

# Genesis Christian School to Open at Old BES Site in August

By Debbie Cole

In closing the doors of the old Berrien Elementary School building last year, the Berrien County Board of Education opened the doors of opportunity for the owner of a Lowndes County independent Christian school who is relocating her business here.

When she heard that the old school was going to be sold at auction, Dr. Debra Tann, owner and founder of Genesis Christian School, quickly began making plans to purchase it.

"I opened Genesis Christian School in Remerton in 2002 for students in kindergarten through eighth grade," said Dr. Tann, indicating that her plans all along were to eventually offer high school classes. "As enrollment continued to increase, I began looking for a larger site with plenty of room to grow."



Dr. Tann says that she found that site in the old BES property and is excited to be relocating to Berrien County. The move will entail not only relocating the physical aspects of her business, but her student body and staff as well.

The move will be a daunting task, but Dr. Tann is not one to shy away from a challenge. When she first opened Genesis Christian School in 2002, she was faced with transforming a run-down bar in Remerton into a functioning facility suited to meet the needs of her students, her staff and her goals.

This involved a lot of hard work for Dr. Tann, who left her career as a college level political science teacher at Valdosta State University and Georgia Military College. But with the full support of her husband and three sons, Dr. Tann's dream became a reality and Genesis Christian School soon became a dynamic business in the community, and was named the 2005 Small Business of the Year by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce.

"I believe that our success is due to the commitment of our parents, students, faculty, board members and friends who believe in the school and its goals," said Dr. Tann. After launching Genesis Christian School with only 13 students and four teachers, she saw enrollment increase to more than 50 during the past few years. "We hope to increase our enrollment to at least 100 when we open here in Berrien County in August," she said.

Relocating to a site that is seven times larger than the facility in Remerton has been a "turn key" event in her ministry, where the sky is the limit, said Dr. Tann. "After purchasing the property, we launched a Project Penny campaign through with our primary focus being the school's growth," she said. Although the school will continue to serve only kindergarten through eight grade students this fall, she hopes to offer high school classes by 2011.

"My main goal right now is to go out into the Berrien community and get to know the people and let them get to know me," she said. "I want the people in this community to know that this is their school. We won't close our doors every day at 3 p.m. when school lets out. We are here for them 24 hours a day."

Genesis Christian School offers regular school classes in addition to a Bible class and a computer technology class. Students must apply for acceptance through an enrollment process which includes an interview with family members. "Genesis is not for everybody," said Dr. Tann, indicating that the school's advanced curriculum may not suit a student who is struggling academically.

Classes will officially begin for the fall term on Aug. 17, in conjunction with area public school systems. "We comply with all state educational guidelines and plan to utilize the school's cafeteria as soon as possible," she indicated.

Dr. Tann also plans to offer GED classes and a Bible College at the school, and will make good use of the school's 33 classrooms, media center, gymnasium, and the nine acres on which the school is located. "We have a bus which will transport students to and from school," she said, adding that more than half of her current students will be making the move from Lowndes to Berrien County.

Meanwhile, Dr. Tann plans to become a vibrant and active member of the local community and will be reaching out to everyone she meets. "I think that there is a need for an alternative education program," she said. "Genesis Christian School is the only one of its kind within a 30-mile radius."

Interested individuals may contact her at 242-7510 to learn more about enrollment.

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