

Each year **Abilities First**, Inc. honors a local business, a community leader, and a volunteer for their contribution to people with disabilities in the community, as well as a program participant for their remarkable abilities. These awards were presented on April 30 at The Grandview, Poughkeepsie. Senator Stephen Saland attended to participate in the ceremonies. This year's awardees were:

**Omega Institute**, a retreat center in Rhinebeck, NY, received the Business of the Year award. Omega provides employment to people with disabilities through Abilities First Integrated Employment Services. Omega was chosen as the recipient of this year's award because of their outstanding hospitality, acceptance and inclusion of these employees.

Sheila Appel, Manager, Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs for **IBM** received the Volunteer of the Year award. She served on Abilities First's board of directors from 1999-2005 and, since 1999, has been the Chair of Kids EXPO, an award winning annual event organized by Abilities First and two other nonprofit organizations. Appel continually volunteers her time by serving on numerous boards and committees in the local community.

Ann Hardiman, Executive Director of the NYS Association of Community and Residential Agencies, received the Lynn and Nancy Wall Award for her dedication to people with disabilities throughout her career. She works to ensure that they have a place in our communities and in our hearts. She's led the charge to improve working status for direct support professionals so that these people, that provide round the clock core services, receive the recognition and benefits they deserve.

Raymond Ike was honored as Abilities First Participant of the Year. Ike receives services through Abilities First and has overcome many hurdles, made significant accomplishments and provides a

positive example of what is possible for people with disabilities.

Renee Bulla of **Momentum Advertising** was the Chair of this year's Kentucky Derby themed event that raised over \$30,000 for children and adults with disabilities.