanish lullaby-singing dolls that preserve the Hispanic heritage, will launch its unique product in South Florida Toys R' Us just in time for the holiday season.

The grandparent dolls have been a hit in the South Florida market since their launch at the Cuba Nostalgia fair this past May. That positive response, along with the new agreement with Toys R' Us, will give the company the opportunity to test market the dolls at 13 Toys R' Us stores in Los Angeles and 11 in South Florida. The dolls also will be on toy shelves at Wal-Mart stores in Puerto Rico. The Wal-Mart agreement is the first to take the cuddly grandparent dolls overseas.

"We had been looking for a way to expand the sales of these loveable dolls in the South Florida market and abroad and we are excited that Toys R' Us and Wal-Mart have given us the opportunity to do so," said Tim Dugan Birrittella, senior vice president of marketing for Baby Abuelita.

"We are on the footsteps of a national and international launch because people recognize that Baby Abuelita Productions is committed to developing learning while preserving the Hispanic cultural heritage and we feel that children and adults will benefit tremendously from the dolls."

Founded in 2005, Baby Abuelita Productions was created by three local

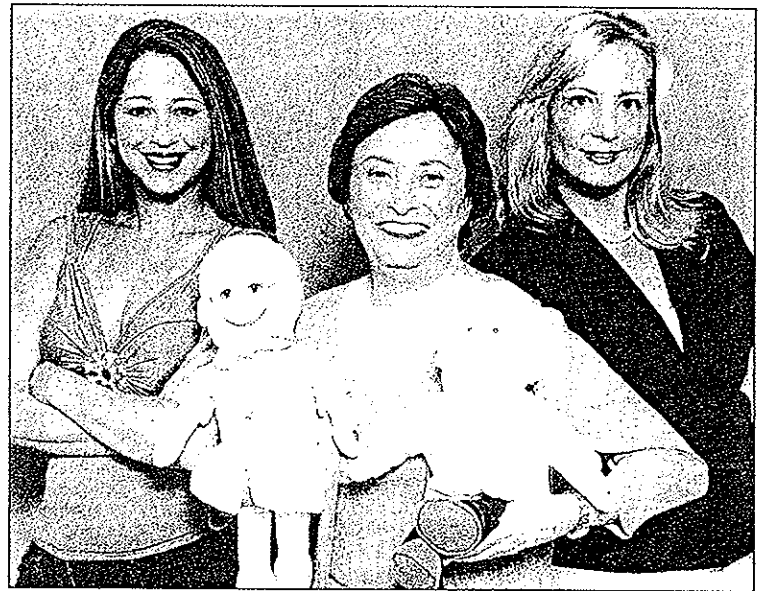
working mothers — Hilda Argilagos-Jimenez, a dance teacher; Carol Fenster, a psychotherapist, and Laura Santamaria, a lawyer.

Argilagos-Jimenez initially thought of preserving the melodies of her childhood into a book to make sure that the songs her parents and grandparents used to sing to her as a child would be passed down to her own kids and future generations. She shared her idea with Fenster, the mother of one of her dance students.

Fenster, who was raised by parents who spoke Yiddish and understood the lure of traditional songs, loved the idea of preserving childhood songs and developed the concept of incorporating them into a singing doll. Fenster then approached Santamaria, whose daughter also was in Argilagos-Jimenez's dance class. Santamaria, loved the idea and knew she could provide the startup capital as well as legal and financial expertise.

"We wanted to create a doll that preserved tradition and warm memories," Fenster said. "But our dolls have managed to do that and more. We get emails from teachers and parents who are using these dolls to educate their children and teach them Spanish, and we think that's a wonderful thing."

The songs sung by "Abuelita Rosa" and "Abuelito Pancho," the two dolls manufactured by the company, are traditional games and nursery rhymes that have been passed down through generations of Hispanic families. The dolls



Pictured with the Baby Abuelita Productions Spanish lullaby-singing dolls are (l-r) Hilda Argilagos-Jimenez, Carol Fenster and Laura Santamaria.

not only seek to preserve the Pan-Hispanic cultural heritage but also teach music and creativity, enhance listening and learning skills, promote language skills and develop social skills.

The "abuelitos" sing a variety of popular cradle songs familiar to most Hispanics. Songs include: *Aroz con Leche* (Rice Pudding); *Duermete mi niña* (Go To

Sleep, My Baby); *Esa Niña Linda* (This beautiful baby girl) and *Las pollitas* (The Baby Chicks).

Baby Abuelita is available at Navarro Discount Pharmacy, La Ideal Baby Store and several other South Florida locations. For more information, visit <[www.babyabuelita.com](http://www.babyabuelita.com)> or call 1-877-RABUELA (1-877-722-8352).