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Former NY chief judge is 1 of 4 Val-Kill honorees

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HYDE PARK - An architect, a judge and a three-time governor of Vermont will join the Anderson Center for Autism in receiving a 2009 Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal.

The Oct. 18 ceremony in Hyde Park will be the 23rd annual presentation of medals by the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill to individuals and organizations that embody the values demonstrated by Roosevelt in her public life.

This year's recipients are Jeh V. Johnson, an architect living in the Town of Poughkeepsie ; Judith S. Kaye, former chief judge of the state of New York; Madeleine Kunin, former governor of Vermont and United States ambassador to Switzerland; and the Anderson Center for Autism in Staatsburg.

"Eleanor Roosevelt's efforts to help those in need, to inspire the next generation, to encourage those in power and to be a light in the darkness are reflected in the honorees this year," said Marc VanderHeyden, a member of the center's board of directors and medals event co-chairman.

Johnson, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, has spent his 40 years as an architect designing housing that responds to human emotional needs, the center at Val-Kill said. He has designed thousands of units that provide good quality, low-cost housing for underprivileged groups.

Among Johnson's architectural accomplishments are Interfaith Towers and Tubman Terrace in the City of Poughkeepsie and St. Simeon Apartments in the Town of Poughkeepsie.

Johnson said Roosevelt was a great influence on his entire family.

"My mother was a great admirer of hers," he said Tuesday.

Kaye was the first woman to serve on the state's highest court and was the first chief judge to complete a full 14-year term. Her groundbreaking work in reforming the state's court system, creating day-care centers in New York Family Court and spearheading the independence of the state courts were recognized by the Val-Kill center.

Kunin is the first woman in U.S. history to be elected governor three times. She was noted for leadership in improving Vermont's quality of education, creating early education programs for low-income children and establishing statewide kindergarten programs in public schools.

The Anderson Center is being recognized for its work in providing high-quality programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Under the leadership of Executive Director Neil Pollack, the Anderson Center reflects Roosevelt's strong belief that every person has the right to a standard of living, education and security in the event of a disability.

"As in the past, our medalists continue to be the torchbearers for Mrs. Roosevelt's commitment to principled leadership, social justice and effective humanitarian efforts in their communities and/or around the world and we are indeed grateful for their contributions," Kathleen Durham, executive director of the center at Val-Kill, said.