

Jeffrey Dean Morgan helping renovate Astor in Rhinebeck

John W. Barry , Poughkeepsie Journal Published 1:11 p.m. ET April 11, 2017 |

Actors Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Hilarie Burton help lead the renovations at the Astor Services for Children and Families in Rhinebeck. Ricky Flores/lohud



Jeffrey Dean Morgan talks about The Walking Dead, zombies and his role in the famed series. Ricky Flores/Poughkeepsie Journal



Actors and Pleasant Valley residents Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Hilarie Burton discuss the renovation project they are coordinating at Astor Services for Children & Families in Rhinebeck. Video by Ricky Flores/Poughkeepsie Journal Wochit



Video: Actors Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Hilarie Burton help lead Astor renovations



Video: Jeffrey Dean Morgan on The Walking Dead, Zombies and his role in the series



Video: Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Hilarie Burton and Astor Services



(Photo: Ricky Flores/Poughkeepsie Journal)

He developed an affinity for the Hudson Valley while filming a movie with [Jane Fonda](#) here in 2010.

In the process of making “Peace, Love & Misunderstanding,” he was introduced to Rhinebeck.

Actor [Jeffrey Dean Morgan](#), known most recently for television’s “The Walking Dead,” was so taken with Rhinebeck that he purchased a home nearby, in Pleasant Valley. And in 2014, Morgan, his wife Hilarie Burton and actor Paul Rudd were part of a group that purchased [Samuel’s Sweet Shop](#) in Rhinebeck.

[SAMUEL’S SWEET SHOP: Paul Rudd and Jeffrey Dean Morgan help keep Rhinebeck sweet shop.](#)

Morgan and Burton are continuing to immerse themselves in the community fabric of northern Dutchess County through a renovation project they are coordinating at [Astor Services for Children & Families](#) in Rhinebeck.

“Not only did they move to the community, but they basically adopted the community,” said Astor Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer James McGuirk.

Photos: Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Hilarie Burton in Rhinebeck



Ricky Flores/The Journal News

Fullscreen







The couple is coordinating the renovation of eight rooms at Astor, which are home to 11 children. Morgan and Burton have brought to the project contractors and companies involved with work on their own home — [Williams Lumber](#) among them — and are now donating their time and services for the Astor project.

Morgan called the initiative, "...a great opportunity for us to kind of give back to the community that, obviously, we love."

Since 1953, Astor has provided behavioral and educational services for children, some of whom have suffered trauma and psychiatric illness, and their families.

Morgan and Burton were at Astor Tuesday to discuss the project. The work is scheduled for April 19-21.



Jeffrey Dean Morgan talks about The Walking Dead, zombies and his role in the famed series. Ricky Flores/Poughkeepsie Journal

Regarding the donations from companies and contractors, Morgan said, “The outpouring from this community has been amazing.”

Morgan and Burton, an actress who appeared on television’s “One Tree Hill,” are among numerous celebrities who call the Hudson Valley home and maintain strong ties to the region.

Actor [James Earl Jones](#) lives in Pawling. Actress [Melissa Leo](#) lives in Stone Ridge. Rocker [Daryl Hall](#) of [Hall and Oates](#) is a former Dutchess resident who operates a [music venue and restaurant](#) in Pawling.

And screenwriter [John Gatins](#), whose credits include “Flight,” “Power Rangers” and “Kong: Skull Island,” owns a home in Dutchess.



Buy Photo

Actors Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Hilarie Burton are leading efforts to renovate the Astor Services for Children and Families in Rhinebeck on Apr. 11, 2017. The renovations will start with the 4 existing wings of the facility with the goal to raise funds to build a whole new wing. (Photo: Ricky Flores/Poughkeepsie Journal)

Astor Services for Children & Families has its own notoriety. It can be traced back to the early 1900s, when the Astor family opened the site for children with tuberculosis. That facility was opened in memory of John Jacob Astor of Rhinebeck, who died on the [Titanic](#).

The organization is based in Rhinebeck and operates throughout Dutchess and Ulster counties, as well as in the Bronx.

Morgan said the couple's involvement with Astor began with a curiosity regarding the building and what transpired inside. That led them to a friend who was involved with the Families for Astor Committee, a fundraising organization.

An informal discussion followed at Samuel's Sweet Shop, then a visit by Morgan and Burton to Astor. That led to Morgan and Burton participating in a fundraiser held last year at Bard College in Annandale.

"Ghostories," a storytelling event, also featured Dutchess County resident [Mary Stuart Masterson](#) and actor and producer Griffin Dunne, and raised more than \$27,000 for Astor. Future fundraisers are planned.



Buy Photo

Actress Hilary Burton and her husband, fellow actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan, are leading efforts to renovate the Astor Services for Children and Families in Rhinebeck on Apr. 11, 2017. The renovations will start with the 4 existing

wings of the facilities with the goal to raise funds to build a whole new wing. (Photo: Ricky Flores/Poughkeepsie Journal)

McGuirk said that Morgan and Burton, while visiting Astor, saw that the living quarters needed “significant upgrades.”

The money raised through “Ghostories” is now being used for the renovations and will be applied to future projects at Astor. McGuirk lauded Morgan and Burton for developing a strong relationship with Astor and, in particular, getting to know the children.

“I am so appreciative of what they’re doing,” he said. “Doing this work for the kids is critically important. But really, what’s been very nice to watch, is the way in which they interact with the kids. They’re very natural. The kids get excited when they see them.”

Electric work, light fixtures, new furniture, painting, kitchen renovations, new rugs and new bedding are among the areas targeted by the current project. Burton said the children were consulted on their favorite colors, sports teams and cartoon characters and each was used to shape the project.



Buy Photo

Actors Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Hilarie Burton are leading efforts to renovate the Astor Services for Children and Families in Rhinebeck on Apr. 11, 2017. The renovations will start with the 4 existing wings of the facility with the goal to raise funds to build a whole new wing. (Photo: Ricky Flores/Poughkeepsie Journal)

The average cost to spruce up each room is \$250, said Sonia Barnes-Moorehead, executive vice president of the Children’s Foundation of Astor.

Burton said she is directly involved with the project and is taking cues from her 7-year-old son when deciding on upgrades.

Speaking of the children at Astor, Burton said, "We're excited for them to come into a new space and know that every person that worked on it did it because we value them and we value the experience that they're having here and the futures that they're building for themselves."

Asked if he'll be swinging a hammer, Morgan said, "I'm going to be entertaining the kids."

John W. Barry: jobarry@poughkeepsiejournal.com, 845-437-4822, Twitter: @JohnBarryPoJo

Jeffrey Dean Morgan and "The Walking Dead"

Television's "The Walking Dead," according to the Internet Movie Database, revolves around life during a "zombie apocalypse."

Morgan plays the character Negan, who relies on a baseball bat for a weapon. And he will be back to work filming in a week.

"I think people connect with the characters," Morgan said. "I think the backdrop is what got the viewers initially in. I think people were fascinated to see the zombies and that whole deal and the apocalyptic nature of it. But I think what keeps them... is following the characters."

He continued, "It's about relationships. It's not as much about zombies as it is about these relationships with people. I think that's what keeps people watching. That's what kept me watching. I was a fan of the show before I was on it."

John W. Barry: jobarry@poughkeepsiejournal.com, 845-437-4822, Twitter: @JohnBarryPoJo