

## Young Monroe Couple Builds a Labor of Love

(Monroe-June 17, 2008) Elizabeth and Jeremy Clack never envisioned opening a daycare center. They both had successful professional careers at an engineering firm, Harrison & Associates. But a twist of fate prompted this young couple to venture into new territory. The daycare center their son, Ethan, was attending shut down, and the Clacks were left with no place to send their two year toddler.

“Had you told me that one day we would start a daycare, I would have laughed at you. But when we started looking for a new daycare, we weren’t completely satisfied with any of the facilities available, so we decided to start our own,” said Elizabeth.

It could have been a daunting task. But the Clacks turned to the **LSBDC at University of Louisiana at Monroe** for assistance. Jeremy and Elizabeth took a 6 week FastTrac program, sponsored by the LSBDC at ULM on how to start and operate a daycare center.

“The classes were phenomenal,” said Elizabeth. “They covered every aspect of the daycare operation from licensing to Health Department regulations. Also, the LSBDC brought in representatives from various state agencies to talk to us.”

LSBDC consultant Eugenie Goodwin helped the Clacks develop financial projections to make sure the couple’s business plan worked on paper. Elizabeth and Jeremy also took other entrepreneurial training courses to learn new managerial skills.

“The Small Business Development Center really assisted us with the ‘homework’ of opening a business. They helped us formulate financial plans and three year projections which were priceless when it came time to approach a lender,” said Jeremy.

Elizabeth and Jeremy spent a year doing their “homework” before purchasing an old restaurant in the Swartz community. Jeremy and his father labored every evening and weekend, gutting and remodeling the 20 year old structure. Jeremy even dropped out of his college night classes in order to finish the remodeling. The Clacks also had a special curriculum developed for their daycare center, called “Playful Learning.” It incorporates hands-on learning with classes in music, gymnastics, computers and even etiquette.

In May 2007, Doodle Bugs Child Development Center opened its doors, employing 11 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees. Within its first year, Doodle Bugs reached full-capacity with 63 students from ages 6 weeks to 12 years. But more importantly, the Clacks say they have built a place their son Ethan loves attending, and they hope other families will benefit from their labor of love.



Jeremy & Elizabeth Clack, owners of  
Doodle Bugs Child Development Center