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Tuesday, December 23, 2014



Bowie couple ditches retirement to launch child therapy center

Husband and wife promote local approach to pediatric care

By Emilie Shaughnessy Staff Writer

While some couples in retirement take up hobbies like gardening or golf, Brenda and Byron Travis of Bowie launched a small business to assist hundreds of children needing help with speech and motor skills.

"I'm retired. I just go to work every day," said Byron Travis, 62.

The Travises opened the Children's Evaluation & Therapy Center in 2011 with a handful of children, no staff, no clients and two lone rooms in an office building on Laurel-Bowie Road, Brenda Travis said.

The center now brings more than 100 children a week through its bustling waiting room — decorated with colorful murals and illustrations — to work with approximately 25 therapists and staff members, she said.

"The parents kept coming. They've come to us crying, they've come to us distraught," said Brenda Travis, 58, a former speech pathologist. "We're everyday people who saw a tremendous need in the community, so we did something about it."

Byron Travis, who has a background in information technology, is the chief financial officer for the CETC, while his wife is president and CEO.

Staff at the center work one-on-one with children experiencing



Greg Dohler/The Gazette
Occupational therapist Shanae Hale works Dec. 18 with Grace Kozushko, 3, at the Children's Evaluation & Therapy Center in Bowie.



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developmental or emotional delays and disorders, Brenda Travis said.

"I was desperately looking for speech therapy services in my area. Right now, [my son Andrew] is basically nonverbal, so we're trying to get him to talk," said Brenda Ssali of Bowie. "One of the major milestones is he sits still, he is beginning to repeat words and he comprehends better. My son loves [the therapists]. He's so excited to get

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Brenda and Byron Travis are no strangers to running a small business. The couple started a private school in Bowie more than a decade ago and also ran a therapist staffing service for schools across the state, Brenda Travis said.

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"We are an excellent team," she said. "I think we really complement each other and I think we both have a genuine love and concern for children, families and community. So with that as the driving force, we believe we can do anything."

Byron Travis said he and his wife felt it was important to work with families at a local level.

"The need was there, and it's good to be able to satisfy that need right here in the county," he said. "We talk to parents who were going to Montgomery [County], to Baltimore to get these same services."

Douglas Numbissi of Bowie said the Traveses' experience in the county was one of the things that drew him to CETC when he was searching for therapy services for his 4-year-old son, Kiran.

"That's one of the incentives that made me come here, because [Brenda Travis has worked] in the education system in Prince George's County, so she knows what is done, what is needed," Numbissi said. "She even knew his doctor."

Brenda and Byron Travis said they hope to expand their business to reach more county residents, with the goal of seeing 1,000 clients each month. This fall, the company won a competitive bid to provide therapy services on site at Prince George's County Public Schools, Brenda Travis said.

"We have a passion, we have a thirst and strong desire for what we do," she said. "We want families in the county to know we're here."

eshaughnessy@gazette.net

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