



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

## **MEDIA ALERT**

**August 22, 2017**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Abilities First to Honor Dr. Marc Straus, Ari Straus, Kevin Page, and Karen Page at the 2017 Signature Event**

**Poughkeepsie, NY** (August 22, 2017) – Abilities First has announced the 2017 annual award recipients to be honored at their nightclub-themed Signature Event on Friday, October 27, 2017 at the newly renovated Shadows on the Hudson in Poughkeepsie, NY from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The 2017 Community Leadership Award will be awarded to Dr. Marc Straus and Ari Straus. Most recently, the Straus Family donated the former Devitt's Medical Arts Building in New Windsor, NY. The \$3.2M gift, the largest in Abilities First's history, will become the first Orange County location for the Abilities First School. Ari Straus is the CEO and Managing Partner of Monticello Motor Club, an automotive country club and private race track in Monticello, NY, that has supported Abilities First through "fund racing" driving events. He also serves on the board of trustees for Bethel Woods Center for the Arts. Formerly, Ari founded mdINR, a healthcare management service for patients on blood-thinning drugs, that operated in the Devitt's building. mdINR was purchased in 2011 by Lincare, the nation's largest providers of home oxygen and other respiratory therapy services. Dr. Marc Straus is a published poet, and renowned art collector, and owner of "MARC STRAUS GALLERY", a contemporary art gallery in Lower Manhattan. He and his wife, Dr. Livia Straus, founded the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art ("HVCCA"), a non-profit arts and education organization in Peekskill, NY.

"We are humbled to be the recipients of the 2017 Abilities First Community Leadership Award. My parents and grandparents taught us that it is our responsibility to help make this world a better place, and that's what Abilities First does by providing care, support, and education to children and adults with unique challenges," said Ari Straus. "We are honored to assist Abilities First with expanding into Orange County where so many families are in need of their services."

Karen Page and Kevin Page, longtime supporters of Abilities First, will be recognized as the 2017 Outstanding Volunteers. Karen Page, and her brother, Kevin Page are Managing Partners of Page Management Group, a Poughkeepsie-based company specializing in land development and commercial real estate leasing. Karen is head of accounting and administration and Kevin heads up operations and maintenance. Having been involved with the Abilities First Golf Classic Committee for many years, they have contributed many volunteer hours to the organization. Page Management Group, formerly H.G. Page Jr. Development, has provided generous sponsorship support for many of Abilities First's fundraising events including the Golf Classic and Signature Event. Both are actively involved with local community groups including The Child Abuse Prevention Center, LaGrange Historical Society, Rotary Club of LaGrange, and Poughkeepsie Elks Lodge #275.

Renée Bulla and Joe Markey will serve as this year's Signature Event Committee co-chairs. Abilities First recognized KeyBank as the 2016 Outstanding Community Leader for their strong commitment in investing in education and the workforce to build thriving communities. Representing KeyBank will be Joe Markey, Market President, Hudson Valley Metro/NY Market. Renée Bulla, Vice-President Client Services at Momentum Advertising & Design, was honored as the 2016 Outstanding Volunteer for her years of leadership and support to Abilities First including Board President from 2014-2015.

"Abilities First is honored to have such community minded and supportive leadership as chairs of our 2017 Signature Event. Collectively, their commitment to the agency sends a strong message to the community of their understanding of the impact of our mission," said Melissa McCoy, Chief Advancement Officer of Abilities First.

The 2017 Signature Event will begin with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres as attendees toast the 2017 Abilities First honorees. The event continues with live music, tastings from regional spirits, a cigar lounge with prime views of the Hudson River, a progressive dining experience, and a host of interactive entertainment experiences including illusionist Chris Dare. Chris, a Hudson Valley native, has performed for thousands of people around the world combining magic, suggestion, psychology, misdirection, and showmanship. Soulsystem Orchestras, an 11-piece band, will again provide their signature high-energy entertainment in a rousing nightclub atmosphere.

The event is open to the public, and tax-deductible tickets are \$200. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Proceeds will benefit the programs and services of Abilities First, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving over 1,400 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the Hudson Valley.

Sponsors of the Signature Event include KeyBank, Page Management Group and Rose & Kiernan, Inc. To inquire about tickets or sponsorship opportunities, contact Melissa McCoy at 845.485.9803 x223 or [MelissaMcCoy@abilitiesfirstny.org](mailto:MelissaMcCoy@abilitiesfirstny.org). For more information about the event, visit <http://www.abilitiesfirstny.org/signature/index.php>.

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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. AF is accredited for the person-centered care by the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL).

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.