



Laurie Sallarulo arrived in Broward County 16 years ago and became active in the community immediately. She has been involved with many non-profit organizations, but has focused her efforts on those that service children, especially those at risk or with special needs.

Laurie's passion for improving the lives of children intensified after the birth of her first child, Patrick, who was born with Down Syndrome, a genetic condition that results in varying degrees of mental retardation. From that moment she realized how very important it was that every child has the opportunity to be the best that he or she can be.

In the months to come, Laurie was committed to learning everything she could about the services available to children, especially those with developmental disabilities and their families. Laurie soon came to realize that there were many gaps in the system and has spent the past 13 years advocating for quality services that are accessible to all children and their families.

Laurie, who holds a Bachelors Degree in Accounting from the State University of Albany was soon making use of her financial and management experience to serve on several County and non-profit boards, and volunteering for organizations that serve children. Her knowledge of budgeting, allocations, return on investment and financial controls has helped many of these organizations better understand and achieve their goals.

In 2002, Governor Jeb Bush appointed Laurie to the Children's Services Council of Broward County. Laurie's presence on the Council has brought greater awareness of the issues facing children with special needs and their families. She recently spearheaded a study with the Council to analyze the gaps in services and develop a plan to implement a coordinated system of care for these children.

Laurie currently co-chairs the SNAC, Special Needs Advisory Committee, which was a result of the study. SNAC brings together a coalition of local government and community leaders dedicated to providing leadership in initiatives intended to improve the system of care for these children and their families.

In 2003, Laurie decided to re-join the workforce as the Habitat for Humanity of Broward Fund Development Director. This seemed to be a perfect fit, as she understands how important a stable, decent home environment is in the development of all children. In her position with Habitat, Laurie is able to further her commitment to helping children and families in need.

Recently, Laurie joined the Board of The Wasie Foundation, a private foundation that addresses children's issues in Minneapolis and Broward County. Laurie's knowledge of the Broward County community is an asset to the Foundation and will help stimulate further support to the community.

Laurie has received many awards over the past several years, including Woman of the Year, Woman of Distinction, Hispanic Woman of Distinction, Women of the Year in Fund Development and Special Events by the Atlantic-Florida Chapter of the Association for Women

in Communications. Laurie was also named Outstanding Mother of the Year by Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Broward County in 2005.

Laurie believes that in the face of every challenge there is an opportunity to learn, grow and bring about change. She feels passionately that it is her responsibility to inspire, educate, empower and advocate not only for Patrick and Samantha, but for all children.