

Paul Rudd surprises crowd at Astor Services' 'Ghost Stories'

[Jack Howland](#), Poughkeepsie Journal

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Video: Hilarie Burton and Jeffrey Dean Morgan open Ghost Stories | 2:51

Actors, married couple, and Dutchess County residents Hilarie Burton and Jeffrey Dean Morgan host the annual Ghost Stories, a benefit event for Astor Services for Children & Families at Bard College. Alex H.



VIDEOS: CELEBRITIES FUNDRAISE FOR ASTOR SERVICES AT GHOST STORIES EVENT

Video: Hilarie Burton reads spooky tale at Ghost Stories | 8:20

Actor Hilarie Burton reads a spooky tale at Ghost Stories, a benefit event for Astor Services for Children & Families held at Bard College. Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal
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Video: Tarot cards spell good luck for Paul Rudd--sort of | 2:03

While participating in Ghost Stories, Paul Rudd asked tarot card reader Marcy Currier about his future career. Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal



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Actor Hilarie Burton talks about how much of an impact the money raised through Ghost Stories will help Astor Services. Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal
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(Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)

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ANNANDALE - With about 30 minutes left until showtime, actors Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Paul Rudd were backstage, looking over the evening's spooky material.

Hilarie Burton, the actress and former host of MTV's "Total Request Live," said Morgan — her husband — and Saturday night's surprise guest had just flown in from Atlanta for the second annual Ghost Stories event benefiting Astor Services for Children and Families campus in Rhinebeck. Burton and Morgan have taken on the task of renovating the aging house off Route 9 while raising their 7-year-old son in Rhinebeck.



While participating in Ghost Stories, Paul Rudd asked tarot card reader Marcy Currier about his future career. Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal

As Rudd and Morgan prepared Saturday night, Burton spoke about her hopes to fund improvements that “give the kids something beautiful” with the assistance of the “Ant-Man” and “I Love You, Man” star Rudd.

[PREVIEW: Ghost Stories tickets on sale with Walking Dead's Morgan, actress Burton](#)

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“He moved his entire schedule around so he could be here, and he works insane hours. So he and Jeff flew up from Atlanta last night, very late — and that’s why people move to this town,” she told the Journal. “Because it’s all like-mindedness. It’s showing up. And he’s such a good friend, and him showing up means a lot to us.”

The trio of celebrities were joined by kids receiving Astor’s mental health or residential services in a night filled with lighthearted scares, impromptu jokes and praises of the old-but-improving home in Rhinebeck.



Actors Hilarie Burton and husband Jeffrey Dean Morgan open *Ghost Stories*, an event held at the at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College to benefit Astor Services for Children & Families. (Photo: Alex H. Wagner/*Poughkeepsie Journal*)

A sold-out crowd of hundreds packed into Bard College's Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, and Astor Chief Executive Officer Jim McGuirk estimated the event would raise about \$80,000 to transform and make over three wings in the Rhinebeck home.

The "full-moon edition" of *Ghost Stories*, as Burton called it, began with the introduction of Rudd — and a chorus of applause from the crowd.

"I've been here about 11 years... It's a spooky town, but it's such a great town," said Rudd, who co-owns Samuel's Sweet Shop in Rhinebeck with Morgan, Burton and others. "Great people, great community, great candy stores."

With the projected image of a full moon looming in the background, an array of people rose to tell stories to the crowd, from children relying on Astor Services to Hudson Valley medium Meta Marcy.

Burton told the tale of the tall and slender woman in black who wanders around Rhinebeck at night, hissing at those she meets. A woman sporting a black dress and a cluster of leaves in her hair wandered through the crowd as she spoke.

Marcy also responded to audience members' written questions using Tarot cards, and Rudd was quick to interject.

"Hilarie would like to ask you if I'm going to win an Academy Award," he said to laughter. "She's just too embarrassed to ask."

The idea for the annual fundraiser at Bard College, Morgan told the crowd, came when he and Burton met the children at Astor and heard them read their ghost stories aloud.



Actress and Dutchess County resident Hilarie Burton discusses Ghost Stories before the event at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College. *(Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)*

Burton said she grew up in a small town in “a very haunted Virginia” and remembers Halloween as a time when the community came together. The ghost stories event has had a similar effect at Astor, she said, as the kids have been penning their own creepy tales in creative writing courses since last year.

Burton, who is six months pregnant, said she and Morgan want to help the kids of Astor so they can set an example for their children.

“I want them to learn empathy and involvement,” she said. “We’re so lucky that Astor has decided to bring these kids who need such special attention to us. That’s a huge compliment to us. And so, if we don’t rise up and meet that challenge, then that’s also on us.”