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## New Plainfield charter school director ready for action

By *MARK SPIVEY*  
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Norman Pressman had a specific skill set in mind when searching for the right person to lead the Ellen G. Pressman Charter School - the city-based school he founded in honor of his sister, a North Jersey educator who died in 2007 after a battle with pancreatic cancer.

Pressman, the former CEO of a Chicago-based medical diagnostics company, said he wanted someone who embodied "an entrepreneurial spirit," but also had "the right skills."

He also said he found that in Tamira Chapman.

Chapman, of Brick, will head the city's newest charter school, a middle school opening on Tuesday that features a specialized curriculum with an emphasis on music education.

"She's got just the right combination of skills and the right spirit to really carry this forward," Pressman said.

Pressman Charter School, located in the city YWCA building on East Front Street, will serve about 160 students in grades 6-7 this year before expanding to serve 240 students in grades 6-8 next year.

Chapman, a native of East Orange, most recently served as the founder and director of the Carteret Arts and Sports Academy, a program that benefited students at Carteret Middle School and was funded by a federal grant. The academy created a community learning center, operated during nonschool hours, that included a counseling program, character-education programs, drug and violence prevention programs and other activities that exposed students to the arts and extracurricular sports.

Chapman left two years into the five-year program to pursue the Pressman post, she said, after gaining what she called valuable experience in a diverse educational environment. The Carteret program will go on without her during the next three years, she said.

"I would say that Carteret was, by far, the most diverse environment I'd ever worked in ... and I really feel like I benefited from that in a lot of ways," Chapman said. "But I think the reason I was able to leave a job I loved so much was because I believe in (Pressman) so much."

Chapman, a Rutgers University graduate who also completed graduate work at St. Peter's College in Jersey City, entered the field of education with East Orange public schools before moving on to Carteret. She took over for Alfredo Huereca, the former principal of Hoboken Charter School who served as interim director of Pressman since March.

Pressman is one of four city charter schools, or schools that feature their own boards of directors, operating independently of public school districts despite being funded by them. It is one of six new

charter schools statewide, joining others opening in Winslow Township, Florence, Vineland, Newark and Jersey City.

Total enrollment at the state's 68 charter schools is expected to exceed 21,000 this year, according to the New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association, with about 11,000 children currently listed on waiting lists for the schools.

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