

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Berkshire Farm Center awarded \$2.75 million grant to fund its new “BEST” program
at its Residential Treatment Center**
Funding from the NY State Education Department

Canaan, New York – Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth has been awarded a five-year, 2.75 million dollar grant from the New York State Education Department to fund Berkshire’s new BEST Program (“Berkshire Enrichment, Support and Training”). The BEST Program will provide an array of creative, non-traditional after-school and weekend activities designed to broadly enrich each student’s overall educational experience while residing at the residential campus in Canaan, New York. The goal of the new program is to help students succeed in school and ultimately in their respective communities. Berkshire expects students actively participating in the BEST program to show significant gains in school grades, social skills, and decision making.

Funding for BEST comes from the U.S. Education Department’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, administered in New York by the New York State Education Department. This program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment and positive youth development opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty schools. The program also helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects such as reading, math, and English. It also offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs as well as educational services to the families of participating youth. Of the nearly 400 applicants for 21st Century Grant awards, the State Education Department awarded grants to only 60 organizations, and the majority of those are in New York City.

Gerry Hinman, Berkshire’s Coordinator of Therapeutic Recreation, says BEST will be an important enhancement of the Residential Treatment Center’s (RTC) programming. “BEST will help youth succeed while they are here as well as prepare them for a successful return to their homes, schools, and communities,” said Hinman. Boys at the RTC have struggled with academic challenges, poor school experiences, and emotional and family issues. The BEST Program is designed to address these challenges in a fun, educational, and enriching format. For example, a campus-based nature center coupled with cottage learning centers will provide a variety of academic enrichment activities for students, enabling them to explore the natural world and develop an appreciation for their environment while enhancing their science, math, and English skills. Special software will help students prepare for GED testing and provide other educational assistance and support. In addition, volunteers from local colleges and the community will tutor students needing additional one-on-one attention.

Tim Giacchetta, the President and CEO of Berkshire Farm Center said, “This funding will help us expand the educational horizons of our youth in ways that are fun and that will ultimately help them develop the educational and social skills they need to live independently and productively in their communities.”

ABOUT BERKSHIRE FARM CENTER (www.berkshirefarm.org)

Berkshire Farm Center & Services for Youth, founded 123 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 200 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, including group homes in Clinton, Columbia, Madison, Monroe, and Washington counties.

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