



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

MEDIA ALERT

December 2, 2015

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Abilities First School Opens its Doors

Ribbon Cutting Held in LaGrange, NY for State of the Art School for Students with Developmental Disabilities

LaGrange, N.Y. – The new Abilities First School opened its doors to the community on Wednesday, December 2, 2015. Abilities First, along with the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce, held a ribbon cutting and donor recognition event at the School's new home at 24 Firemens Way, Poughkeepsie, NY. The School has 83 students and 9 classrooms equipped with instructional technology, adaptive physical education space, a fully outfitted sensory gym and clinical space for therapies. Students attended classes at the new location for the first time on Monday, November 30.

The new Abilities First School features:

- Increased footprint of the Sensory Motor Gym enabling improved therapeutic interventions for students
- Each classroom has a cutting edge SMART Board allowing teachers interactive lessons and access to internet resources
- A daily living skills training area complete with a full kitchen, washer-dryer, and other resources for functional living skills training
- Bathrooms equipped with aids for self-care skills
- Student computers with adaptive keyboards to assist in learning
- Added space that allows opportunities for teaching more independent daily living skills
- Secure building that is beautifully designed and equipped for students with special needs

"I am proud and honored to be the Principal in this newly designed building, offering a state of the art education for our students, said Libby Faison, Abilities First School Principal. "I am extremely grateful to our team who has developed create this environment so our students can reach their greatest potential."

The Abilities First School has operated in Poughkeepsie for the past 35 years. Abilities First, a not-for-profit organization, provides services to over 1,200 developmentally disabled individuals, aged pre-school through adulthood, including students from 22 school districts throughout in Dutchess, Orange, Green, Putnam and Ulster Counties. The Abilities First School enrollment totals 102 including students at Red Hook Elementary, Middle, and High School.

The \$1.2M construction project was funded by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the New York State Division of Budget (NYSDOB). Redesign of the Page Management Partners property was developed by Poughkeepsie based Mauri Architects PC, with renovations completed by Mid-Hudson Construction Management.

Through generous contributions from the community, the Abilities First Future Steps Education Campaign raised over \$225,000 to support the supplies and equipment needed by the students. The supporters of the Abilities First School were recognized with the unveiling of the donor wall, along with the following naming opportunities:

- Sensory Gym - M&T Bank
- Community Room & Gym – Rose & Kiernan, Inc.
- Café & Training Kitchen – Kearney Realty & Development Group
- Nurse’s Office – 2015 – 2016 Abilities First Board of Directors
- Lobby – The Students and Staff of the Abilities First School
- Classroom #1 – David & Lynn Melby
- Classroom #4 – Monticello Motor Club

Abilities First will continue its fundraising efforts in order to install a fully accessible and adaptive playground on school grounds where all kids of all abilities can play together. Contributions or the purchase of playground equipment are welcomed from the community through its Abilities First Playground Campaign at www.AbilitiesFirstNY.org. For further information on how you can support the Campaign, please contact Melissa McCoy at 845.485.9803 x 223.

Abilities First Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Jeffery Fox, said, “From our Preschool in Wappingers Falls, to our Universal Prekindergarten program that launched in 2014, which enabled children of all abilities to learn together, and now a cutting edge school for students age 5 through 21, Abilities First continues to strive to create equal educational opportunities for children with developmental and intellectual disabilities that they deserve.

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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.

Photos:

Sensory Gym at the new Abilities First School which was generously donated by M&T Bank.



Abilities First Staff along with Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Frank M. Castella, Jr. at the Abilities First School Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Wednesday, December 2, 2015.

