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MassDevelopment issues \$1.5 million tax-exempt bond on behalf of The Island Autism Group, Inc. for phase 1 of campus

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West Tisbury, MA MassDevelopment has issued a \$1.5 million tax-exempt bond on behalf of The Island Autism Group, Inc. (IAG), which will use proceeds to build a facility referred to as the HUB House at 515 Lamberts Cove Rd. as part of its Island Autism Center, a campus under development for people of all ages with autism and other developmental disabilities. The projects supported by this bond represent the first phase of the organization's three-phase development to establish the center, which in later phases will feature supportive housing and cottages for adults with autism and other developmental disabilities. Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank purchased the bond, which helped IAG achieve a lower cost of capital. The Life Initiative complemented the financing by providing a \$1.5 million loan to bridge donations, fund debt service reserve, and finance a portion of project development costs.

The HUB House will be used for after-school and enrichment programs, summer daytime programs, and community integration and job training. The facility will feature staff offices, a commercial kitchen, and bathrooms.

guest rooms for visiting speakers and interns, an apartment for the farm manager, and program and community space. Additionally, the organization will also use bond proceeds to build a separate barn building and farm stand to be used for selling produce, flowers, and other items made in the HUB House commercial kitchen.

“Kate DeVane and Marcy Bettencourt started Island Autism Group as two devoted moms in search of better opportunities and services for their children, and now they and their team have inspired us with their vision for a dynamic campus where youth and adults with developmental disabilities can live life to the fullest,” said MassDevelopment president and CEO Dan Rivera. “Their story exemplifies what is possible when families and communities come together to change lives for the better, and MassDevelopment is pleased that our tax-exempt financing will help advance this incredible project.”

The Island Autism Group, Inc., IAG, is a nonprofit that serves autistic children and their families on Martha’s Vineyard. IAG was founded in 2008 by Kate DeVane and Marcy Bettencourt, both mothers of then-young sons with autism. IAG works closely with teachers, therapists, parents, friends, and partner organizations interested in supporting those with autism. The organization funds comprehensive therapeutic services, activities and programs, and hard goods and equipment for educational growth and development of autistic children to further integrate them into society. It also funds seminars, speakers, and workshops that advance and educate parents, teachers, and caregivers of children who do not fully participate in inclusive programs due to their disabilities.

“Island Autism has grown over the last 16 years from a group that supported the school programs to encompassing all of our members at all times in their lives,” said Island Autism Group executive director Kate DeVane. “Through jobs, recreation, community interaction and social supports, we strive for the lifelong independence, confidence, and happiness of autistic individuals and their families on Martha’s Vineyard. We could not be more grateful to Joe Grivers and everyone at MassDevelopment, Phil Mercier and everyone at MV Bank, Brandon Braxton and The Life Initiative and our wonderful accepting friends and neighbors on the Island. This project will enrich the lives of so many!”

“The Life Initiative is excited to be playing a role in Island Autism Group’s amazing project by providing construction financing,” said The Life Initiative president Kristen Harol. “This project encapsulates our mission to provide housing, life skills, enrichment, and job training to well deserving and undeserved communities within the Commonwealth. We are honored to partner with an organization like IAG and look forward to future projects on Martha’s Vineyard and beyond.”