

# Astor Family

Vol 7 Issue 1  
Spring 2018



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# *Astor Family*

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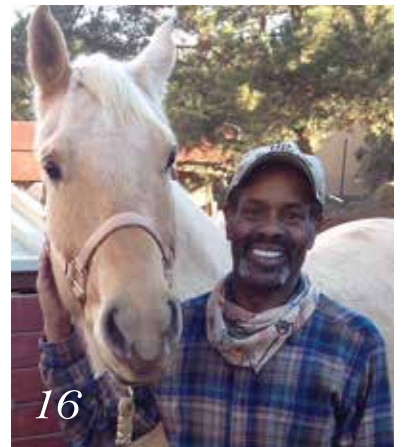
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## Dear Astor Family...

I have just finished reading your latest issue of *Astor Family*. I would love to learn more about Sasha Smith, the author of the poem *Mantra*. Her words had a tremendous impact on me. So much so, that I plan to read it at a Thanksgiving family gathering.

This issue appeared particularly significant in that it demonstrates the diversity of "community" and the commitment of the *Astor Family* to riding the tide of change.

Great issue!

Marianne Reilly Appel

*Editor's note:*

*Information on the poet, Sasha Smith, was forwarded.*



We would like to receive your feedback & suggestions. Please e-mail letters to Sonia Barnes-Moorhead, Publisher, Astor Family Magazine. E-mail: [smoorhead@astorservices.org](mailto:smoorhead@astorservices.org)

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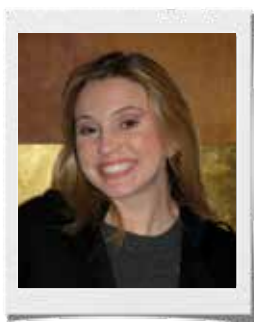
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### Jeannine D. Mendez

Jeannine is Astor's Director of Development, Public and Government Relations for the Bronx. Jeannine currently resides in the Bronx with her husband and three daughters.



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### Arletha Kirby, Ph.D.

Arletha is Clinical Director at The Lawrence F. Hickey Center for Child Development in the Bronx. She attended the New School for Social Research in New York and received a doctoral degree in Psychology.

If you would be interested in contributing to future issues of Astor Family, please contact Sonia Barnes-Moorhead - Publisher, Astor Services for Children & Families. Phone: (845) 871-1117 or e-mail: [smoorhead@astorservices.org](mailto:smoorhead@astorservices.org)



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*In Memory  
of our  
friend  
Jan Weido*



## Welcome

I have been a part of Astor's Lawrence F. Hickey Center for Child Development in the Bronx for more than 23 years and now serve as its Principal/Educational Director.

My journey throughout my time at Astor has been deeply rewarding.

I have been allowed to witness big and small "a-ha" moments as I see our children grow not only academically, but also socially.

Throughout this journey, play has been the foundation of our curriculum and an important part of each child's life. Our philosophy is that "children learn through play." Play helps children with everything from basic motor skills to empathy to the expression of emotions. It enhances their imagination, creativity, and curiosity.

With the knowledge we have about the imperative role of play in our children's lives, we couldn't be happier to share the news of a newly built therapeutic playground on our grounds, courtesy of KaBOOM! and the Walt Disney Company.

As we commemorate our 65th year of work with children and families, we have chosen this issue to celebrate some of the amazing people and stories connected to Astor. We will share a trio of stories that include a donor, a staff member, and a former student. Read about the entrepreneurial spirit of With You Locketts, an active donor and former committee member. Also read about a long time kitchen staff member with a huge heart, and an alumnus/donor who shares a personal experience during his time at Astor that guided him throughout his life. We hope this issue gives you some greater insight as to who Astor was and continues to be today.

I hope you enjoy your read, and we'd love to hear from you. Our all-volunteer magazine staff is continuously looking for ways to improve what we do, so please let us know what you think!

### Celesta Parisi

Principal, Educational Director  
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### ASTOR FAMILY MAGAZINE

Astor Family magazine furthers the mission of Astor Services for Children & Families. The unique combination of services Astor provides to its clients is the basis for a publication with two goals: to use Astor's experience with children and families under stress as guidelines of benefit to all the families in the region facing the challenges of raising children; and to draw upon the great strengths and assets of the region (i.e., Hudson Valley, New York City, etc.) to help families fully realize their values and goals. This free publication is distributed throughout the Hudson Valley (Dutchess, Ulster and Orange counties) and the Bronx at thousands of locations including doctor's offices, schools, libraries, retail locations, corporations, Astor's 33 locations, etc. The magazine reaches over 10,000 readers each issue.



by Kathleen Dingee

# Meet TJ Hessler

Astor's staff members serve our children and families with care, respect, and the highest degree of professional service. The collection of clinicians, nurses, childcare workers, educators, and all other staff is dedicated to the goal of ensuring that the children of Astor receive the childhood they deserve. We would like to introduce you to one such staff member, TJ Hessler, who goes above and beyond each day.

TJ, now age 60, has been working in the Rhinebeck Residence kitchen for 40 years and doesn't plan on stopping any time soon. He was born and raised in the Bronx and



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moved to the Hudson Valley in 1966. His mother, Mary Hessler, started working at Astor in 1970 as a "Group Mother," which led TJ to where he is today. As a senior in high school, he spent his weekends working at Astor. His job took off from there.

During the past 40 years, TJ has had perfect attendance. No matter the weather, he has made his way to work. Several years ago a blizzard hit the Hudson Valley and TJ was unable to shovel out his car that morning. He set off for the three-plus-mile hike to Astor on foot, leaving Rhinecliff at 6:30 a.m. He did not arrive to work until 8:30 a.m. TJ explained,

**"The snow was so high that I could not walk on the sidewalk. I knew the children had to eat, and that Astor's kitchen manager needed my help."**

With that kind of commitment to his work and the children, it's not surprising that when his manager is out, TJ is left in charge of

the kitchen, a position of responsibility that he feels honored to hold. More than that, he enjoys interacting with the children and staff who he considers to be family.

TJ tells how important his Astor family has been to him. "When my parents passed away, so many of my fellow workers shared their condolences," he said.

While TJ has a book full of wonderful memories from the last 40 years at Astor, his favorites are cooking on the grill at Camp Astor Day where children and staff stepped out of their daily routines and joined together as a family.

Four decades of dedication to Astor and the people it serves is a long time, but TJ continues to be excited about his future with the organization.

"God willing," he said, "I hope to make it to 50 years."

Astor is honored that TJ has chosen to spend those years with them.

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# Healing THROUGH PLAY

**Play is fun  
and exhilarating.**

**There is something  
liberating about  
play for children  
and adults alike.**

*by Arletha Kirby, Ph.D.*



Early philosopher Plato wrote that  
"It is the essential nature of man to play."

Play is a way for children to explore and learn about the world. It is understood that the language skills of a very young child are often beyond what they can verbally express. It is a natural thing for children to pick up toys, and toys become their words.

Play can be very therapeutic because it facilitates therapist's ability to join with the very young child through the use of toys and expressive activities to better understand, identify and try to resolve a wide range of social- emotional, behavioral, and other developmental issues.

Children use play as their earliest form of communication. They can give information about what they may be experiencing. It also helps children to work through processing emotions and feelings.

## The Concept of Play Therapy

Activities such as drawing, drumming, creative movement, and play permit individuals of all ages to express their thoughts and feelings in a manner that is different than strictly verbal means and have unique properties as interventions.

An excerpt from  
*Cultural Issues in Play Therapy*

Edited by Eliana Gil and Athena A. Drewes  
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Jim, Beth  
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For children who have emotional and behavioral problems, integrating play in their treatment is an important element of their therapy. The use of toys, stories, songs, games, and movement activities grab the childrens' attention and teach basic lessons like how to follow directions.

For example, in play therapy puppets can be used to act out some of the troubles that children may be experiencing. By speaking to a puppet, the children are able to problem solve for the puppet and in the process learn something about themselves.

While sessions of play therapy happen in a controlled space like a classroom or playroom, when possible it is beneficial to test the work being done in a real life setting



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such as a playground, where children have the opportunity to practice what they have learned in therapy with the support of an adult whom they trust.

Playgrounds can serve a multitude of functions that include exploration, honing motor skills, imaginative play, hand eye coordination, and a large array of social skills. A playground is critical in learning waiting turns, using kind words, good manners, saying sorry, and playing with others. It's celebrating their successes while helping them to experience failures as teachable moments.

Whether in a controlled space with a therapist and a puppet, or on the playground, play can be an invaluable tool to learning about who we are and who we can become.



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# WITH YOU LOCKETS - *a Legacy*



by Kimberley McGrath

**M**ikki Glass lost her father in 2002, after a short battle with brain cancer. What has evolved since his passing is With You Locketts, a legacy that has not only helped Mikki cope with her loss, but also helped many others do the same.

With You Locketts was born during the planning of Mikki's sister's wedding, three years after their father's death.



**"I wanted to include him in the wedding in some way that had significance," said Mikki. "Not like an empty chair or some other sentimental gesture," but as if he was there, in a private way."**

**"I came up with the idea of making her (Mikki's sister) an anklet with a locket enclosing him, so that he could walk her down the aisle."**

Later, when Mikki married her husband, Troy Haley, she also wore the anklet and has since recalled the strength she felt with that remembrance of her father on that day.

Troy, who had spent time in the military, had often discussed the idea of carrying the images of people on-hand to keep them close in moments of need, including those who haven't passed away. So, when Troy retired from the military, the couple decided the business of personalized lockets was something they could get behind in a personal and meaningful way. That business, With You Locketts, got its footing with a crowd-funding campaign in mid-2014, which raised \$43,000 in 30 days. By the end of the year the couple launched the business.



"We were a little naïve early on," Mikki said. "We were so susceptible to the dreamers' mistake of watching a show like Shark Tank, and then because we had so much passion, we thought that, of course we were going to be successful. But we had zero experience in the jewelry space—no idea how to do a trade show, or how to create trade show specials. We didn't even have order forms. But our booth looked good. It made us look bigger than we were."

After multiple iterations of their products, the couple learned how to realize their vision, figured out the mechanics of their business and redesigned their website. It worked. They recently opened shop in an old chocolate factory in Red Hook, New York, which keeps them close to their daughter, Olivia, and home.

They also keep their business local and personal in every way. Moving away from a

large commerce center and customizing each locket order may have been a departure from today's business trend, but the couple knows their business' success relies on their commitment to a small-scale, personal touch.

While Troy and Mikki have worked hard to maintain an intimate connection with their customers they have built a virtual business that rivals their largest competitors. Troy's facility for maximizing their online exposure has yielded phenomenal results at a fraction of the investment of some mega-jewelers. Looking big while maintaining boutique style service matched with high quality products distinguishes them from the crowd.

"Photo albums are one of those things that are the first thing you grab when you have a fire," said Mikki. "Those pictures are moments in time that are precious."

Troy said their connection with

their customers can become personal.

"We had someone whose mother had recently passed and when he opened the locket you could see a visceral reaction from him," he said.

"At first glance, our customers are like 'Oh it's so pretty. Oh it opens.' And then they open the locket to discover a picture of their loved one. We feel we are honoring those people who are in the lockets."

With You Locketts is growing by leaps and bounds, and it is clear this couple has created a model that has depth and longevity. Mikki and Troy's flexibility and strong belief in the business' origins sets them apart from their competitors.

Commitment to the integrity of their product, personal attention to each locket purchase, and the memory of a father are the recipe that's sure to continue the success of this venture.





*Mikki and Troy's 6 year-old daughter, Olivia is quite the young artist.*

## *The Next Generation*

Mikki and Troy's 6 year-old daughter, Olivia is trying her hand at Jewelry design. Olivia sketched a drawing of a locket. Mikki had a CAD rendering made from Olivia's sketch and the locket will be designed.

This locket will be called the Astor Locket in honor of Astor's 65th Anniversary. Proceeds will support Astor's art programs to inspire future artists.

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*Olivia's sketch of the Astor Locket*



*CAD Rendering made from Olivia's sketch*



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By looking at your overall health every day – both physically and mentally –  
you can go a long way in ensuring that you focus on your Fitness **#4Mind4Body**





by Maliha Khan

# The Healing Power *of* HORSES



**Harry Brown**

**Harry Brown was a young child in the 1950's when he was first introduced to horses in Astor's Residential Facility.**

He vividly recalls taking walks with his counselor at The Dutchess County Fairgrounds in Rhinebeck, NY, where they stumbled upon horse stables. As they would walk through the stables, the horses poked their heads out to see him and that's how he first remembers being introduced to horses. That moment helped to shape him into the man he is today.

The residence at Astor was a very different place than it is today. "The neighbors had donkeys that would wander onto Astor's property. I would watch the older boys catch them and try to ride them. When I got a little bit older, I finally got my chance at riding one," said Brown. He and his counselor began walking to the fairgrounds weekly where he was around horses on a regular basis. "It started off with me feeding sugar cubes and carrots," he recalls fondly.

One day, Harry was on one of his walks with his counselor and met a horse owner: “The owner of a horse asked me if I knew how to ride?” With his experience riding the donkeys, he exclaimed, “Sure!” with enthusiasm. “So they saddled me up on a thoroughbred, and got me on the racetrack, and I’ve been riding ever since,” said Brown.

Although now retired and living in California, Harry is still excited to see his horses. “Not just to see and ride them, but to care for them,” he says. For him, his horses are both a distraction and therapeutic relief. “I know I could easily sit around my living room and watch TV all day, but getting out with my horses provides a calming distraction,” Harry says. “When I am with my horses, I’m not thinking about chores or problems. Personal issues and serious matters don’t consume me.”

This calming effect is not just unique to Harry, but has proven to provide relief for many people when they spend time with horses. Cori Nichols, owner of Nichols Field Riding Club & Hudson Valley Horseplay in Kerhonkson, NY, says,



**“Horses provide a therapeutic effect on humans unlike any other animal.”**

Many studies have been done to show the effects of building relationships with animals







and horses. Nichols explains, “People experiencing aggression, defiance, or anger, release chemicals into their body which intensifies stress. Horse therapy has been proven to soothe and maintain a healthy chemical balance. When an individual is around the presence of such a large and powerful animal like a horse, connecting with it becomes one’s primary focus.”

After Harry left Astor, his early passion for horses was sustained in spite of a changing world around him. “I had been an altar boy for 6 years. I then moved into the projects in Roxbury, MA. There was no space for a goody two-shoes altar boy like me in the projects back then. But that was just half of my life as a teenager.”

Harry quietly continued his pursuit of horses. “I used to spend my weekends





going to Suffolk Downs, which is a harness horse racetrack near Boston. This is where I became trained in learning how to groom and care for horses professionally for the first time. From taking care of the equipment to racing as well,” said Brown.

Over the next 40 years, Harry trained all kinds of horses ranging from hunter jumpers, thoroughbreds, and quarter horses, to name a few.

Horses became a constant in his life, and brought stability to him when he needed it most. “Whatever is going on with you is mirrored pretty quickly by the horses,” corroborates Rosemary Rouhana, LMHC, NCC, a specialist in Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP). EAP incorporates horses experientially for emotional growth and learning, psychotherapeutic benefit and the support of developmental assets,” Rouhana continued.



“Participants learn about themselves and others by participating in activities with the horses, and then processing thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and patterns.”

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"Its effects are immediate. When doing an activity with horses, the therapy happens in real-time. The efficacy of this process is attributed to the immediacy of the work to better oneself," explained Rouhana.

Harry Brown understands how horses lend themselves so well to helping humans. He guesses it comes from a horses' heightened sensitivity to human emotions. Brown explains, "Humans don't realize that when they interact with horses, they are doing so with the horses permission. If a horse doesn't want to be touched or approached by you, they will make it known by means of backing away or even go as far as throwing a rider off."

Harry often struggled in a world of people, but he learned that the place he found the most comfort throughout his life was always in the world of the horse, and always will be.

## *Resources*

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# We Built a Playground

by Jeannine D. Mendez

A playground is a wonderful place for children to play and socialize.



*Happy volunteers at KaBOOM!/Disney Playground Build Day.*





*KaBOOM!/Disney Playground build day ribbon cutting with our volunteers and local elected officials.*

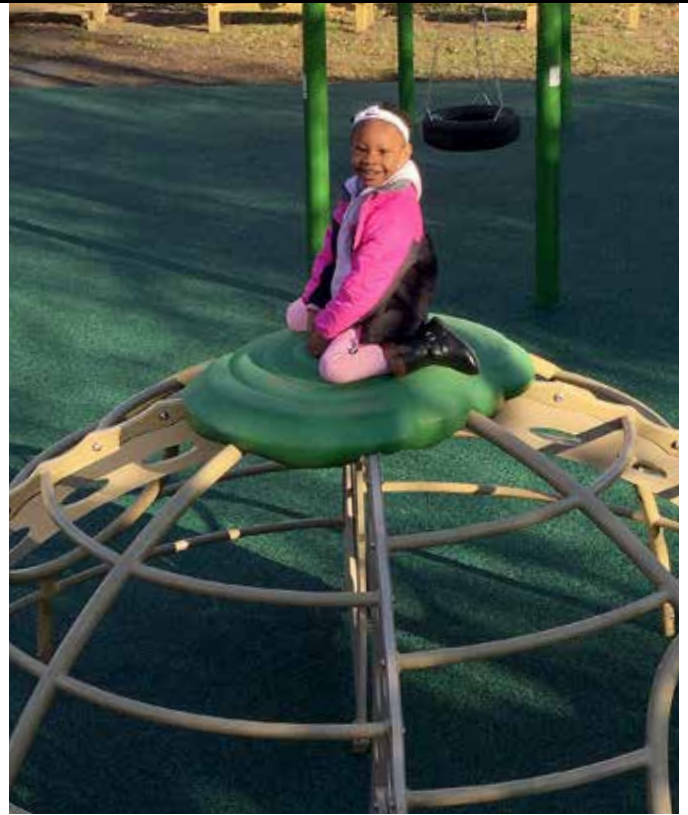
Thanks to the generosity of KaBOOM!, The Walt Disney Company, and partners like Catholic Charities of NY, the children and families of Astor's Lawrence F. Hickey Center were given the gift of play with a new playground in October of 2017.

KaBOOM! is a national non-profit that believes play matters for all kids and that could not be more true than for the 40 children that attend the Hickey Center every day. The Hickey Center serves children between 2.9 and 5 years of age with behavioral and cognitive challenges that limit their ability to learn in a mainstream environment. This newly built therapeutic and

age appropriate play space gives the children and their families an opportunity to expand social interactions, better communicate, improve physical endurance and dexterity, and most of all have fun!

In an effort to provide Astor's children with an improved play experience more than 300 volunteers convened from areas all over to build a playground from scratch.

Beyond the final product, bonds were forged between workers of all ages, ethnicities, skill sets, and religions.



*Children from the Lawrence F. Hickey Center having fun on the new playground.*

On that day, volunteers transformed a dusty lot by mixing cement foundations, installing bridges, swings, jungle gyms, and picnic tables. The surroundings were adorned with mulch, turf, and brightly colored murals.

The spirit of play was alive on the day of the build as music pumped, power tools whirred, and laughter echoed throughout the expansive space.

Local officials participated in the fun as Bronx Borough president Ruben Diaz Jr, City Council Member Andy King, State Senator Jamaal Bailey, and Kevin Riley from State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie's office gathered for an end of day ribbon cutting.

Long after most of the worker/volunteers had packed up, a scaled down crew from the Church of Latter Day Saints and Astor remained into the night until the job was complete.

While the process of building this playground was a large one – students, staff, parents, and community members collaborated for months prior in finding volunteers, and sponsors, gathering design input, and preparation of the site.

**The spirit of play  
was alive and well  
that day and could  
be seen on every inch  
of the school property.**

In the end, the project was a collaborative effort that all involved can feel proud to have participated in.

Senator Jamaal Bailey summed up the day best when he said, "Most of the people here today may

never meet the children who will use this space but they should know that they've made a difference in the lives of the children at the Hickey Center."

In the end, the smiles on the volunteers' faces revealed the deep joy that play can bring to children and adults alike.





*Volunteers creating colorful artwork for the KaBOOM!/Disney Playground.*




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# ASTOR *Snaps*

## *Ghost Stories II*

November 4, 2017



Hilarie Burton and Jeffrey Dean Morgan



Kate Kortbus and Hilarie Burton



Paul Rudd and Jeffrey Dean Morgan



"MetaMarcy" Currier

## *SoulCycle Charity Ride*

January 28, 2018

## *Holiday Festival & Children's Art Show*

December 1, 2017



A student describes her work



Astor's Young Professionals Board at SoulCycle Charity Ride



## 8th Annual Cabaret

February 3, 2018



Children from the Lawrence F. Hickey Center



Magee Hickey with Astor's CEO Jim McGuirk & Stacy Sullivan



Astor staff members Jurine Walker and Ed Pruitt

## Adopt-A-Family

December 2017



Adopt-A-Family Volunteers



Adopt-A-Family Staff

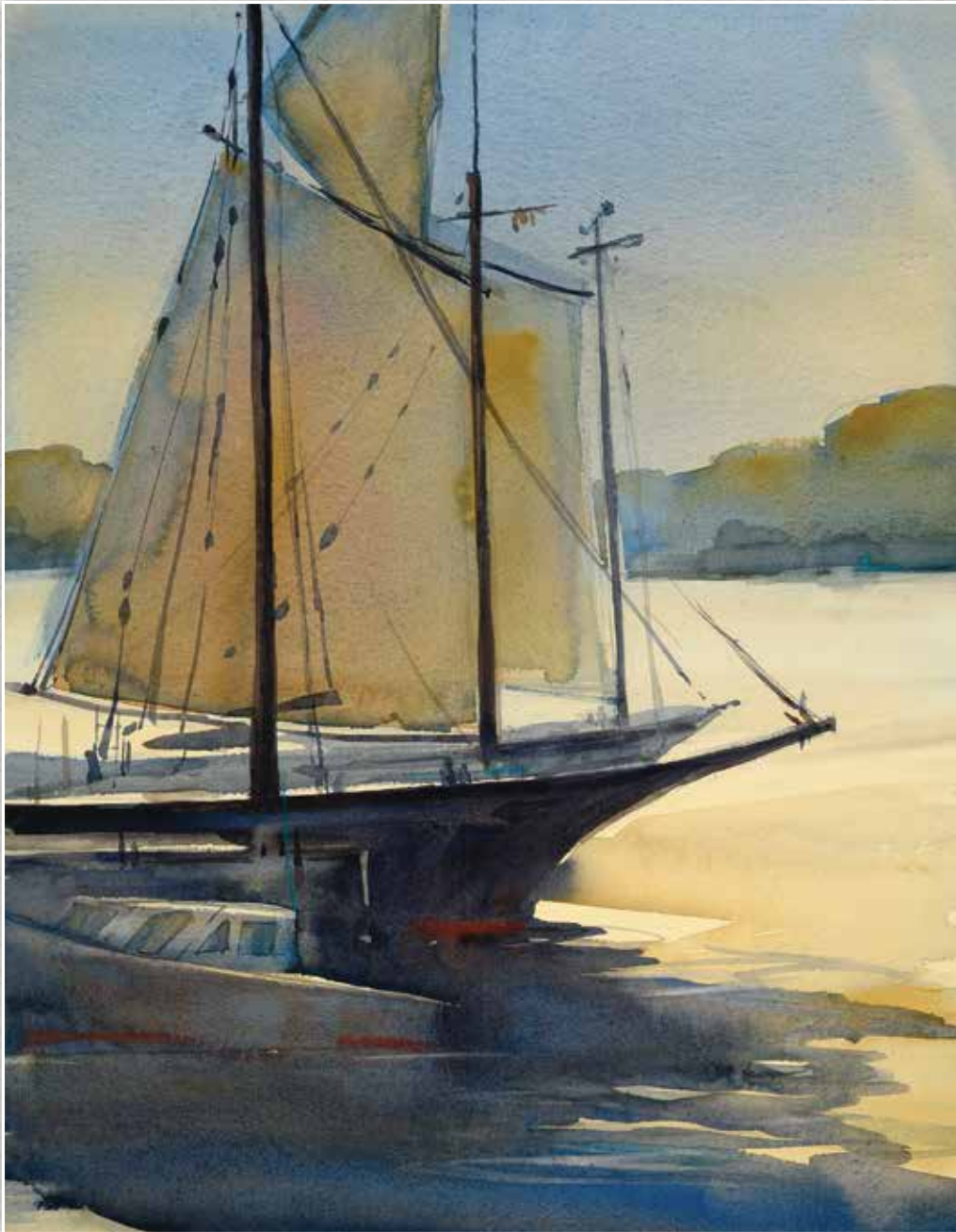


Astor Teaching Assistant Danielle with donated gifts



Adopt-A-Family Gift Recipient





## On The River

Betsy Jacaruso

**Watercolorist, Betsy Jacaruso**, received her BFA with honors from the Pratt Institute of Art and Design in Brooklyn, NY in 1979. Through the years, she has gained the reputation for being not only a talented painter, but also a gifted instructor who teaches drawing and painting techniques as a way of realizing individual vision.

Her current work explores atmosphere and luminosity in landscape, and has been featured in

both regional and international exhibitions, as well as represented in private collections throughout the United States and Europe. In February 2013, her painting, "Edge of Light," was featured in the *The New York Times*. Locally, her work is on display at her gallery & studio in The Courtyard in Rhinebeck, NY.

See more of Betsy's work at [betsyjacarusoartist.com](http://betsyjacarusoartist.com).

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Mental Health  
Awareness Month.**

**Help us break  
the stigma!**

## Upcoming Events

Astor's Young Professionals Board invites you to a

### *Sapphire* COCKTAIL RECEPTION

THURSDAY, MAY 24 | 6PM

Mutual of America Bldg, 320 Park Ave, NYC, 35th Floor

Tickets: \$65 - RSVP by May 7. Join us for an evening of networking,  
top shelf open bar, hot & cold hors d'oeuvres, and silent auction.



For info, contact Jeannine Mendez 646-300-2810  
or [jdmendez@astorservices.org](mailto:jdmendez@astorservices.org)



**Monday, June 11**

**Powelton Club, Newburgh, NY**

*20th Annual  
Stenberg Cup  
Golf Tournament*

*3rd Annual  
Astor  
Tennis Tournament*

**Special Guests - Former NFL stars  
Joe Morris & Jeff Feagles!**

**Enter for a chance to win a round of golf with  
Joe Morris or Jeff Feagles**

Text 'astorgolf' to 855-735-BIDR (2437) or  
visit <https://bidr.co/events/astorgolf>



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