



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## ABILITIES FIRST FULLY ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND GETS \$100,000 BOOST FROM SERINO

SUSAN SERINO August 21, 2017



POUGHKEEPSIE, NY—A local non-profit dedicated to empowering community members diagnosed with developmental and intellectual disabilities, Abilities First, Inc. has recently embarked on a campaign to build a fully accessible playground to enhance the health and well-being of the over 100 students they serve. Today, that effort received a \$100,000 boost when Senator Sue Serino announced that she successfully secured funds to bolster the project through the state's Economic Development Assistance Program (EDAP).

*“Abilities First goes above and beyond to ensure that our neighbors with disabilities have the tools they need to live their lives to the fullest,” said Senator Serino. “Playgrounds play a critical role in shaping the experiences of children of all ages. No child should have to forego making those memories because they are challenged by a disability. I am proud to have played a role in securing funds that will assist in making this fully accessible playground a reality and help Abilities First fulfill their mission of empowering those they serve to reach their full potential.”*

*“We are incredibly grateful to New York State Senator Sue Serino for securing the funding for the children and their playground,” said Abilities First Chief Advancement Officer Melissa McCoy. “This grant has been joined by over 300 other generous gifts, and pushed us over the edge in reaching the \$200,000 fundraising goal. Additional funds will be directed to playground enhancements, which would not otherwise have been realized.”*

In December of 2015, Abilities First opened a new school in Poughkeepsie—a private special education school under the auspices of the New York State Education Department.

With the move to a new facility, the student population has found itself without any outdoor play space, with the exception of an unshaded blacktop area behind the building. Previously, the students enjoyed access to walking/biking path, green spaces, adaptive play equipment, and interactive devices that played a critical role in meeting the unique needs of the students.

The previous playground not only helped children to develop invaluable life-skills at their own pace, it played a key role in enhancing the health and well-being of the students who require assistance and repetitiveness to learn tasks, use of muscles, cognitive understanding of motion, and socialization, amongst other significant therapeutic and growth experiences.

In July of 2016, Abilities First embarked on a funding campaign to make the fully accessible playground a reality. Prior to the grant they had raised \$125,000 of their \$200,000 goal.

Recently, they launched the first phase of the project and funding secured by Senator Serino will ensure that they can see the project through to completion. The playground is slated to

be open for student use in September of this year.