

Abeona House creates compassionate first steps

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Tulanians Jenny Irons, Timothy McEvoy and Allison Cruz are board members of Abeona House, a child care center in the Mid-City neighborhood of New Orleans. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Abeona, the Roman goddess of outward journeys, watches over children's first steps away from home. It's a fitting name for the [Abeona House Child Discovery Center](#) in the Mid-City neighborhood of New Orleans. The center dedicates itself to the teaching of Reggio Emilia-inspired child care, which focuses on a curriculum grounded in a child's creativity and a sense of community in order to make a child's journey confident and compassionate.

Abeona House is one of the only nonprofit child-care facilities in New Orleans that is not affiliated with a church or large institution. Three members of the Tulane

community – Allison Cruz, director of [Newcomb-Tulane College cohort programs](#); Jenny Irons, director of student leadership and engagement at [Newcomb College Institute](#); and Timothy McEvoy, a clinical instructor with Tulane Law School's [Domestic Violence Clinic](#) – serve on its board, which steers a learning environment governed by core values.

The center strives to provide affordable child care and a diverse student body, as well as living wages and benefits to its staff of early-childhood education professionals. It also boasts an innovative food justice program that focuses on freshly prepared, local and organic food.

Cruz, who is the board president, says she is proud to send her children to a school whose mission is to be just and equitable.

McEvoy says he enjoys visiting the center for its “joy and sense of community” and to see the children work in the school garden, create large art murals and even rescue injured june bugs.

Founded by a small group of parents after Hurricane Katrina when a dearth of child care existed, Abeona House accommodates students from 6 weeks to 5 years old. The center has a waiting list – a testament, Irons says, to Abeona’s strong reputation.

Cruz, Irons and McEvoy may not have deity status, but their mission as parents and board members guides students’ first steps all the same.