

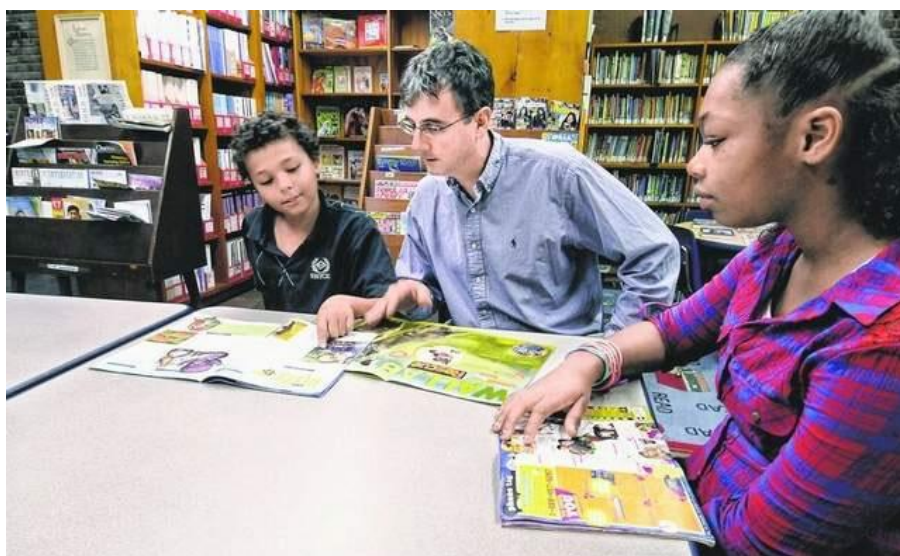
Astor Services for Children & Families wins Dutchess Business Excellence Award

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Written by

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Brendan Sullivan, Astor Services director of admissions and consumer relations, talks with students Devon, 9, and Maya, 11, this month in the library at the nonprofit's Rhinebeck campus. / Photo by Kathy McLaughlin/For the Poughkeepsie Journal

RHINEBECK — Astor Services for Children & Families, a well-known nonprofit name in Dutchess County, has an impact that is substantial both in helping people and in helping the economy.

So the agency has been named winner of the Business Excellence Award for nonprofits by the Dutchess County Economic Development Corp.

Astor, previously known as the Astor Home, employs about 800 people, with 667

of them based in Dutchess County, where about 4,500 people benefit from its services.

James McGuirk, executive director and CEO, explains the mission: "From our beginning, our founders have been committed to providing a level of care and treatment and education to those people who typically have not had the support or who have lived on the fringes, or kids who have suffered from emotional or behavioral difficulties. We've always been committed to excellence."

Astor has created a "wide range of employment," McGuirk said.

"The jobs range from entry-level positions to highly educated, master's-level and Ph.D-level and M.D.-level staff."

McGuirk said the organization has an annual budget "in the neighborhood of \$50 million." About 95 percent of that comes from public funds. Sources include federal Head Start, Early Head Start and

Medicaid as well as contracts involving state money that typically come through counties or local school districts.

The rest is charitable support. Sonia Barnes-Moorhead, executive vice president of the affiliated Childrens Foundation of Astor, is in charge of that aspect.

"We have an annual campaign, and several appeals within the campaign. We are fortunate to be supported by some of our local foundations as well," she said. The Dyson Foundation "has been a huge supporter of our early childhood program," she noted as one example.

Some work is funded by United Way, now United Way of the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Astor is affiliated with Catholic Charities, a division of the Archdiocese of New York.

Astor was formed in 1953 as an experimental program to try to keep kids out of state psychiatric hospitals, he said. It has broadened its scope, but still remains headquartered in Rhinebeck though its service area is spread quite a bit farther. It has 34 sites in the Hudson Valley and in the Bronx.

The main campus at Rhinebeck is about to be expanded. A groundbreaking ceremony is set for noon on Tuesday at the Residential Programs Facility, 6339 Mill St., when Astor will begin replacing the living quarters for children in the Residential Treatment Program.

Children ages 5 through 13 live there to get treatment for severe emotional disturbances or mental illness. There are 20 children in the program and the number will stay the same.

"The current living spaces in our historic Rhinebeck location have been retrofitted over the past 50 years and are not fully meeting the needs of the children any longer," McGuirk said.

The 10,000-square-foot space will be built by Kirchhoff-Consigli Construction Management.

Andrea Reynolds, who is president and CEO of the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley, is an admirer of Astor.

"While their programs run from Albany to the Bronx, their presence in Dutchess County is county-wide. Through their partnerships with schools and other nonprofits, Astor provides a wide array of services, including counseling, residential treatment, community-based behavioral and prevention services, and early childhood development programs," she said.

Calling Astor a homegrown nonprofit with a large impact, Reynolds said, "Astor quietly goes about its work, yet touches thousands of lives every year."

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