



MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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School for Students with Developmental Disabilities Opens in New Windsor

New Windsor, N.Y. (October 9, 2018) – The theme of the ribbon cutting for the Abilities First School at the Straus Family Pavilion was “It Takes a Village.” Abilities First along with local leaders, families of the students and community partners came together to celebrate the opening of the new school that will serve up to 40 students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 5-21, from 14 school districts throughout the Hudson Valley. Formerly the Devitt’s Medical Arts Building, the School is located at 59 Windsor Highway in New Windsor and houses 6 classrooms equipped with instructional technology, a sensory gym, and clinical spaces for therapies. Students will transition into the new space on Friday, October 12, 2018.

In 2016, Ari Straus toured the Abilities First School in LaGrange. That pivotal day was a catalyst in what became a 2 year project to create a school for children with disabilities in Orange County a reality. The newly renovated building was dedicated as the Straus Family Pavilion in honor of the \$3.2 M gift of the building from Ari Straus and Dr. Marc Straus and the Straus family’s interest, generosity and commitment to making the community a better place.

“While today, we recognize the gift of this building, I’d like to note that the Straus family continues to extend their interest and support to the mission through their support of fundraising initiatives, to extending their significant presence in the international art world, through Marc Straus Galleries and the Hudson Valley Museum for Contemporary Art, through the donation of world-class art, their expertise and resources, as we plan for a center for art and exploration for our folks and the community to engage and explore,” Melissa McCoy, Chief Advancement Officer for Abilities First.

Senator William Larkin was instrumental in securing a \$30,000 grant for smart board technology in the classrooms at the Abilities First School. Smart technology takes learning beyond traditional methods and helps to bridge the gap for those who have challenges learning in traditional settings including those who may be visually or hearing impaired.

Other community partners including Rifton Equipment and Lowe’s Heroes, volunteers based at the Newburgh store, were also acknowledged. Rifton Equipment, the Ulster County-based adaptive equipment manufacturer, donated professional services to repaint and repair the Straus Family Pavilion. Volunteers from the Lowe’s Home Improvement store in Newburgh spent over 8 hours landscaping the Straus Family Pavilion property. Lowe’s also donated paint for the exterior renovations. Both will be honored at the organization’s Signature Event on Friday, October 19, 2018, at Heritage Food + Drink for their support of the Abilities First mission.

Also, announced was the expansion of preschool services by Abilities First into Orange County thanks to an additional \$245,000 from Senator Larkin. Once fully occupied, the 42,000 square foot facility will include four preschool classrooms for 32 students as well as the Abilities First School, corporate offices, and tenant spaces. An Open House is scheduled for October 15, 2018, from 8:00 am - 3:30 pm at 336 Hudson Street, Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY 12520 for those interested in preschool services. For more information, parents can contact Sue Rea or Leann Coyle at 845-275-0454 or 845-298-2090.

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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 1,500 children and adults throughout the Hudson Valley region of New York State. Abilities First is accredited for 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.

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Photos



Melissa McCoy, Chief Advancement Officer for Abilities First, honors the Straus family with the dedication of the building as the Straus family Pavilion.



Abilities First along with members of the community come together to celebrate the ribbon cutting of the Abilities First School at the Straus Family Pavilion.