



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

MEDIA ALERT

May 1, 2017

For more information, contact:

Kristina Mukherjee, Manager, Corporate Communications

Abilities First, Inc.

845-485-9803 ext. 215

kristinamukherjee@abilitiesfirstny.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ABILITIES FIRST HOSTS 2nd ANNUAL
COMMUNITY BREAKFAST & ANNUAL AWARDS**

HONORING INSPIRING INDIVIDUALS AND A COMMUNITY BUSINESS LEADER

Poughkeepsie, N.Y. (May 1, 2017) – The 2nd Annual Abilities First Community Breakfast will be held on Thursday, May 11, 2017 from 8:00 – 9:00 a.m., at The Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel, Poughkeepsie, NY. Abilities First invites the public to the complimentary event to celebrate the organization’s mission “Enriching the Lives of Children & Adults in our Communities.” Abilities First serves over 1,200 children and adults with developmental disabilities through educational, vocational, residential, and habilitation services throughout the Hudson Valley.

Shaneka R. Paulin, an Abilities First participant since 1980, will be sharing her inspiring story with Community Breakfast attendees. Paulin utilized the resources of Abilities First since she was first diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at 8 months old when it was formerly known as Rehabilitation Programs, Inc. Clinic. Paulin has gone on to focus on her abilities, earning a degree from Marist College and becoming a Paralegal. She presently works at Rosicki, Rosicki, and Associates, PC. Shaneka Paulin has not let her disability limit her goals and hopes to one day live more independently in a wheelchair accessible apartment.

Described by Abilities First staff as “passionate” and “driven”, Jessica Doering is being honored as the 2017 Participant of the Year. Doering, an Abilities First participant since 1986 when the organization was known as REHAB Programs, is being recognized for her enthusiasm and commitment to reaching her greatest potential. Through many of Abilities First’s pre-vocational and vocational programs including School to Work and Volunteer Programs, Doering has worked or volunteered at various local businesses such as Habitat for Humanity’s ReStore and Batemans Senior Meals. She is also a self-advocate Board Member for the Down Syndrome Association Hudson Valley.

The event will recognize Kearney Realty Group as the 2017 Business of the Year for their collaborative interest in working with Abilities First to provide housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Kearney Realty Group recently opened The Mews at Hopewell Junction in the Town of East Fishkill, which provides new integrated and affordable housing options for area residents. Ken Kearny has a strong history in creating supportive housing, with over 25 years of experience in developing affordable housing, including the Mews 1, Mews II in Baldwin Place and Highridge Gardens, Poughkeepsie Commons and Pendell Commons.

The Abilities First Innovation Award is being presented to Ray Lugo for his leadership and commitment to bringing disability education and awareness to the forefront through scouting. Inspired by his son, Ryan who was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, Lugo has used his role as an Assistant Scout Master for the Boy Scouts of America, Hudson Valley Council, Troop 40 to help his scouts realize they can participate in scouting regardless of their challenges. The disABILITIES E.D.G.E. website initiative (<http://www.disabilitiesedge.com/>) was one result of his passion for disability awareness. Lugo, a Maintenance Administrator for the Transit Management of Dutchess County Inc., was proud to help install advertisements displaying the Think DIFFERENTLY campaign on Dutchess County Transit Buses. Last year, Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro on behalf of Dutchess County Government accepted the Innovation Award for the “Think DIFFERENTLY” initiative.

Support for the Abilities First Community Breakfast is provided by Hospitality Sponsors Central Hudson and The Affinity Group, LLC and Media Sponsor the Poughkeepsie Journal.

Complimentary registration is now open at www.abilitiesfirstny.org/breakfast/. To inquire about sponsorship opportunities for the Community Breakfast, contact Dana Hammond at 845-485-9803 ext. 384 or danahammond@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).

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.