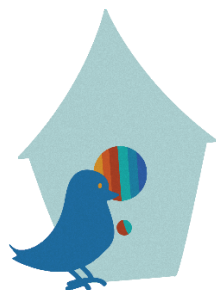


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**Actors Hilarie Burton & Jeffrey Dean Morgan
Donate Another Hand Painted Birdhouse to
Rhinebeck Responds Auction in Support of Small Businesses
~ Auction Ends September 14 ~**

Rhinebeck, New York: Rhinebeck Responds has received a 'bonus' birdhouse painted by actors Hilarie Burton and Jeffrey Dean Morgan and their two children for the 'Better Together' Birdhouse Auction. The online auction, which runs through September 14, is raising funds to assist small local businesses struggling to survive the coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis.

The Morgan family's new entry, entitled "Birds of Feather," is signed and inscribed with the words: "From Our Family to Yours. Thank you for supporting your local businesses in Rhinebeck." Burton, Morgan and their son, Gus and daughter, George each painted a panel of the wooden Audubon birdhouse. It goes on display today in the window of Oblong Books in Rhinebeck where it will be showcased, along with Burton's previous birdhouse and her best-selling book, *The Rural Diaries*. Bidding on this new birdhouse begins online at RhinebeckResponds.org at \$100, with no maximum limit.

The three dozen birdhouses in the auction are all on view in store windows throughout Rhinebeck village. They have been painted by over 20 Hudson Valley artists. Three of the original bird boxes were painted by TV and film stars Burton, Morgan, and Paul Rudd, all of whom are also owners of Samuel's Sweet Shop in the Rhinebeck village. These three celebrity boxes have already sold for \$3000 each, the maximum bid set before the auction began.

"We are thrilled that Hilarie and her family have generously given us this new entry for the final days of our auction," says Lila Pague, Co-Chair of Rhinebeck Responds Small Business Committee. "We feel confident that this final box, *which has no maximum price tag*, will generate enthusiastic and competitive bidding, bringing in a generous final donation for our Small Business Grants Fund."

The online auction bidding platform is accessed via the homepage of RhinebeckResponds.org. Bidding on individual bird boxes starts at \$100, with top bids set at \$1000 for boxes painted by artists and \$3000 for those painted by celebrities. To date, over \$20,000 has been raised, with a final target now set at \$30,000 -- or more.

“This is our most ambitious – and most uplifting – fundraising initiative to date,” notes Martha Honey, who is Co-Chair, along with Pague, of the Small Business Committee and a member of the Small Business Grants Committee. “In addition to the artists, we are really pleased to see local businesses, government officials, civic organizations, and the public embracing and supporting the auction. In addition, our wonderful volunteer organizing committee has worked hard to ensure the auction is a success. It is truly a ‘feel good’ community endeavor.”

The Small Business Grants Fund has already given grants to 23 local businesses and nonprofit organizations. “We’ve awarded a total of over \$85,000 to date and now we urgently need to raise more funds. Through this auction we hope to secure funds to help keep our grants program running through the fall when we anticipate the needs may even be greater,” explains Honey.

The Rhinebeck Responds grants program, launched in early June, is open to businesses located within town or village of Rhinebeck. The program provides grants of up to \$5000 apiece, based on applications and funds available. Local businesses may access the grant application from Rhinebeck Responds homepage: www.rhinebeckresponds.org.

Rhinebeck Responds is a volunteer civic organization created to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, in partnership with the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley. It is funded with donations from individuals, businesses, and foundations, including the Frost Memorial Fund and Thompson Trust. In addition to supporting small businesses, Rhinebeck Responds also raises funds to help underserved communities. Donations can be made via the “donate” button on Rhinebeck Responds home page.

To access the ‘Better Together’ Birdhouse Auction, go to: www.RhinebeckResponds.org or <https://www.biddingforgood.com/rhinebeck>