



ABILITIES FIRST
ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
& ADULTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA ALERT

June 29, 2017

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**Abilities First Receives \$3.2M Gift
to Expand School Resources for Students with Disabilities
in Orange County**

New Windsor, N.Y. (June 22, 2017) – Resources for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities will expand in Orange County thanks to the generous property donation of the former Devitt’s Medical Arts Building to Abilities First. The property will be renovated into a state-of-the-art educational facility to serve 40 students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 5 – 21. Abilities First will open a temporary location in Cornwall in the fall of 2017 during renovations.

The Abilities First School, presently located in LaGrange and Red Hook currently supports 116 students spread across six Hudson Valley counties. This new facility will enable Abilities First to better serve students currently living in and near Orange County.

The donation, the largest gift in the organization’s history, was made by Ari Straus and his father, Dr. Marc Straus. Straus is the CEO and managing partner of Monticello Motor Club, an automotive country club and private race track in Monticello, New York. Dr. Straus is a renowned art collector and owner of a contemporary art gallery in Manhattan.

“Since an initial visit to the Abilities First School and learning of the school’s need to expand into Orange County, the Straus family has been unwavering in their support to do something meaningful for the students.” said Melissa McCoy, Chief Advancement Officer for Abilities First. “Most children, especially those with disabilities, need the opportunity to be educated and integrate into the communities in which they live, with the available resources and support vital to their success. Abilities First is most grateful to the Straus Family for their generous gift, which will expand regional options for families, shorten travel time for current students, and enhance the opportunity for families to have close proximity to participate in their child’s activities and meetings.”

“In addition to the school, we will also utilize space to develop other needed programs and services for people with developmental challenges living in the region,” said Dr. Jeff Fox, CEO of Abilities First. “We look forward to a 2018 opening of the ‘Straus Family Pavilion’, named in recognition of this tremendous gift.”

For further information, contact Melissa McCoy at (845) 485-9803 ext. 223.

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About Abilities First

Founded in 1962, Abilities First is a not-for-profit organization serving the needs of the community, as well as those with developmental disabilities, from pre-school through adulthood. Abilities First has had a long-term commitment of providing a cohesive culture of compassion, empowerment and respect for people with a variety of disabilities through educational, vocational, residential and habilitation services. It presently serves over 1,400 children and adults throughout the Hudson Valley region of New York State. Abilities First is accredited for person-centered care by the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL).

The Abilities First School serves children with intellectual & developmental disabilities needing specialized educational and therapy services. Students are determined eligible by their home school district. In addition to its Lagrange location, Abilities First supports a Universal Pre-K program for ages 3 and 4 year-olds in collaboration with the Hyde Park School District, and its Abilities First Pre-School, serving 67 children age 3-5 at its Wappingers Falls site.

Abilities First’s mission is to provide people with disabilities and their families support to attain independence, self-determination, integration and acceptance by others through education, exploration and experience.

For more information, visit www.AbilitiesFirstNY.org or on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/AbilitiesFirstInc](https://www.facebook.com/AbilitiesFirstInc) and [@AbilitiesF](https://twitter.com/AbilitiesF) on Twitter.