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New school, synagogue find common ground

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When the Carrie Brazer Center for Autism, Inc.'s new elementary school starts the 2008-09 academic school year on Aug. 18, it will do so on a Jewish campus — Congregation Bet Breira.

"We're really happy," said Jason Possman, assistant director for the school. "It's [Bet Breira] a beautiful space and a beautiful facility. We're looking forward to a partnership with them and hoping to integrate our children in their program one day. It's something that's going to take time to develop, but we're hoping that one day we'll be able to integrate our kids into their program."

The Carrie Brazer Center is a nonprofit charitable school that provides therapy to children with autism. At the elementary school, the children will have access to Bet Breira's playground, soccer field and basketball court. Jewish students will also be able to participate in the synagogue's Shabbat and Jewish holiday services as well as Judaic studies.

"The fact that we can open and introduce students to come to the synagogue for Shabbat serv-

ices, and for Judaic studies, and for holiday programming there and that we're welcoming new members to the temple is a great opportunity," said Carrie Brazer, director for the school. "If we get enough students here that want to have Judaic classes, we will offer that as part of the curriculum."

Possman feels that the students' participation with Bet Breira will allow the non-Jewish children a chance to learn about another religion.

"You're brought up under a certain religion and as you grow older and you become able to explore different religions, you get to make that choice as to what religion you'd like to find and this will give them an opportunity to explore the Jewish faith that they might not understand while living in a Christian home," he said.

Katie Reuter, staff member for the school, thinks it will help the students' involvement in the Jewish community.

"I think the students are going to become more involved in the Judaic community and in the Judaic instruction as they learn more about it and incorporate that into their lessons."



From left, Carrie Brazer Center for Autism, Inc. staff member Fredy Pabon, student Camacho Eduardo and Assistant Director Jason Possman at the center's new location. Photo/Sergio Carmona

Dani Einsohn, executive director for Bet Breira, expressed her satisfaction in welcoming the elementary school into their campus.

"We're glad that we can offer the space and we believe we [Bet Breira] are a warm and welcoming community," she said. "We hope to have a nice partnership with them [Carrie Brazer Center]."

The school has future plans. It is hopeful that students can take part in the opportunity to mainstream with the Bet Breira Day School children in music, art and play time. It also plans to allow Asperg-

ers/High Functioning children to participate in academic classes at the synagogue upon teacher recommendation.

"I think it [future plans] would be the best thing ever if we can introduce students, parents, and teachers to the congregants," Brazer said. "That would be a lovely goal for the kids to be accepted community-wide."

The school is open to pre-school and elementary school children ages 3-12 that are diagnosed with classical Autism Spectrum Disorders and other social and communi-

cative disabilities, including Asperger's Disorder, high-functioning autism, and nonverbal learning disabilities. A team of behavioral, music, speech, occupational and physical therapists as well as Certified Special Education teachers will be available for the students.

For more information on the school, call 305-271-8790 or visit www.cbc4autism.org.

The campus is located at 8790 SW 94th St. in Miami.