



## **John Gallin & Son gives lift to Cooke Center for Learning and Dev.**

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The Cooke Center for Learning and Development - a school known best known for transforming the lives of its students with disabilities - is undergoing its own transformation due to a multi-million dollar capital improvement campaign and the assistance of construction manager John Gallin & Son, LLC.

Thanks to the Cooke Center's \$10 million Road to Independence Campaign, the five-story school, at 60 McDougal St., which serves a community of special needs high school students, is undergoing a major facelift.

"This capital improvement campaign is not simply about beautification," said Michael Termini, president of The Cooke Center. "It's about making the school a more accessible facility that is ADA-compliant, and one which enhances the kids' daily learning experiences and helps them grow." Two of the most significant improvements include the installation of a building elevator and a wheelchair lift from the street level to the main entrance of the building. Prior to John Gallin & Son's installation, students with ambulatory restrictions had to be carried up the stairs, which was taxing for both the students and their teachers.

"The new wheelchair lift enables physically challenged students to access the building themselves and without the necessary aid of a teacher, thus boosting their mobility and independence," said Mark Varian, president of John Gallin & Son. "And the elevator benefits the entire school community."

In addition to the wheelchair lift and elevator, other upgrades include:

- \* Renovation of the Robards Family Student Center (a multi-purpose space), which includes a state-of-the-art Daily Living Lab, where students can practice the important skills they will need to live independently, such as planning and cooking meals, and doing laundry.
- \* Improvements to the building's facade, including installation of new doors and new signage
- \* Renovation of the entrance lobby with special lighting
- \* Renovation of the administrative and admission offices
- \* Installation of art and science rooms and renovation of therapy spaces
- \* Construction of building service spaces
- \* Updating of restrooms throughout the school, making them ADA-compliant, and
- \* Installation of an ADA-compliant emergency notification system and sprinkler system.

Upcoming improvements include the renovation of classrooms, the first-floor multi-purpose room, corridors and locker alcoves; the installation of new Fresh Air system and window treatments; and the completion of electrical and data systems.

"The Cooke Center for Learning is an outstanding institution that provides a strong foundation for the children and families it serves," said Varian. "It's been extremely rewarding to help improve the

physical school environment, and to see how these improvements have had a direct impact on the students and their teachers. We may be altering a structure, but what we're really doing is making changes that will allow Cooke Center Academy students to have a full high school experience in a facility that allows them to acquire the full range of technology and daily living skills they need for an independent adulthood. There is nothing more gratifying than that."

Founded in 1987, The Cooke Center for Learning and Development provides high-quality inclusive schooling for children with special needs. Cooke offers preschool programs, a Lower School, Middle School and High School for students ages five to 21, and consulting services in more than 35 inner city Head Starts, and parochial and charter schools that optimize the skills all students need to live independent lives.

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