



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

## **MEDIA ALERT**

**July 2, 2015**

*For more information, contact:*

Kristina Muhkerjee, Integrated Communications Specialist

Abilities First, Inc.

845-485-9803 x 215

[kristinamuhkerjee@abilitiesfirstny.org](mailto:kristinamuhkerjee@abilitiesfirstny.org)

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

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Abilities First Announces Major Gift From M&T Bank**

**LaGrange, N.Y.** (July 2, 2015) – Abilities First, Inc. CEO, Dr. Jeffery Fox announces that M&T Bank has made a \$30,000 leadership gift in support of the Abilities First - Future Steps Education Campaign. The Future Steps Education Campaign supports the needs of a new school which is currently under renovations at an existing facility in LaGrange, NY.

"We are extremely grateful that M&T Bank has chosen to honor our students with this gift. It will allow us to construct a state-of-the-art sensory gym, where children with special needs will grow essential skills needed to succeed in life. We owe these opportunities to our students and would not have been able to provide them at this level without this support from M&T Bank", said Dr. Fox.

"We understand how important it is to provide the right access and resources for all of the members of our community to succeed and are happy to support Abilities First in this project to install a new gym that will help children needing sensory integration therapy," said Michael T. Keegan, President of M&T Bank's Albany and Hudson Valley Region.

The \$1.2M construction project is funded by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the New York State Division of Budget (NYSDOB). When complete, the new school will include 9 classrooms with instructional technology, physical education space, clinical space for therapies, and a fully accessible playground. Occupancy will take place during the 2015-2016 school year.

The Abilities First School has operated in Poughkeepsie for the past 35 years. Abilities First, a not-for-profit organization, provides services to over 1,500 developmentally disabled individuals, aged pre-school through adulthood, including students from 21 school districts throughout Orange, Ulster, Dutchess, Putnam, and Columbia counties.

Fundraising efforts continue for classrooms and the adaptive playground through contributions to the Future Steps Education Campaign at [www.futurestepseducation.org](http://www.futurestepseducation.org). For further information on how

you can support the organization's Future Steps Education Campaign, please contact Melissa McCoy at 845.485.9803 x223 or email [melissamccoy@abilitiesfirstny.org](mailto:melissamccoy@abilitiesfirstny.org).

###

## PHOTOS

AF-NewSchool-Fox-McCoy-HaydockBuckly-Flynn.JPG

Dr. Fox is joined by (l to r): Melissa McCoy, AF Chief Advancement Officer; Courtney Haydock Buckley, Assistant Vice President, Foundation & Community Relations Manager M&T Bank, and Michael J. Flynn, Vice President Commercial Banking M&T Bank, at the site of the future school and sensory gym.

AF-Preschool-SensoryGym.jpg

Pictured is the existing Abilities First Preschool sensory gym, providing a glimpse of the extraordinary environment which will be made possible by M&T Bank.

### **About Abilities First, Inc.**

Founded in 1962, Abilities First is a not-for-profit organization serving the needs of 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 and habilitation services. It presently serves over 1,500 children and adults with disabilities in 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).

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](http://www.AbilitiesFirstNY.org) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/AbilitiesFirstInc](https://www.facebook.com/AbilitiesFirstInc) and [@AbilitiesF](https://twitter.com/AbilitiesF) on Twitter.