

THINK DUTCHESS HONORS UNDERWEAR FACTORY

Factory

Non-Profit of the Year Award given for large community impact

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POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL

The aroma of fresh coffee wafting through the air.

Artists working on their newest creations.

A bustling kitchen where local produce is cooked and seasonal dishes are served.

Once a premiere factory for making undergarments, the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory is now a community hub.

Hudson River Housing spent nearly \$7 million spearheading the project to rejuvenate the once-prominent property. The revitalized building opened its doors in March. The space features small businesses occupying commercial units and 15 apartment units, many reserved for occupants who meet income restrictions.

In a short time, the Underwear Factory has made a big impact on the City of Poughkeepsie, according to Think Dutchess CEO Sarah Lee — an impact that has earned it the organization’s Non-Profit of the Year Award.

The honor is one of this year’s Business Excellence Awards given by Think Dutchess in concert with the Poughkeepsie Journal. An awards ceremony is scheduled for Oct. 19.

“We’re very excited and honored to receive this award, and we’re very proud of this building,” said Mary Linge, Hudson River Housing’s director of real estate development. “It makes us very happy the community feels the same way that we do.”

Both the North River Roasters Coffee House & Community Hub and the Pough- keepsie Open Kitchen (POK), found on the building’s first floor, are “doing very well,” Linge said. Earth, Wind, & Fuego, a Beaconbased healthy food service, offers an affordable, locally-sourced lunch there Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

On the second floor the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory Studios, or PUF, has also been a success, she said. The studio spaces are available for artists on a monthly basis, and includes a printmaking studio and art classes for the public. Spark Media Project and Mill Street Loft, two arts organizations, merge and utilize the space for youth arts

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An exterior view of the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory. PHOTOS BY ALEX H. WAGNER/POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL



Jeff Aman, a City of Poughkeepsie-based artist, works on a painting in his rented studio space at the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory.

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programming on the third floor.

Each of the 15 apartments in the former factory — six one-bedroom apartments and nine studio apartments — are occupied, Linge said.

“It’s been a very positive impact — the community hub we anticipated and hoped it would be,” Linge said. “It’s a place where people can meet for coffee, catch up with friends, sit with a laptop and do work... Just relax and enjoy Poughkeepsie.”

A hundred years ago, the three-story brick building that stands on 8 N. Cherry St. was world-renowned for making underwear. But that was before the 22,0000-square-foot building fell into disrepair.

The 143-year-old building’s place on the National Registry of Historic Places helped Hudson River Housing make the renovation possible, enabling the organization to obtain hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding from federal and state tax credits. Of the \$6,669,470 total in funding Hudson River Housing had for the project, \$1,111,579 came from federal historic tax credits, and \$752,632 was provided by state historic tax credits, according to Linge. Empire State Development funded \$850,000 of the project, Dutchess County HOME Funds provided \$541,756 and several other organizations also contributed.

“The Underwear Factor is a building that Hudson River Housing developed to really revitalize the middle main corridor,” Lee said. “Hudson River Housing took a risk, and really went into the commercial aspect of that building to promote economic development in that area. Their vision was a lofty one, and they were able to achieve it. And its really been a transformation project.

“The building, as a whole, has become a community center.”

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Madeline Henriquez, co-founder and owner of Earth, Wind, & Fuego, finishes making a 'TBLT' sandwich in the kitchen space at the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory. PHOTOS BY ALEX H. WAGNER/POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL



Athena Torri of Beacon enjoys lunch at the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory.