



**CUTTING THE RIBBON** - Le Jardin Executive Director Eddie Berrones, at right, and Thomas Schram, chairman of Le Jardin's Board of Directors, cuts the red ribbon, officially opening the new building. PHOTO BY JENNIFER MESSEMER

## Le Jardin expands campus

By **JENNIFER MESSEMER**  
Staff Writer

Not only is Le Jardin Community Centers making a difference in young children's lives, but the program is transforming Homestead's community as well.

Le Jardin's newest building at 107 S.W. Eighth St. was once an abandoned crack house. The renovation took eight months and is the first of three phases on the 3-acre parcel.

Le Jardin's Executive Director Eddie Berrones said a total buildout of the site would serve 400 children.

"When I was hired here four years ago, we knew if we wanted to make a real impact to the children's lives, we had to do something about the environment as well," Berrones said last Wednesday at the grandopening.

Le Jardin is a private nonprofit agency that looks to give an educational head start to children from low-income families.

Parent volunteer Nadia Hasan said her 4-year-old daughter's experience at Le Jardin has been invariable.

"Rania helps her older brother who is in kindergarten with his homework," said Hasan. "The teachers here are perfect. They communicate with the parents a lot. She's ready for kindergarten. She's already writing her name."

Le Jardin's chairman of the board Thomas Schram said this addition is needed for the children.

"This is the beginning of these children's long careers in education," said Schram. "It allows us to provide a higher quality of education to the children we serve. And better serve the children's families and the community as a whole."

David Goodwyn Sr.'s 4-year-old son David Jr. attends Le Jardin.

"The instructors get to know the children very well and provide a level of discipline," said Goodwyn. "They are teaching him something I want him to have - self discipline."

The new building also has a media center complete with computers, books and a microscope. Money for the media center was provided by a grant by Ruth Shack from the Dade Community Foundation, said Berrones.