

## Families by Design offers an array of therapeutic services



(Dale King Staff Photo)

The staff at the newly opened Families by Design in Boca Raton includes, from left, Leif Weig, Dr. Laurie Emery and Dr. Stephanie May.

**By Dale M. King**  
CITY EDITOR

Often, people who need therapeutic services have to search — or travel miles — to find good doctors and clinics.

Dr. Laurie Emery, founder and president of Families by Design, said her newly opened practices offers “a menu of services” that can handle a variety of needs.

“We do not splinter services,” she said Wednesday when she and her staff opened Families by Design at 1900 NW Corporate Blvd., Suite 225 in Boca Raton.

Families facing life challenges — from tantrums to eating disorders — now have a resource in Palm Beach County, she said.

Emery will lead the team of therapists whose services include individual, couples, family unit and family group sessions and an array of experiential trainings and workshops, she said.

Joining Emery are Dr. Stephanie May, who specializes in teens, eating disorder treatment and nutrition and wellness, and Leif Weig, child play therapy and youth therapy specialist.

According to Emery, patients often wait until there is a problem to seek the assistance of a therapist. FBD, she said, encourages all parents to learn the tools to help them succeed at making and keeping agreements, communicating effectively and creating a family team.

“I believe if you have a family work together like a champion baseball team and have each player realize his or her unique gifts, every family wins,” said Emery.

She said she watched her father struggle raising three children, including one with special needs. This motivated her to provide a

service that would have supporter her family and others with similar challenges.

“Ultimately, I think my passion for connecting families came from wanting to do for others what I wished had occurred in my own family growing up,” she said.

Emery, who said her passion has always been to empower children to know the special gifts they have, worked with emotionally handicapped children in the public school system for eight years.

During that time, she saw the gap in services for these children. According to Emery, there were many band-aid programs that did not effectively address the handicaps because they did not change the home environments.

She said FBD fills those gaps by gathering the necessary resources to help parents raise a child with special needs — including a day-long workshop on parents rights, Individual Education Plan (IEP) writing and funding sources.

When Emery, a Miami Institute of Psychology’s Doctoral program alumnus, began her private practice, she also saw gaps in therapy services for families. The clinical psychologist wanted to provide parents with tools needed to be as effective at designing their relationship with children, ultimately having the family live as connected and fulfilled as possible.

“We believe that regardless of what you are doing in the world,” she said, “parenting is one of the most important jobs, and we are never trained for it. At Family By Design, we support people and actively create positive relationships within the family.”

Dale M. King can be reached at 561-549-0832 or at dking@bocanews.com.

## Boca rec. dept. honored by PBC school district

The School District of Palm Beach County has given a Business Partner of the Year award to the City of Boca Raton Recreation Services Department. Recreation Services Director Mickey Gomez was on hand recently at the school district’s National Community Education Day Celebration to accept the award from Mary Barrett, Manager of the District’s Department of Adult and Community Education.

For more than 25 years, the city has had a long-standing relationship with the school district, primarily through the city’s recreation department. According to Recreation Superintendent J.D. Vamey, an interlocal agreement for mutual use of school and city facilities results in many cooperative programs serving both children and adults. Those activities include:

- Summer recreational camps held at school centers.
- School sports team events at

local parks and recreation facilities

- City sponsored sports teams using local school centers.

A number of Recreation Services staff members joined Gomez for the ceremony, including Buddy Parks, Deputy Recreation Services Director, Joe Briggs, Community Centers Administrator, J.D. Vamey, Recreation Superintendent, Greg Stevens, Athletic Programs Administrator, Amanda Liebl, Youth Program Director - Teen & Camp; and Sharon Duke, Recreation Center Supervisor II.

Joining in the presentation were School Board Chairman Bill Graham and Vice Chair Paulette Burdick, School Board Member Monroe Benaim and Assistant Superintendent Brenda Magee.

For further information on programs offered by the City of Boca Raton Recreation Services Department, contact Kevin Beckman, Athletic Supervisor II at 561-347-3950.

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