

Lara Talsky wants to bring family, fun together at Dragonfly Cafe and play area

October 20 2014 9:46 PM



Lara Talsky and her three children, from left, Eva, Gabriel and Stella, enjoy some of the attractions at the new Dragonfly Cafe playroom at the RiverBender.com Community Center in Alton. The cafe and playroom should be a fun environment for families to bring their children.

For Lara Talsky, bringing family and fun together is something she constantly thinks about with her three children and husband, Joe.

Within the doors of Riverbender.com Community Center, Lara Talsky and Dee Dee Altenbernd are trying to lead somewhat of a revival of both not only in their own homes, but those of the Alton region and beyond.

The two women presented RiverBender.com Community Center owner John Hentrich the idea for a cafe/play area for families in June of this year. The two felt there was a void in the Alton area for indoor play spaces for children. The women want to produce a safe, nurturing environment for area children and believe they can provide that. The new Dragonfly Cafe operated by the two women is opening at the RiverBender center.

Talsky is devoted to her three children, but she wants to use her creative talents and expand those abilities as a mother to help other children.

“The idea for the cafe started in 2009,” Lara Talsky said. “I have three children. I Googled Family Play Cafe and a cafe popped up in Chicago, but there are none around here. The one in Chicago was incredible. You walk in and order your food and there is an area where you could sit and there was an arts area, a basketball hoop and a playhouses area for non-walkers. It had puzzles and games and the owner came out and played guitar for the children.”

Lara has an elementary education, theater and writing background. Her bachelor’s degree is in theater and she has a master’s of fine arts in creative writing. She wants the new cafe to be a vehicle to get people in to the Community Center. In high school, she was voted “most artistic,” so her creative nature has been present for several years.

“What is truly great about Riverbender Community Center is it is truly a family center with activities for older kids, younger kids, something for everybody. This idea will bring family and fun together.”

Outside the play area, there are booths and tables, so adults can go out and sit there if they don’t want to be in the play area and just use the cafe. Jason Harrison has been hired to be the chef of the new cafe.

For the past several years, Lara has stayed at home raising her family, but she said she now wants to use her creative talents and do something for other children.

“My plan is to change things around so they don’t get stale,” she said. “We are hoping to have something during the Christmas tree lighting. RiverBender is always open at night then to the public. We would like to build a gingerbread house and change things

up in the room. We hope to use different books, games and different arrangements. It is just an awesome opportunity and I think it will be a success and something families find value in.”

Lara and Joe Talsky were married in November 2007. He is a prominent area gynecologist/obstetrician and is extremely well known to families in the region with his embracing personality.

Lara said her three children Gabriel, 6; Stella, 4; and Eva, 2; love the community center and the new cafe area. She wants to make Alton a better place for her children and others to live and grow in as families.

“I think Alton could use a lot of things, especially for families and kids,” she said. “John has been so gracious in giving us the space. I think this will be a success. We are going to start our focus on Friday nights. John already has an open play on Friday evenings, so the cafe will be serving dinner and the play area will be open.”

If a group wants to use the new play area, they will be able to do so in the morning with advance notice, Lara said. “Once we get up and going we will talk about reserving the space for different groups or people,” she said.