

# The Abilities First Independent Times



Abilities First, Inc. 70 Overocker Road Poughkeepsie, NY 12603 845.485.9803

[www.abilitiesfirstny.org](http://www.abilitiesfirstny.org)

Winter 2011

## Forty Year Milestone for 'Buddy'!

Edward Sommerfield, or Buddy, as he is affectionately known, recently celebrated his 40th anniversary with Abilities First. Buddy has become a well-known member of the Abilities First family and in the local community, as well.

Buddy is a 1974 graduate of Ketcham High School and still remains in contact with some of his classmates. His tenure with Abilities First (then REHAB Programs) began on October 20, 1970 when he began working at the North Road facility as a member of a small group earning an income sanding and caning furniture. Buddy has a long history of successful employment through the organization's Employment Services programs including positions in the Work Training Center and enclaves at Bard College, Omega Institute, Red Lobster, Western Publishing, and currently at Marist College. Buddy says, "I work very hard and I earn a good paycheck so I can pay for things on my own." Buddy's supervisors at work say that he is "a motivated and very hard worker. He does a great job."



Buddy moved into Waryas House in 1979 and has been a part of the Abilities First residential family ever



since. He now lives at Violet Gardens Apartments and says, "I like living at Violet (Gardens Apartments) best." Buddy proudly takes the bus around Poughkeepsie to run his errands independently.

Buddy has been active in Self Advocacy Association of NYS for many years and always attends their annual conference in Albany and the monthly chapter meetings at the Poughkeepsie Galleria. He is the Vice President of his local Self Advocacy Chapter and is a strong advocate for himself and his peers. Buddy even attended the 2004 National Self Advocacy Association conference in California! Additionally, Buddy has been an active member in Special Olympics since 1983 and has 142 medals hanging on his wall. He has competed in swimming, track and field, power lifting, bowling, volleyball, and basketball.

Buddy's family includes his brother, Bruce, who he sees regularly, and his parents whom he visits every August in Colorado Springs, CO. Buddy exclaims – with his unforgettable smile – "Abilities First has been good to me. I'm very happy here!"

## Abilities First Adopts A Rail Trail

In October, Abilities First, Inc. became the first organization to be an Adopt-A-Trail sponsor for the Dutchess Rail Trail. On the day of this 'initiation', County Executive William Steinhaus met with the Abilities First's Day Habilitation Program from our Work Training Center to acknowledge them for having adopted a quarter mile section of the Dutchess Rail Trail that stretches from Morgan Lake south to Overocker Road in the Town of Poughkeepsie.

This Day Hab group meets five days a week at Abilities First's Work Training Center on Overocker Road and walks the trail often. Adopting the trail provides them with the opportunity to be involved in their community, learn new skills, spend time outside engaging in physical activity, and will give them a sense of pride and responsibility through their "ownership" of the trail. The group will keep the trail clean and beautify it with seasonal plantings.



Dutchess County Executive Bill Steinhaus with Abilities First day hab participants and staff at the rail trail

## A Message From The President



We all know full well that these are challenging economic times. As a businessperson I see this first hand each day. Ironically, this makes it an exceptional time to be at the helm of an organization as special as Abilities First.

The organization has always been a place that nurtures, heals and supports some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. As resources dwindle, increasing the vulnerability of people with disabilities and their families, Abilities First staff continues to provide compassionate, top notch care, filling in the gaps to make sure no one receives less than they deserve to live a full, happy and productive life. This sense of well being is evident in the faces of every participant I encounter in Abilities First's schools, working or volunteering in the community, and participating in our day programs.

The difference that Abilities First makes in the lives of people with disabilities, even during challenging times, truly makes me proud to be part of its Board of Directors. I invite you to experience first hand what I have experienced over the last seven years by contacting Abilities First at anytime to arrange a tour of our programs. I guarantee you will leave touched, moved and inspired!

On behalf of the entire Board, I'd like to thank you for your support of Abilities First in the past. Now more than ever, we are hoping for your support of Abilities First once again in 2011!

*Michael T. Flynn*  
*President*



### **Abilities First, Inc. Board of Directors**

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The Abilities First Independent Times is a periodic newsletter produced by the organization to keep friends and the community informed about the activities of Abilities First.

To submit news items or provide comments regarding this newsletter, please contact the Development Department at:

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and dedication of our staff. Throughout the organization they have stepped up to meet the funding and day to day challenges we are all facing in the Human Service field. As a result of these efforts, Abilities First has been able to maintain its strong fiscal position and continues to be a provider of a wide spectrum of services to children and adults with disabilities.

Looking ahead to 2011, these pressures will continue as funding cuts from NYS government occur. Since a significant amount of our programmatic income comes from governmental sources, 2011 is shaping up to be challenging. During this time it will be vital that all stakeholders from private-not-for-profits, their staff, consumers of services and their families work together to send a unified message to government officials that essential services for individuals with disabilities must be maintained. Examples of these services include housing or “a home”, work op-

portunities or “a job”, education development or “school”, and personal development that provides the opportunity to be part of a community and to live lives that are enriched in a way that all people deserve. You can be certain that we will lobby and advocate strongly to ensure that those we serve receive the services that allow each person to grow and meet their fullest potential. During these times we will coordinate and look for those opportunities that will allow us to further our mission: “to serve people with disabilities and their families by developing and providing innovative services, advocacy and support in a culture of dignity and respect”. Thank you for your continued support and may 2011 bring each of you much joy and happiness.

John Thoman  
Executive Director

As I reflect back on 2010, I am encouraged by how well Abilities First fared in spite of the national recession. In fact, in my 31 years with the Abilities First, 2010 stands out in my mind as one of the organization’s best years. The economy climate has forced us to assess and evaluate all aspects of our organization and lean to operate in a more efficient and effective manner while maintaining the high quality of services our consumers and their families have become accustomed to. This accomplishment would not have been possible if it were not for the commitment

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## Kids Expo 2010 At The Waterfront



*Perfect weather and a new location along the Hudson River drew lots of families to Kids Expo 2010.*

As one of Kids Expo three coalition members, Abilities First had a major role in planning and carrying out Kids Expo 2010. This year the event was moved to the Fall and was held along the Poughkeepsie Waterfront and at the Mid Hudson Children’s Museum. Thousands of children and families came out to enjoy the beautiful weather and take part in the activities offered by dozens of vendors and sponsors. Entertainment included musicians Jay Mankita and Chris Propfe, Bill Robinson’s World of Animals, Clearwater’s Power of Song, and Radio Disney. This year’s top sponsors

included IBM, Poughkeepsie Journal, Clear Channel, City of Poughkeepsie, Hannaford, Price Chopper, and Stop & Shop.

Mark your calendars for Kids Expo 2011 that will take place on September 10th and 11th!



*Fun and educational activities are the highlight of the event.*

# Abilities First Waryas Artists Participate in Kingston Soap Box Derby

In spite of the flooding rain event, Director of Residential Services, Richard Judge, on August 22, participants from Abilities First's Waryas Art Program brought their "Abilities Beast Mobile" to be judged at the 2010 Kingston 16th Annual Soap Box Derby in Kingston. After 'crashing and burning' in last year's event, they were awarded an assortment of prizes for Cooperative Effort including gift certificates to local eateries and tickets to ride the scenic Catskill Mountain Railroad.



*Participants and staff from Abilities First Waryas Art Program proudly show off their "Beast Mobile."*

# Abilities First Preschoolers Celebrate Halloween With Our Neighbors!

Each year, neighbors in the building shared with our Abilities First Preschool at Myers Corners look forward to greeting our trick or treaters as much as our Preschoolers enjoy being on the receiving end of this activity! Students in Orchard View High School, office staff from Wappingers Falls School District Administrative Offices, and – joining in for the first time this year – Laerdal Medical Corp., all got caught up in the spirit of the holiday and handed out candy to our Preschoolers in costume.



*It was a happy Halloween for kids of all ages and abilities!*

## 2010 "Gait To The Gala" Posts A Winner!

We were off to the races last April at The Abilities First Gala! The Kentucky Derby themed event was full of mint juleps, red roses, ladies in picture hats, gentlemen in straw skimmers, and, of course, horse racing! Over 220 people attended the event, which raised over \$30,000 for Abilities First. Thank you to our sponsors of the 2009 Gala:

Central Hudson  
Custom Security Systems  
Health Quest  
IBM  
Anthony Kaplan  
KeyBank  
M&T Bank  
Miller Funeral Home  
Momentum Advertising & Design

Rohde, Soyka & Andrews,  
Consulting Engineers  
Rose & Kiernan Insurance

We took the occasion to honor several people and organizations. The Omega Institute was recognized as the Business Of The Year for their support to individuals with disabilities in their workplace. Ann Hardiman, executive director of NYSA-CRA, received the Lynn and Nancy Wall Award for her lifelong dedication to people with disabilities, including a stint as director of Abilities First's residential program. The Abilities First Participant Of The Year was Raymond Ike. Raymond received this award after his inspiring success with speech therapy and independent living. And our

Volunteer Of The Year was IBM's Sheila Appel, for her ceaseless fundraising and advocacy for people with disabilities in the Mid-Hudson area.

**Be sure to join us for the 2011 Gala, scheduled for Friday, April 29, 2011 at The Grandview. Many plots and clues will be given throughout the night to solve the "Whodunit"!**



*Violet Gardens resident, Tom, offers the ladies a red rose at the 2010 Gala.*

## Arlington Rotary Holds Its First Casino Night To Support Abilities First!

Arlington Rotary's first Casino Night event was a wild success! Over 100 people came to Christo's Restaurant to enjoy good food, good company and 'gamble' for a good cause. Abilities First would like to thank Arlington Rotary with a special acknowledgment of Danielle Marxer, Nicole Peluse, Dennis Sarlo, Beverly Sarlo, and P.J. Walker for organizing this event to benefit Abilities First's preschool playground.



*The big winner - Abilities First!*

## Myers Corners Preschool Playground Dedication



*Elizabeth plays on the brand new playground!*

Abilities First held a dedication and donor acknowledgment reception in September for its newly completed playground at the Myers Corners Preschool. Heather Flanagan, the mother of a preschooler who has since graduated, helped to raise much of the funds for the playground. Heather passed away in 2009 and the playground was dedicated in her memory. Donors, board members, staff, Abilities First preschoolers and friends and family of Heather Flanagan attended.



## 14th Annual Women's Golf Tournament And Beginner Golf Clinic

Despite the week-long threat of a rain-out, June 28th brought sunny skies and happy lady golfers together for the 14th Annual Abilities First Women's Golf Tournament and Beginner Golf Clinic. Over 100 women played a round of golf and 40 women participated in the Beginner Golf Clinic. Many ladies use this opportunity to learn the basics of the game of golf in a stress-free environment. And best of all, they get to use those newly learned skills in a 3-hole mini-tournament!

Many thanks to our presenting sponsor, **KeyBank**. Other sponsors include **Clear Channel Of The Hudson Valley**, **Rose & Kiernan Insurance**, **McCabe & Mack LLP**, **DRA Imaging**, **Millman Harris Romano Foundation**, **Emblem Health**, **Molloy Pharmacy**, **Verizon**, **MVP**, **Bridgeway Federal Credit Union**, **Arlington Teachers Association** and **Mobil Life Support Systems**.



*Glenda Williams and Angie Frost enjoying the day on the course!*

Keep checking the Abilities First website or call 485-9803 x384 to hear about the 2011 tournament and beginner clinic!

# Show Your Support On Our Pathway Of Promise!

**A**bilities First continues to offer the opportunity to have your support represented on our Pathway of Promise with a brick engraved with your message. Many have used this as a long lasting way to honor or memorialize someone special, announce the birth of a child, show community support or simply make an inspirational statement!

The Pathway of Promise is located in front of Abilities First's Administrative Offices at 70 Overocker Rd., Poughkeepsie. Come visit anytime!

**Proceeds from this project support the Abilities First Endowment Fund.**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: (Home/cell) \_\_\_\_\_ Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my gift/pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (please contact us to set up a pledge)

- |                          |                  |              |          |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Donor            | 4"X8" brick  | \$125    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Community Leader | 8"X8" brick  | \$500    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Benefactor       | 8"X18" brick | \$2,500  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Partner          | Bench        | \$10,000 |

Please engrave my brick as follows (engraving is limited to 13 characters and 3 lines including spaces for 4"x8" bricks. Call 845-485-9803 ext. 227 with questions):

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## Payment Method

- Check or Money Order made payable to Abilities First, Inc.  
 Please charge my gift to  Visa  MasterCard  Discover

Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Complete and send this form with payment to:  
Abilities First, Inc., 70 Overocker Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

For more information or to learn about planned giving options please call 845.485.9803



# ABILITIES FIRST LAUNCHES 'LEAF A LEGACY'



*A few of the artists' submissions for the Leaf A Legacy Campaign*



*Leaf A Legacy Co-Chairs, Michael T. Flynn and Bernadette Mack welcome supporters at the reception*

## 2010 Men's Golf Tournament A Winner For Abilities First Endowment!

Friday August 27th was a perfect day for golf and a perfect day for the 6th Annual Abilities First Men's Golf Tournament. 75 men played a round of golf at Casperkill Golf Course, with many contests and games played on many holes. Over \$13,000 was raised and the proceeds from this event go directly to the endowment fund at Abilities First. **Trump National Golf Club in Hopewell Junction will be the site of the 2011 tournament on May 16, 2011!** Keep checking the Abilities First Events Webpage for updated details!

The winners of the Men's Tournament are:

### **3rd Place:**

Timothy Reynolds  
Steve Milton  
Kevin Kelly  
Mike Gregor

### **2nd Place:**

Dan Barry  
Todd Martin  
Jose Costa

### **1st Place:**

Kevin Page  
Henry Page III  
Bob McMann  
Mike Havas

To raise capital for our endowment campaign, Abilities First has launched a county wide public art project that was unveiled at a reception on July 14 at Dutchess Country Club. The project, Leaf A Legacy, is modeled after similar campaigns that organizations across the country have carried out as successful fundraising endeavors utilizing custom fiberglass sculptures in the form of animals, mascots or other locally symbolic figures.

Abilities First chose the figure of a maple leaf for its Leaf A Legacy fundraising campaign to represent the Hudson Valley's widely loved fall foliage and the sugar maple tree, the official state tree of New York. Local artists are being invited to use virtually any appropriate medium to decorate the four-foot maple leaves. Artists receive a stipend and a portion of the proceeds from the revenue generated from their leaf. Sponsorship of leaves has now been made available. Sponsors may choose their artist and place the finished work on display at a location of their choosing. Abilities First is working with Dutchess County Tourism and Dutchess County Art Council to develop outreach to publicize the project and support its sponsors. The leaves will later be sold at auction.

For information about submitting an artistic design or sponsorship of a leaf, call 845-485-9803 x 384. Check out the Campaigns Leaf A Legacy Facebook page!





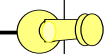
**ABILITIES FIRST**

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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**ABILITIES FIRST**  
ENRICHING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Friday, April 29, 2011**

Abilities First Annual Gala  
“Who Done It?”  
The Grandview, Poughkeepsie

**Monday, May 16, 2011**

Abilities First 7th Annual  
Men's Golf Tournament  
Trump National Golf Club  
Hudson Valley

**Monday, June 27, 2011**

15th Annual Abilities First  
Womens Cup Challenge  
and Beginner Golf Clinic  
Casperkill Golf Club

**September 11 & 12, 2011**

Kids Expo  
City of Poughkeepsie Waterfront

*Sponsorship opportunities are available. For information or registration, please call  
Regina Fitzgerald Donato  
at 485-9803 ext 384*

