



MEDIA ALERT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KeyBank Foundation Grants \$120,000 to New Abilities First School

(LaGrange, NY) – Abilities First’s Chief Advancement Officer, Melissa McCoy, announces a \$120,000 grant has been awarded by KeyBank Foundation, whose funding priorities focus is to help communities thrive through improved education and workforce development, to establish The Abilities First & KeyBank Foundation – Workforce Readiness Program at the new Abilities First School in LaGrange. The new Abilities First school and state-of-the-art facility opened in LaGrange in December 2015 and serves over 100 students from throughout the Hudson Valley.

The Abilities First & KeyBank Foundation – Workforce Readiness Program is designed to give high school age students with disabilities real work experience before graduation, which they can use to enhance their readiness for employment after graduation. By providing transportation and professional staffing, the program will allow students to engage in a variety of community work experiences. The success of the program will be seen by the growth and improvement of each student during the annual evaluation, as well as a post-graduation analysis.

Why is this program so important? State and Federal Governments are shifting priorities for adult programs away from congregate care models (i.e., group homes, day programs) and toward community living and employment. Therefore, students who age out of special education programs must be much better prepared for true independent living and competitive employment. “Both Abilities First and KeyBank recognize the need to be ahead of the curve by enhancing real work opportunities for students with disabilities which will help them maximize their readiness to compete in the challenging world that we all share. Abilities First is extremely grateful for the partnership and leadership from the KeyBank Foundation as we work together to support the potential of students with disabilities with the essential skills needed to succeed in the workforce and in life,” said McCoy.

“At KeyBank, we believe it is important that communities come together to make a difference by developing and supporting programs and organizations that create pathways for all people from

every background with any ability to succeed,” said Ruth Mahoney, president, Hudson Valley/Metro NY Market, KeyBank N.A. “This is why we at KeyBank is so pleased to support Abilities First’s new workforce readiness program. By offering students with disabilities the opportunity to prepare for real-world experiences today, in a structured educational environment, we improve their chances of being contributors to the community tomorrow.”

“In light of state and federal mandates for workforce readiness, grants such as this supports the resources otherwise unavailable, to offer first-rate transition planning and work experience for all students,” said Elizabeth Faison, Principal of the Abilities First School.

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PHOTO



(Left to Right) Rita McPeck, SBA Business Service Officer of KeyBank; Jeff Fox, CEO of Abilities First; Ruth Mahoney, Hudson Valley Metro NY Market President of KeyBank; Libby Faison, Principal of the Abilities First School; Eric Brown Senior Vice President of KeyBank Corporate Philanthropy; and Melissa McCoy, Chief Advancement Officer of Abilities First.

KeyBank Foundation awarded a \$120,000 grant to the Abilities First School in LaGrange, NY to establish The Abilities First & KeyBank Foundation – Workforce Readiness Program.

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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 1,200 children and adults throughout the Hudson Valley region of New York State. AF is accredited for the person-centered care by the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) and given the honor of participating in a coalition of leaders in the field through New York Integrated Network and Coordinated Behavioral Health Services (CBHS).

After over thirty years in Poughkeepsie, the Abilities First School opened its doors in a new state-of-the-art location in Lagrange in December 2015. The school has over 100 students and 9 classrooms equipped with instructional technology, adaptive physical education space, a fully outfitted sensory gym and clinical space for therapies. Additional programs are held within the Red Hook School District. Students from over twenty-three school districts from a seven county region attend the school.

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.

About KeyBank Foundation

Beyond traditional banking products and services, Key supports communities through the important work of KeyBank Foundation, a nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1969 and funded by KeyCorp. The Foundation's mission is to support organizations and programs that promote and foster thriving communities through education and workforce development. For more information, visit <https://www.key.com/about/community/key-foundation-philanthropy-banking.jsp>.