



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Walkway Over the Hudson Inspires Abilities First Art Show

Poughkeepsie, N.Y. (June 20, 2016) – Abilities First announces the opening of the NEW BEGINNINGS art show at the Abilities First Art Garage at 99 Inwood Avenue, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. on Monday, June 20. The show features art by participants of Abilities First programs which was inspired by the recent gallery renovation and presentations by regionally known photographer and Walkway on the Hudson enthusiast Fred Schaeffer.

The Art Garage recently went through a significant renovation of the gallery, workspaces and outdoor areas thanks to the Leadership Dutchess Class of 2016 annual project. Their efforts created an inspiring new space for art therapy, and for artists to enjoy and be inspired in year-round.

As a result of the recent renovation, and a presentation about transforming the old railroad bridge into a pedestrian walkway by Fred Schaeffer, the theme of “new beginnings” emerged for the show.

“When Fred shared his love of photography from the Walkway Over the Hudson and the Hudson Valley with the six men, they began to draw and paint, creating the artwork on display in the show,” said Theresa O’Connor, art therapist at Abilities First. “A trip to the Walkway Over the Hudson is planned for later this summer.”

Fred Schaeffer was Chairman of the Walkway Over the Hudson from 2004 – 2010. An avid photographer, Schaeffer’s photography can be seen on the Walkway Over the Hudson’s Facebook page, including the images captured during sunrise and sunset when he volunteers to open the gates on Saturdays and Sundays. Schaeffer’s photography will also be displayed at art show.

“I was very happy to be included in the plans for the Abilities First initial art show at the renovated Art Garage. It gave me the opportunity to share my love of photography with the participants and encourage them to take an interest in photography as a hobby. It was a heart-warming experience and made me appreciate the great work Abilities First is doing every day,” said Fred Schaeffer.

Art therapy makes use of the benefits of art-making to help improve the artist's quality of life. People share their own life story through their art, either in abstract or more realistic representations. When the artist looks at the piece of art with an art therapist, he or she often discovers meaning in the symbolism that is personally significant in some way. Art therapy helps raise self-esteem and promotes self-expression, relaxation and a sense of autonomy, helping to bring about an improved sense of well-being.

The community is invited to view and enjoy the art show from Monday, June 20 from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, June 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. or by appointment through July 3, 2016 by contacting Theresa O'Conner at theresaconnor@abilitiesfirstny.org. The artwork will be on sale with proceeds benefiting the Abilities First Gallery Program and artists. The Art Garage is also seeking donations from the community of new or used art supplies and frames.

If any business is interested in having the show hung in their location, or would like additional information on Abilities First, please contact Melissa McCoy at 845-485-9803 ext. 223 or melissamccoy@abilitiesfirstny.org.

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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).

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 and [@AbilitiesF](https://twitter.com/AbilitiesF) on Twitter.

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(Photos next page)

PHOTOS



Abilities First participant with his interpretation of a photograph of hot air balloons by Fred Schaeffer.



Art created by Abilities First participants interpreting Fred Schaeffer's photographs of the Walkway Over the Hudson and its views of the Hudson Valley.