

Register-Star

Friday, December 5, 2008

Robert Ragani/Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

Kinderhof Group Home residents hang a new sign outside the home on Route 203 in Valatie Monday, replacing the one that has hung outside the home for 25 years. The sign change marked the 25th anniversary of the group home, which is operated by the Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth, during an open house there. Directing the young men at left is Gail Colton, coordinator of house management for Berkshire Farms.



VALATIE

25 years of service

Kinderhof Group Home marks anniversary

By Simona David
Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

The Kinderhof Group Home in Valatie celebrated its 25th anniversary Monday with an open house for families, friends and community members. The Kinderhof Group Home opened in 1983 as part of the Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth.

The Berkshire Farm Center was created in 1886 by Burnham family, whose intention

was to bring city youth to the farm and teach them how to live healthy and productive lives. Currently, the Center has five residential group homes in New York, located in Columbia, Clinton, Madison, Monroe and Washington counties.

Tim Giacchetta, the new CEO at Berkshire Farm Center, said that Berkshire has a great history of almost 130 years and was started to provide opportunities to homeless youngsters wandering on the streets of New York City. He said that youngsters were

Please see Home, page A12

This story about the Kinderhof Group Home's 25th anniversary and open house appeared in the Hudson Register-Star and the Chatham Courier.

The media alert sent to reporters is shown below.



MEDIA ALERT

BERKSHIRE FARM CENTER & SERVICES FOR YOUTH
13640 Route 22, Canaan, NY 12029
Tel. 518-781-4567

CONTACT: Keith Toomey 518-781-4567 ext. 2542 – ktoomey@berkshirefarm.org

Berkshire Farm Center's Kinderhof Group Home – Open House – 25 years of serving children in need

Open House - tour, photo/video ops, comments from group home staff and residents and Berkshire Farm Center's new CEO, Tim Giacchetta

DATE Monday, Dec. 1, 2008
TIME 4:00pm - 6:00pm
PLACE 3433 Route 203, Valatie, NY 12184

The Kinderhof Group Home is celebrating its 25th anniversary with an open house on Monday, Dec. 1, 2008. Media representatives are welcome between 3:30 and 6:30pm. If you need to schedule a different time, please call Keith Toomey (518-781-4567 ext. 2542 or email ktoomey@berkshirefarm.org).

The Kinderhof Group home features a family atmosphere and home setting for its 12 residents, boys aged 14-18 years. Some staff and residents are available for interview.

Tim Giacchetta (“Jee’-uh-keh’-uh”), the new CEO at Berkshire Farm Center, will be on hand to speak about the agency’s new direction and plans for the future. This will be a convenient and visually rich setting for interviews.

ABOUT BERKSHIRE FARM CENTER (www.berkshirefarm.org)

Berkshire Farm Center & Services for Youth, founded 122 years ago, is a not-for-profit corporation that provides specialized services to at-risk children and their families. Nearly 3,000 boys and girls, from newborn to 21 years of age, are served each year in Community-Based Programs. These children typically have been struggling with behavioral and emotional difficulties, family problems, physical and emotional abuse, substance abuse, and other problems. In addition to these programs, Berkshire’s Residential Treatment Center in Canaan, New York serves some 600 young men with similar problems each year. They come from urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout New York State. Berkshire’s Canaan campus comprises some 2,000 acres. The agency has regional and district offices around the state, as well as additional satellite locations.

NEWS

www.registerstar.com

Friday, December 5, 2008

Home

Continued from page A1

brought up to the farm “to learn professions, to feel loved, to feel cared for and to learn hope.” He said that the boys were taught that they worth something and they had an opportunity in life to do something.

Since that time, Giacchetta said Berkshire has grown into a very large, multi-services agency and the group homes are a critical, very important part of it. He said that the Kinderhof Home has served more than 400 kids in its 25 years of existence and has been able to provide quality services thanks to its committed staff.

Paul Mossman, Columbia County Social Services commissioner, was also present at the ceremony. He said that “creating and having a community-based program such as this is so vital to the community.” He said that Berkshire has had success in Columbia County and that local communities can truly rely on services like these. Mossman thanked those present for their work and commitment and wished them luck for the next 25 years.

The Kinderhof Group Home provides 24-hour staff supervision and structured treatment for teenage boys, ages 12 to 18, whose personal, social, developmental or family situations preclude them from living at home or in a less restrictive setting.

The house has five bedrooms and three bathrooms upstairs, a homey kitchen and dining-room, as well as a living room and library downstairs.

Using the Berkshire Model of Care and Treatment, the Kinderhof Group Home team builds on each individual’s potential through daily interaction with the youngsters to reinforce their positive behavior and successful reintegration in society. The boys also participate in group counseling sessions twice a week, where they are being taught independent living, social skills, anger management, discharge planning, planned parenthood and grief and loss. Academic tutoring services are provided in the home four days a week to assist the boys in meeting their educational goals. All the boys attend the Ichabod Crane Central School District, participate in sports and clubs and do volunteer work for the community. Currently, 11 boys reside in the house, which can accommodate up to 12.

Jerry Smith, coordinator of Clinical Services, has been at Kinderhof for three years, but has worked with Berkshire Farm Center for 26 years. He counsels the boys residing at Kinderhof, but also keeps in contact with their families, social services and the court, when needed. Smith said he “oversees all the things that are going on in [each boy’s]

case.” He writes reports, files extensions with the police in court and schedules outside counseling, when specialized counseling is needed. Smith interacts daily with the boys, except for those days when he has to be in court.

Once a week, the staff has its regular meeting to discuss how the boys are doing and whether they have encountered any difficulties or not. Smith said that the Kinderhof staff works closely with the school district to make sure that the boys are doing fine. He said that the staff is in constant communication with the school to schedule new residents’ enrollment, bus pick up, special education meetings and other activities.

Smith explained that Kinderhof residents are being taught independent living skills, such as cooking their own meals, doing their laundry and cleaning the house. Each week, two boys are assigned to kitchen duty and they do the cooking with staff supervision. The house chores change every week, which Smith said is part of a motivational system which teaches youngsters to be self-reliant.

At Kinderhof, staff working closely with residents have succeeded to create a pretty “homey environment,” Smith said. “I feel really good about what Berkshire Farm accomplishes and the programs the youngsters are

involved in.” He said that the boys aren’t really spending a long time at Kinderhof because the program is very effective in making a lot of changes really quickly.

Gail Colton, coordinator of House Management, along with Smith oversees the youth in the program and makes sure their needs are properly accommodated. Colton said she talks to the boys every morning before they go to school. She helps create a family atmosphere and home setting at Kinderhof and oversees staffing, budgeting and event planning. At the open house Dec. 1, one could not help but notice that the boys regard Colton with the deference and respect she deserves and look to her for advice when they need it.

Giacchetta said that Berkshire has more than 25 different types of programs spread all over the state. Among those, he mentioned preventive services for kids in communities, home-based foster care, group homes, such as Kinderhof, and residential facilities. He said that many adolescents come to these homes after being abused or neglected, so they feel like nobody cares about them. In group homes, professional staff work with the youngsters to build trust and show that somebody does care about them.