

Mary Nichols Finds 'Soul Work' At Astor Services In Dutchess

[Kathy Reakes](#) 05/15/2016



Mary Nichols Photo Credit: *Contributed photo*

RHINEBECK, N.Y. -- For Mary Nichols, a research and outcomes psychologist with Astor Services for Children & Families in Rhinebeck, helping children with mental health issues is "soul work."

"With children we have more time to make a difference, inspire hope and healing, and to prevent the mental illnesses of adulthood from even beginning to take shape," Nichols said. "Families need skills and support to raise healthy, happy children in today's world, and to work toward that aim is a meaningful effort."

Nichols is hoping to help remove the stigma of mental health problems, especially in children, during May, which is Mental Health Awareness month.

"There is a lot we can do to remove the stigma associated with mental illness in children. Mental health professionals and educators need to stop blaming parents and instead teach them skills, support them, and empower them be advocates for their children with mental health concerns," she said. "As parents, we need to learn what services are available to address children's needs, and to join together to support other parents. As a society, we need to remember that stigma affects all of us, and work toward building educational and health care systems that promote the health of the whole child and celebrate their strengths."

Nichols came to Astor in 2009 to pursue a doctoral psychology internship, where she provided psychotherapy and psychological assessment services to children and adolescents in the residential and outpatient programs and never left. Since joining the staff, she has done research, program evaluation, clinical consultation, supervision and training in various agency programs.

Astor Services for Children & Families is a community based, non-profit organization that provides children's mental health services, child welfare services, and early childhood development programs. Astor serves children and families in New York State's Mid-Hudson Valley region and the Bronx.

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