

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Berkshire Farm Center's Kinderhof Group Home holds open house to celebrate 25 years of serving children in need

Open House included Berkshire Farm Center's new CEO and the Commissioner of the Columbia County Department of Social Services

Valatie, New York – The Kinderhof Group Home, part of Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth, celebrated its 25th anniversary with an open house on Monday, Dec. 1, 2008.

The Kinderhof Group Home, located on Route 203 in Valatie, New York, features a family atmosphere and home setting for 12 boys, aged 12-18 years. It is one of five group homes operated by Berkshire Farm Center in New York State.

More than 50 people attended the open house, including Paul Mossman, Columbia County Commissioner for the Department of Social Services, who spoke about the partnership between the county and Berkshire Farm Center and the importance of facilities like the Kinderhof Group Home. "A vision began 25 years ago with the Kinderhof Group home," said Mr. Mossman, "and the home has become a genuine asset to our community." Mossman noted the many programs provided by Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth. "Berkshire Farm Center has and continues to be a valuable resource not only to Columbia County, but also to the State of New York," he said.

Timothy Giacchetta, Berkshire Farm Center's CEO, said the agency has changed quite a bit since it was founded more than 120 years ago. "Berkshire's original mission was to provide opportunities to homeless youngsters wandering the streets of New York City," he said. "Over the years, Berkshire Farm Center has become a leading, multi-services agency that helps thousands of children and families across New York State, and group homes are a very important part of our services." He explained that the Kinderhof Group Home has served more than 400 youth over the past 25 years, providing quality services in a caring environment. "Thanks to the dedicated staff at the Kinderhof Home, children who are not able to remain in their own homes can live in a safe and caring place with people who genuinely care about them," Giacchetta said.

Gail Colton, the group home's Coordinator of House Management, said everyone at the home work together to create a family atmosphere and home setting. "I talk to the boys before they go to school each morning," said Colton. "It's important that we maintain a family atmosphere, and that the boys know we are here for them."

Kinderhof Group Home staff received certificates of appreciation for the dedication and hard work, and some of the young men installed a new sign in front of the home. The sign is a replica of the original sign installed in 1983, when the home first opened.

Also on hand was Harold Novick, the former Executive Director of Berkshire Farm Center, who helped to create the Kinderhof Group Home. "It took plenty of effort by a lot of people to get this started," said Mr. Novick, "but it was certainly worth it."

It appears to have been worth it to 16-year-old Malcolm, a resident at the home, who says he has learned a lot while there. "I've learned about the value of family," said Malcolm. "I've learned how to get along with other people, and I've learned how to listen to people." He added, "I'm glad I came here."

ABOUT THE KINDERHOF GROUP HOME

The Kinderhof Group Home provides a 24-hour staff-supervised and structured treatment environment for males between the ages of 12 and 18, whose personal, social, developmental, or family situations preclude them from living at home or in a less restrictive setting. Youth from the group home attend the Ichabod Crane Central School District in Valatie. They are encouraged to become involved in sports, clubs, perform volunteer work in the community, and attain employment locally. Some of the group home residents who have completed high school attend Columbia-Green Community College and could attend any local college or trade school.

The Group Home Treatment Team uses the Berkshire Model of Care and Treatment, which builds on each youth's strengths, using "teachable moments" throughout the day to reinforce their positive behaviors.

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, including group homes in Clinton, Columbia, Madison, Monroe, and Washington counties.