



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

MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Abilities First School Celebrates Annual Prom for Students with Special Needs

Poughkeepsie, N.Y. (June 9, 2016) – With the generous support of the Hudson Valley community, the Abilities First School hosted its third annual prom for its students with intellectual and developmental disabilities on Thursday, June 9, 2016 at the Poughkeepsie Elks Lodge #275. Students, ages 15 – 21, along with their families enjoyed a celebratory evening of dinner and dancing to mark the end of the school year. Alumni of the Abilities First School also returned for the special event, including the student whose idea to have the School's first prom in 2014.

Prior to the Prom, through the Junior League of Poughkeepsie's "Cinderella's Closet" Prom Dress Drive, students were able to choose from donated gowns to wear and Luxe Salon & Spa Poughkeepsie helped the students with hair and make-up. A staff member from the Arlington Central School District offered to make clothing alterations for those attending, many of which are in wheelchairs or have other physical disabilities.

Those who have volunteered or have donated their services or products have all somehow been touched by the Abilities First mission or has had a personal connection. Weeds and Willows donated corsages and boutonnieres in memory of a staff's family member who received services from Abilities First. Other donations have included catering services from Michael's Restaurant in Wappingers Falls, a balloon arch from Finishing Touches, and a photo booth from Broadway Photo Booth. Poughkeepsie Elks Lodge #275, through a grant has again generously donated the venue, the DJ and a monetary contribution. The Arlington Central School District, Beacon City School District, Marlboro Central School District, Millbrook Central School District, Poughkeepsie City School District, Wappingers Central School District, and Poughkeepsie First Student kindly provided transportation for the students.

"The prom is one of our best events. It is our third year of sponsoring. We received financial support through a grant from the Grand Lodge. We know Abilities First appreciates our involvement and the look on the students' faces makes it a winner," said John Kesselmark, of the Poughkeepsie Elks Lodge and Chairman of the Abilities First School Prom Committee.

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About Abilities First School

The Abilities First School has over 100 students, ages 5-21 years old, from 22 school districts throughout Dutchess, Orange, Greene, Putnam and Ulster Counties. The Abilities First School, located in LaGrange, N.Y., includes 9 classrooms equipped with instructional technology, adaptive physical education space, and clinical space for therapies. Additional classrooms are hosted within the Red Hook School District.

The Abilities First School has been providing educational and therapeutic services for over 50 years to students that have one or more of the following disabilities and are, therefore, unable to attend public school: cerebral palsy; ADHD; seizure disorders; autism spectrum disorders; developmental delays; hearing, vision or sensory impairments; genetic, neurological, chromosomal, or progressive disorders; and behavioral intervention requirements. Additionally, some of the students require nursing services to monitor their daily needs.

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.