

FREE Times

Celebrating #40YearsOfFREE

On April 20 in 1977, Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE) was founded with a mission to serve one of Long Island's most vulnerable populations.

From our humble beginning, with one residence and a handful of employees, we have grown into an agency with more than 2,500 Valued Team Members that supports over 4,000 men, women and children to realize their full potential!

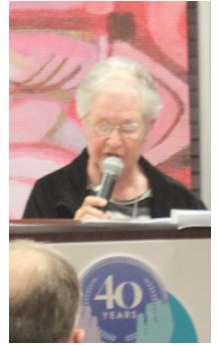
Over the past 40 years, FREE has been able to:

- Employ differently-abled individuals
- Provide our community members with mental illness the tools to regain independence
- Support individuals to strive toward their self-identified goals
- Empower Long Island's under-served youth
- Ease the process of transitioning between the world of school and work
- And so much more!

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for continuing to support and believe in Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc.

Together we truly can create the right solution for any need!

Forty years later, on April 21, 2017, FREE celebrated #40YearsOfFREE by holding an reception at our Old Bethpage location. The event included opening remarks by Robert S. Budd, CEO, and Dr. Christopher D. Long, President, a blessing by Sister Rosalie Carven, remarks and a proclamation presentation by NYS Assemblyman Michael Montesano. Anita Dowd-Neufeld, Chief Administrative Officer, presented an offering on behalf of FREE to Jaci Best, Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, Dr. Martha Carlin, Office of Mental Health, and Dr. Jim Dolan, Department of Human Services. Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick and Brian T. Finnegan, Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Chad A. Lupinacci, also attended, and Success Stories by Steven and Stefanie, FREE Self-Advocates, were also included, as well as a performance by The FREE Players Ensemble.



A Message From the CEO and President

Over the past 40 years, it has been a true honor for Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. to serve our local community. Not only has FREE blossomed over these many years, but so have the loving staff that have helped differently-abled individuals to achieve their goals.

In this issue of the FREE Times, you can once again read about the many magnificent events and programs that have made FREE such a success. Articles covering the arts, advocacy, integrity, diversity, innovation, interdependence, quality of life, and more, are always available for your viewing pleasure.

Besides celebrating #40YearsOfFREE, we also have informative articles about new initiatives that we are implementing to better serve the individuals within our organization.

The SMILE campaign was officially launched, where anybody can post

#moments4smiles on social media using the hashtag. This is not only for people who are differently-abled, but for everyone to share what makes them SMILE. It is to show the world that no matter what your circumstances may be, all of us can find a reason to SMILE.

The 26th Annual Dinner Dance was recently held, and individuals could not get enough of smiling for the camera for #moments4smiles.

We also held our first annual donor appreciation event, thanking all the wonderful people who have helped us reach this amazing goal of 40 years.

A new column has been introduced in this issue, entitled "Behind the Scenes of Accounting." Susan Dickinson, CPA, Chief Financial Officer at FREE, will guide people through the ins and outs of accounting so that people may have a better understanding of what goes into running such a massive organization.



Robert S. Budd
CEO

As always, we have included health and wellness articles, both to show some of the initiatives we have implemented over the years, as well as new and excit-



Dr. Christopher D. Long
President

ing ways for individuals to stay healthy.

Again, we can't express how much we are thankful and look forward to another 40 years.

Syngerstically yours,

Robert S. Budd, CEO

Dr. Christopher D. Long, President

Terry's Café at Taste Long Island

Here's another big step for Sue and the crew at Terry's Café! Terry's was asked to take part in the grand opening of the new Taste Long Island visitors center on the Long Island Expressway. It is a state-of-the-art facility that will be visited by an estimated 8,000 people a year.

The grand opening was hosted by New York Lt. Governor Kathleen Hochul and Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone. Terry's made turkey, lettuce, tomato, and sigit cheese (made fresh by a Long Island dairy farm in Peconic) wraps and their famous chocolate chip cookies.

Special thanks to Greg Sandor of Cornell Cooperative for including us in this exciting opportunity that will be an ongoing partnership. Also, special thanks to Sue Narbutt and June Mills of Terry's for going the extra mile on such short notice!

And, of course, let's hear it for the crew at Terry's who just keep improving. They have a vision and a goal to improve quality, efficiency, and service every day. Because of their efforts, they keep expanding to create more opportunities for themselves and their peers.





First Annual Donor Appreciation Event

We could not be more thankful for all of our generous donors. Without your continued support, FREE would not be able to accomplish all of the amazing things we do each year!

For information on becoming a donor, please contact Nancy Cohen, CFRE, at 516-870-1612 or NCohen@FamilyRes.org.



From the Parents' Perspective

My journey with FREE began in late 2001 when I met Barbara Townsend, who was the CEO of the agency at that time. We began talking and she asked me about my son, Joe, who was in crisis due to a family situation, which had intensified his complicated special needs. Amazingly, within 12 months, Joe was living in a residence with five other individuals. I thought at the time that this event was the end. In fact, it was only the beginning of what FREE was able to do for Joe, and has continued to do over the past 15 years. The many individuals, from the current CEO, Robert S. Budd, and President, Dr. Christopher D. Long, to the DSPs in the residence, have unfailingly done everything possible to

Pictured are Joe and Gretchen

ensure that Joe reaches his potential and achieves a life filled with opportunity.

It was unimaginable when four years ago Joe married Gretchen – the love of his life! Although marriage within the disability community is extremely rare and often frowned upon, FREE embraced this wonderful young couple.

My journey is ongoing. There are no words to express how grateful I am to FREE, an agency that continues to advocate for the best possible life for every single individual they serve.

— Ellen Paige Nelson



Special Needs Got Talent

Recently, BroadHollow Theatre Company and FREE brought the “Special Needs Got Talent Competition” to the Bayway Arts Center Stage. The event was a huge success and was featured on News 12, FiOS and in local Long Island newspapers. The main objective was to show the community the strengths and talents of people who are differently abled. Children and adults from all parts of Long Island performed that night. The contestants were then judged by celebrity judges from the band Twisted Sister, as well as wrestler Mick Foley and radio DJ Joe Rock! Winners took home prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place.



The HR Corner

In this edition of the FREE Times, the Human Resources department decided to put together a fun puzzle for you to solve regarding the past 40 years of FREE. See if you can find all the words below in the word search! Words can be found horizontally, vertically, diagonally and backwards.

- ADELANTE
- FAMILIES
- OPWDD
- ALBANY
- FORTY
- RIDES
- BILLING
- FUNDING
- SERVICES
- BUDD
- INDIVIDUALS
- SKILLS
- CAREER
- LONG
- TOWNSEND
- CELEBRATIONS
- MILESTONE
- TRI
- CGS
- NETWORK
- YEARS
- EMPLOYEES
- OMH



Behind the Scenes of Accounting



By Susan Dickinson, CPA
Chief Financial Officer

We are often called by different names – “Fiscal,” “Finance,” or two-time volleyball champs. We are the accounting department for FREE and all the Network partners.

What is accounting? It is known as the “language of business.” Accounting is the art of recording the financial (\$\$) transactions of a business, classifying them into meaningful groups, and finally, reporting and interpreting the results. Although the main focus of the accounting department is the end-product – the financial reports – the department also carries out many financial functions on behalf of the organization and its team members.

We are organized in five basic areas, each focusing on a different component of the financial story. However, the interconnectedness of the various areas makes it imperative that we constantly communicate and collaborate toward the end result. As a department, our work is subject to independent audit for each entity in the FREE Network on an annual basis, and each of the teams play an integral role in preparing for this in their respective domains.

So, let’s meet the accounting department, beginning this time with the three areas of payroll, accounts payable, and treasury. The first two are responsible for sending out payments, and the treasury group monitors the flow of cash in and out of the business to ensure there is enough cash to make these payments. These three areas are under the leadership of Ann Borzon – Controller for Fiscal Operations.

Payroll – This is the area that is probably the best known, because their ultimate product is making sure that we are all paid for the work we do.

The payroll team is responsible for the process of

compensating employees. Because payroll activities are so closely tied to Human Resources, the payroll team must develop an understanding of the HR process, and coordinate with them on an ongoing basis.

During the payroll process, the department carries out numerous validation routines so that many errors and omissions are caught before the final pay is processed. Payroll doesn’t end when your wages are deposited in your account or your pay check is printed. They make sure all taxes are paid and other deductions are handled according to your instructions. They provide payroll data for various management and reporting needs – overtime reports, pension and worker’s comp, quarterly reporting to the state, W-2 reporting, and various ad-hoc requests throughout the year. To help understand the role, here are some statistics:

- Although you are paid every two weeks, the payroll process occurs every week for two or more organizations in the FREE Network.
- There are about 2,600 employees paid over each two-week cycle, for a total payroll over \$2.5 million every cycle.

Currently, the payroll team of three is also involved in the conversion to Agresso. This is a huge undertaking on top of the regular duties.

Accounts Payable – This is the team responsible for recording and paying our bills to others. When we purchase goods and services, we generally do so “on account.” We do not use cash or credit cards; vendors allow us to pay later, when they send an invoice.

The process for the AP team has been radically changed over the last two years. In the Agresso software, the steps have moved to electronic filing, workflow approval, and automatic matching to purchase orders. Although this improves the process for transparency and internal control, it sometimes creates additional work for AP. The team will determine what should be paid, and handle all vendor inquiries on past due payments. Overall, it is an extremely

challenging job. Consider the volume:

- Our accounts payable, on average, is about \$7 million, owed to about 1,400 vendors.
- The number of invoices posted each month averages 4,000, with a total dollar value of about \$5 million.

Treasury – The treasury team manages the cash flow for each of the organizations in the FREE Network. They monitor the cash balances for each account daily, carefully project the timing of incoming cash with the Revenue & Reimbursement team, and determine the amounts available for payroll and AP disbursements. They arrange to borrow money as needed to cover the timing differences between incoming and outgoing cash. (Payment for services generally lags about 6 to 12 weeks after the service is performed.) They also process requests for loans to cover purchases of vehicles and property.

The treasury team is also responsible for cash deposits, several of which are handled either through remote deposit terminals with the banks. They manage the purchase card program used extensively through the Network. They process all wire transfer and direct deposit transactions, such as those used for employee payroll, and payments on debt.

The following will help to understand the scope of this area:

- There are 50 individual accounts with seven banks, most of which require daily balance updates.
- Cash needs for payroll average \$2.1 million for each FREE payroll, and AP cash needs range between \$450,000 and \$1.6 million in any given week.
- During the course of a year, debt payments of about \$7.1 million are paid out to various banks.

As you can see, these three areas work constantly behind the scenes to help manage the financial health and stability of the FREE Network. Next time we will introduce the rest of our hard working department.

UPCEA National Engagement Award

The national organization for continuing and online education, UPCEA, has recognized the Stony Brook School of Professional Development-FREE Partnership with a national UPCEA Engagement Award! This award is a welcome confirmation of the wonderful work that FREE and the School of Professional Development have accomplished together under the leadership of Carolyn Jankowski, MA, Assistant Dean, Human Services Programs, School of Professional Development, Stony Brook University. Please join us in congratulating Carolyn and Dr. Christopher D. Long on this noteworthy and well-deserved recognition.



The Wellness Corner: The Benefits of Gardening

Spring is here and it's time to get outdoors, connect with the soil and reap the many benefits of gardening! If you've never gardened, you don't know what you're missing!!!

Gardening can reduce stress and improve your mood – it allows you to disconnect from technology and helps to slow down the frantic pace of life. We're all so plugged in – gardening is one way to get away from the constant barrage of information that surrounds us all.

Gardening teaches patience... you can't rush nature! If you sow seeds, or plant seedlings, you can't make them grow faster – they grow at the pace they're supposed to grow at.

Working in the garden also has a very tangible reward – you can have access to fresh, healthy produce! Many studies have shown that when children join in the gardening experience, they are more likely to try new vegetables and fruits.



Another great benefit of gardening is the physical benefit! Although many people don't think of gardening as a "real" exercise, you can actually burn as many calories in 45 minutes of gardening as you can in 30 minutes of aerobics. You use many different muscle

groups and increase your flexibility and strength.

You don't need a big backyard or a green thumb to get started... you can even start by gardening in containers, if space is extremely limited. An easy, enjoyable way to begin is to start with a 6" raised garden bed that is a 4' X 4' square. Plants thrive in raised boxes that are sectioned and filled with nutrient-rich soil.

So get down and dirty and enjoy some of the wonderful benefits of gardening!!

Happy Planting!!!

Did you know?

Our farm, which is in its fifth season, is located on the property of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Our Community Supported Agriculture offers shares throughout the season, including 40 varieties of 100 percent certified organic vegetables, herbs and flowers. For more information, please contact Karen Bonne at 631-345-0318 or email TheFarmer@FamilyRes.org.

Celebrating the Faces of FREE

Submitted by John W.

Hi! My name is John W. I have had a long 58-year life of virtues followed thru in an evolution of connecting the dots in a journey of trial and error. My liberty to go to places to meet my colleagues or to be alone has been vast. I am very outgoing and active. I have traveled up and down the East Coast, gone fishing with my family, and played tennis and golf with my friends. It has been fun.

In trying to learn to travel in my own mind, which I consider the best journey, I discovered new ways of doing my jobs and recreation. My ability to use innovation in my workplace increasing my efficiency has been one of my greatest achievements.

Even after years of playing basketball, swimming and jogging, with a sports-ending prognosis at 13 years old, I adjusted my body for years to excel while still respecting my opponents. I also learned to jump rope and rotate my body simultaneously in a gymnastic experiment that showed a variation on movement that could be mastered in the coordination control of the human body.

It was a learning experience to be able to adjust my mental challenges. I was a K-12 honor society student in public school and that education gave me gifts I used later on in life so I would not miss out on the best daily moments. I had sub-par grades in college, but that did not squelch my ability and ambition to invent my own public and personal ways to improve my and other lives.

I was a good neighbor with car repairs, emergency rides, health care wellness applications, exposing of logical injustices and guidance of children of the community with lessons in preserving their stance in life and how to mature.

I am blessed and have no regrets to the better sides of my example. I learned not to scoff at loves bitter edges. I don't blush and am not modest to my life's trials and tribulations. I accept them as fulfilling learning experiences. I am honored and proud to live the American Dream with all its perks as I live life to the fullest. There is more of me to know every day in a journey I call "My Time on This Planet." The joy I get from my good memories is enriching and heartwarming, giving boundless positive energy as I encourage all the people who have a road to travel to share their good story. It gives back to society with genuine sincerity and pride.

The Mystery of the Dark Rose

The mystery of the dark rose in the mist of the dark night, it weeps into the shadows at the break of dawn.

In the blooming eclipse night, it spores as the forbidden rose takes its place.

It's an anonymous rose that does not know its name.

With colors more colorful than the rainbow in a soft glacier that sits at the highest peak of a secret valley; that shines like the golden sun.

I take a step forward into the wilderness into the mist of its shadows, no dirt on me grow wild flowers.

Sitting on my nightstand as it soaks in the heat and the water that shatters the glass of the vase that breaks me free;

The rose that nobody knows that secretly lies in me; seek and you will not find the mystery that's buried in me.

Just like a card waiting to be opened; inside is the mystery of the dark rose; sitting alone in its vase while it's representing its self as someone's true love.

When the mystery of the dark rose petals begins to wilt can it reveal the persons spiritual identity?

The mystery of the dark rose stands strong with pride and can make everything inside of you weak and completely dried out; but instead it took an unexpected twist and turn that leaves you scarred for life.

It's an anonymous rose that does not know its name.

My deepest and darkest thoughts are well curious of when the dark rose would ever bloom again.

— Composed by *The Poets of Honor*



First Place

The Waves by Mike O.



Second Place

Wild Lava by Diane C.



Third Place

Gravel by Angel A.

Ascension Unveiled at Patchogue-Medford Library

On April 5, 2017, Ascension, the second professionally juried competition of artwork created by the artists of FREE, was unveiled at a Meet the Artists Reception at Patchogue-Medford Library. Over 40 paintings were submitted to this year's competition! The artists represented are the finalists whose quality of work "rose high enough" to have garnered entrance into this glorious collection. Fifteen Tier One pieces were selected, along with First-, Second- and Third-Place winners by our esteemed judge, Kevin Larkin, Director of the b.j. spoke gallery and award-winning artist.

You are witness to the enormous courage and strength needed to take on the challenge of creating a free form abstract painting. Throughout the eleven months it took to complete our process, weekly emotional and spiritual self-revelation spiraled our artists to ever mounting artistic heights allowing them to find their voices and "talk to us" through the mystical, hidden language of images, colors and symbols.

Ascension consists of wide ranging depictions of different elements of nature. Skies, land forms, water and other natural

elements span across all of the canvases displaying the artists' connection to our world and the pathway to creativity. We worked through nine stages of creation... from beginning sketches in pencil to learning how to handle pastels, water colors and finally acrylic paints.

While the artwork is beautiful to look at, it is important to recognize the incredible depth of emotional release, intellectual learning and work skills development that took place over months of work with all of our dedicated staff. It was their patience and unerring commitment to "stay the course" and believe that our artists could

reach high to not only "see their healing image," but also commit it to permanent form for all to share in their vision.

Much has been written about the healing power of Mindfulness Based Art Therapy and the creative process of spiritual self expression, especially for individuals who may find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings through spoken words alone. The images on view are a testament to this healing power, as our artists faced the challenge to "break through" familiar modes of expression and embrace feelings of trust, hope and peace, offering them an alternative to

chaos, conflict and fear. This project in creativity has helped fortify the groundwork for our artists' successful, ongoing contributions to our community through employment, volunteerism and cultural enhancement for us all.

Join me in celebrating the love that is so prominently displayed for your viewing pleasure. It is an honor to work with the spirit and the future of our humanity.

Also, please join us on July 7 from 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm at The LENZ Winery for the next Meet the Artists Reception.

— Ed Regensburg, LCAT
Director of Art Therapy, FREE



26th Annual Dinner Dance



More than 550 people attended this year's Dinner Dance, held at the Crest Hollow Country Club. It is a wonderful example of our Vision Statement: "Together... creating the right solution for any need."

The beauty of all those who attend is certainly obvious in the many wonderful outfits, but it is outshone by the beauty that radiates in the smiles and the twinkle of joy in the eye. This is what synergistic human connection looks and feels like!!!

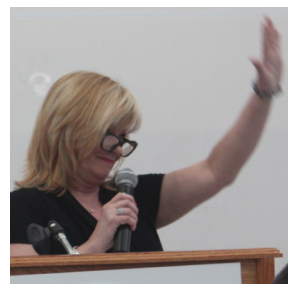
Let's be sure to nurture the inspiring positive energy to keep it alive in each and every day!

The Dinner Dance was also the perfect place to give a sneak peek at the #moments4smiles campaign. SMILE (Special Moments In Life I Enjoy) is a movement to bring global awareness to the fact that all humans are very much alike! A SMILE is universal! You can follow the Special Moments In Life I Enjoy campaign @moments4smiles through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Join our campaign and share your #moments4smiles on social media using the hashtag!



Advocacy and Disability Awareness Conference

This year's Advocacy and Disability Awareness Conference was a huge success! Many of our Advocates spoke about their challenges that they have overcome, The FREE Players Ensemble preformed, and the Nassau Kings Wheelchair Basketball Team gave an inspirational presentation. Finally, the #moments4smiles campaign was officially launched!



Why Do You SMILE?

It doesn't matter who you are ... everyone has a reason to SMILE! #moments4smiles could be anything! They can be as grandiose as a tropical vacation

to as small as giving your friend a hug or experiencing the beautiful springtime weather! Whatever makes you SMILE, be sure to share it with us! Help

grow our online community by using the hashtag #moments4smiles so you can see others around the globe who are just like you!

FREE To BE Self-Advocacy Group of the Year

FREE To BE, FREE's LGBTQ advocacy group, was presented with the Self-Advocacy Group of the Year Award on Friday, September 9, at the Self-Advocacy Association of New York's (SANYS) annual state conference. FREE To BE's mission is to provide a welcoming and safe world for LGBTQ individuals and allies of all abilities by increasing awareness, education, support and advocacy. Their motto is, "We ARE...therefore FREE To BE."

"We are proud of the work being done by FREE To BE and are thrilled that SANYS has recognized that work by naming them the 2016 Self-Advocacy Group of the Year," said Robert S. Budd, CEO of FREE.

FREE co-hosted the first LGBTQ and Allies Meet and Greet on Thursday, September 8 – the first day of the conference – along with Pamela Boyle, AHRC Sexuality and Socialization Specialist; FREE To BE member Matthew Kuriloff, East End Disability Associates (EEDA) Manager of Development and Public Relations; and FREE To BE member Claire Miller, FREE Advocacy Coordinator and FREE To BE Facilitator; along with self-advocates from around the state.

On Friday, September 9, FREE co-facilitated the first Gay-Straight Alliance Workshop to be presented at the statewide SANYS conference. Presenters at the workshop included Claire Miller; Matthew Kuriloff; Clint Perrin, SANYS Director of Policy; and FREE self-advocates Dennis M., President of FREE To BE; Monique M., Hospitality Chairperson of FREE To BE and EEDA Self-Advocate; and Christine B., President of EEDA's Self-Advocacy Group. The New York State Developmental Disabilities Council was present at the workshop and continues to be very supportive of growing Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) statewide. The workshop was packed with participants that engaged in a lively discussion over the next steps in further expansion of LGBTQ advocacy throughout the state – exciting news for LGBT advocacy!

If you are interested in joining the fun, come to FREE To BE and spread the news that everyone is welcome!



**Upcoming 2017
FREE To BE Meetings**

- June 27
- July 25
- August 22
- September 26
- October 24
- November 28
- December 26

Time: 4:30-6:00 pm

Location: Bethpage Fundraising Conference Room

Meetings Include: Inspirational guest speakers, workshops, open discussions, social events and community involvement.

To Learn More: Contact Claire Miller at 516-870-1645 or CMiller02@FamilyRes.org.

HOPEFitness Helping Individuals Stay in Shape

The exercise part of the Nutrition and Wellness Program includes membership fees and classes at HOPEFitness. The HOPEFitness Sports Foundation's mission is to provide, coordinate and support the inclusion of individuals with ALL types of abilities in fitness and sport training. They welcome participants who are physically and/or intellectually challenged, economically disenfranchised or are considered "at risk," either behaviorally or due to their living situations.





“9 to 5 – The Musical” at Bayway Arts Center

Recently, The FREE Players performed “9 to 5 – The Musical” at Bayway Arts Center in East Islip.

Robert S. Budd, CEO of FREE, commented, “It [was] a privilege to welcome you to the theatrical presentation of ‘9 to 5’ performed by the talented and extraordinary FREE Players, which operates under the auspices of Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. I am proud to share that this is the 20th production by our very talented FREE Players.

“The FREE Players are unlike any other theatre group. This group combines the efforts of artists, actors, and musicians that are differently-abled and can create extraordinary productions of classic, full-length musicals and comedies. Members of The FREE Players participate in a one-of-a-kind theatre arts experience that provides professional training in performing arts, set design, vocal training, lighting, sound and orchestration.

“It is an honor to work to achieve our vision of inspiring individuals of all abilities to realize their full potential.

“Please accept our sincere thanks for supporting The FREE Players, and [we] hope you enjoy[ed] the show!”



Upcoming Events

Family Advocacy Quarterly Meeting

Tuesday, June 6, 2017
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
FREE, Old Bethpage

Talent Connection Job Expo

Friday, June 9, 2017
8:30 am – 3:00 pm
Farmingdale State College

Employee Appreciation Event

Wednesday, June 14, 2017
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
The Mansion at Oyster Bay

Family Night With The Long Island Ducks

Tuesday, August 8, 2017
5:00 pm
Bethpage Ballpark, Central Islip

Family Advocacy Quarterly Meeting

Tuesday, September 12, 2017
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
FREE, Old Bethpage

2nd Annual Symposium

Friday, October 6, 2017
8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Hilton Long Island, Melville

40th Anniversary Celebration of Life Gala

Thursday, October 19, 2017
6:00 pm – 11:00 pm
Bourne Mansion, Oakdale



At The Stabler Arena in Bethlehem, PA, for WGI Color Guard East, where the FREE Players Drum Corps got to spend some time with their good friends Emanon Winter Guard. All that our members ever want to be is accepted. Thank you Emanon for embracing our Guard and for realizing that our members share the same passion as you!

FREE Players Drum Corps Continues Momentum

The FREE Players Drum Corps have been busier than ever before these past couple of months. They just wrapped up a thrilling Indoor Season that included performances at The Kings Park and Bethpage St. Patrick's Day parades, Molloy College, The Stabler Arena in Bethlehem, PA, for WGI Color Guard East, and The Pine Belt Arena in Toms River, NJ, for WGI Percussion East. This year, the Color Guard closed out the season with two performances at the University of Dayton Arena, in Dayton, OH, in front of almost 14,000 spectators, with their 2017 Winter Guard production, "Our Dreams Are Limitless." All performances this season saw HUGE standing ovations and didn't leave a dry eye in the stands.

The FREE Drum Corps also launched their new clothing line this Indoor Season, featuring brand new hats, T-shirts, sweatpants and hoodies. Information on how to purchase these items will be made available soon!

The FREE Drum Corps was also visited by the Associated Press (AP) in March. The AP's story on our Drum Corps was featured by over 100 media outlets across the globe, including CBS, NBC, ABC and FOX TV affiliates across the nation. Top tier newspapers, such as the Washington Post, Seattle Times, Miami Herald, and Minneapolis StarTribune, all featured the Corps. The story also was featured by USA Today and TIME.

The Corps is now beginning to take the first steps in preparing for the 2018 Drum Corps Inter-

national World Championships. The FREE Drum Corps will make history as the first differently-abled "corps style" marching band to ever perform at the DCI Finals, DrumLine Battle and SoundSport. The DCI World Championships will take place in 2018 at Lucas Oil Stadium (the home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts) in Indianapolis, IN, with over 30,000 spectators expected to be in attendance.

This coming fall, the Drum Corps will have a very busy marching band season! They are scheduled to perform on October 7 at the USBands Gold Showcase at Walt Whitman High School, in mid-October (Date TBA) at the Newsday Marching Band Festival, on October 29 at the USBands NY State Championships, and will finish off their season on November 11 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ, for the USBands National Championships!

There seems to be no limit to what our very talented musician athletes the FREE Players Drum Corps are capable of. If you would like to find out more information about the Corps you can visit them on social media:

[Facebook.com/FREEPlayersDrumCorps](https://www.facebook.com/FREEPlayersDrumCorps)

[Instagram.com/FREEDrumCorps](https://www.instagram.com/FREEDrumCorps)

[Twitter.com/FREEDrumCorps](https://twitter.com/FREEDrumCorps)

[YouTube.com/FREEPlayersDrumCorps](https://www.youtube.com/FREEPlayersDrumCorps)

And [GoFundMe.com/FREEDrumCorps](https://www.gofundme.com/FREEDrumCorps)



Girl Scouts of Suffolk County Partner With FREE

On May 12, the Girl Scouts of Suffolk County (GSSC) held a press conference at Camp Edey, Juliette Low Friendship Center, in Bayport, to announce their partnership with FREE.

The morning started off with the Flag Ceremony and the Girl Scouts Promise, followed by the FREE Players Ensemble, who performed The National Anthem.

“We are delighted to foster our partnership with FREE,” commented Yvonne Grant, the GSSC’s President and CEO. “Both GSSC and FREE look for ways to serve and give back to the community, so a relationship like this makes a tremendous amount of sense, as each agency can benefit from the services the other has to offer. This alignment is a surefire win-win situation for both GSSC and FREE.”

“Hi, I am Ella Barrett, a Girl Scout from Troop 1390. I spend almost every Monday at FREE with the group of teens in the after-school program. Some people may call it “volunteering,” but I don’t think of it as volunteering; I enjoy spending my time there and never once thought of it as work or a task. I was just hanging out with a group of amazing kids. I learned each kid there has something special about themselves and are all really funny and kind. I call all those kids my friends and I hope they think of me in the same way. FREE has given me a lot of amazing opportunities to make memories, laugh, smile, and have a great time. I also realized they all are just like me and my friends. Even though they have a disability they work past that and want to live a normal life just like you or me. They are just teens after all, and even though I haven’t been one (yet that is), it is thought to be the toughest years of your life for everyone, disability or not.”



Presently, Suffolk Girl Scouts are participants in FREE’s afterschool program, where they do arts and crafts, music, and sing-a-longs with participants in the FREE program in East Setauket. Additionally, the Girl Scouts have also designed gardens at FREE’s residences in Hauppauge and Kings Park. Also, Troop No. 1853 will design a serenity garden, complete with bird houses, at two of FREE’s houses in Ridge as part of their Silver Award Project.



Through FREE’s Program Without Walls, individuals have helped GSSC deliver Girl Scout cookies to local legislators and dignitaries. These men and women have also assisted with packing cookies for distribution to school superintendents, as well as helping to assemble cookie order forms and packages.

FREE will also be present at a Girl Scout getaway weekend in the beginning of June. The theme will be diversity and inclusion, and FREE’s Speakers Bureau and The FREE Players Ensemble will be performing. Girl Scouts attending this getaway weekend will be among the first recipients of the all-new Inclusion Patch.

The Inclusion Patch is very special, as it was designed by Joseph S., an attendee of the FREE Day Habilitation Program.

Robert S. Budd, CEO of FREE, spoke about how happy he is that we are implementing so many projects with the GSSC. Robert went on to discuss the future opportunities between FREE and the GSSC.



FREE Individuals Get Political

The men and women of FREE went political this year continuing to speak up for themselves! For 1 ½ years, FREE has worked collaboratively with provider agencies across New York State on the #bFair2DirectCare movement. In 2016, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo launched an initiative to raise the minimum wage in New York State to \$15/hour. Ask any of the men and women – FREE is privileged to support the initiative if they feel their Direct Support Professionals deserve to make a decent wage, and the answer is a resounding YES. However, the Governor’s passed budget did not include a funding stream to raise existing salaries to meet the new minimum wage increase. This effectively put the financial burden on the shoulders of the provider agencies. As a result of this oversight, the #bFair2DirectCare movement became a multi-year initiative.

Our grassroots effort shifted focus to the Governor’s 2017-18 budget. FREE and it’s fellow provider agencies “turned up the heat.” Teams of self-advocates and advocates took their message directly to those they elected. We met with senators and assemblymembers in their Albany offices and in district to bring attention to the bFair movement. Rallies were held by fellow provider agencies across the state. Social media blasts went out on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Phone calls and letter writing campaigns ensued.

On March 24, a team of self-advocates, advocates, allies and family members stood tall in Times Square, united with sister agencies in favor of the #bFair2DirectCare movement. On March 28, a Circle of Care wrapped it’s way around the NYS Capitol building’s War Room in an effort to be heard. With both the NYS Assembly and Senate putting \$45 million in their proposed budgets, the initiative again went to the Governor. It was during the March 28 rally that hundreds of self-advocates and allies were greeted by Governor Cuomo for the announcement that he would, in fact, include \$55 million dollars in the budget to offset the cost impact of raising the minimum wage. The funding will enable provider agencies to offer their Direct Support Professionals a living wage!



Working Together to Bridge the Transition Gap

On April 6, FREE welcomed agencies, school district educators, counselors, administrators and SEPTA representatives to come explore our comprehensive services — how we support seamless transition experiences from the world of school-to-work for students and families — at our Transition Expo.

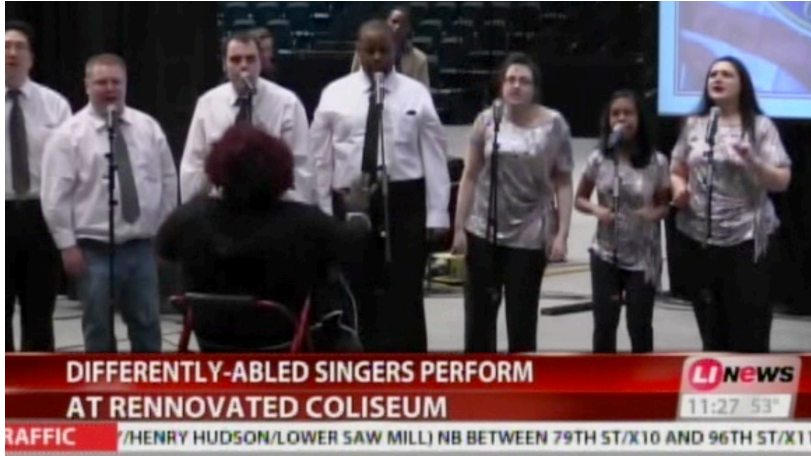
Everyone enjoyed this networking event, which included refreshments, entertainment, a services expo, as well as an informative Panel Session comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

- BOCES Regional Special Education-Technical Assistance Support Center (RSE-TASC)
- Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)
- NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) Employment Training Program (ETP)
- NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH)



State of the County Address

What an honor it was for the FREE Players Ensemble to be the first group to perform at the new Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum presented by New York Community Bank (NYCB). The performance took place at the State of the County Address.



Candlelight Vigil for the Homeless

Thank you to all who contributed to the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless "Have a Heart for the Homeless" Candlelight Vigil. We would also like to recognize friends and families of Club Friendship, part of FREE's children's respite program, who collected non-perishable food items, hygiene products and several winter coats!



Every time you shop with AmazonSmile, a portion of your purchase is donated to Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. Buy the items you need and support a good cause at the same time! Type smile.amazon.com into your browser and select Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. as the charity!

The generosity of many Valued Team Members has offered Treasure Town the opportunity to support more than 950 Valued Team Members since 2009.

Get Involved! Sign Up!

Application available on the Intranet or contact TreasureTown@FamilyRes.org.



May Is National Foster Care Month

As part of a “Travel With Dignity” initiative, FREE received donations of new duffel bags and luggage sets to be donated to children in foster care who often have to travel from placement to placement with their belongings in garbage bags. The adopted youth and adoptive parents in the Stop the Bounce monthly support group meetings decorated the bags and wrote messages of hope and inspiration on note cards which will go in each bag for the foster care youth receiving them.

At our next monthly support group meeting on June 8, we are planning a joint initiative in which foster care youth from MercyFirst will be joining the adoptive youth and parents to exchange the duffel bags and luggage sets!



To order a copy of Stop the Bounce, visit StopTheBounce.org.



stop the bounce

Stop the Bounce Needs Your HELP!

The average foster care child moves seven times before the age of 18. Most of the time, these children are moving place to place carrying only a garbage bag.

Our goal is to eliminate trash bags as an acceptable form of luggage for foster children. It's important to give them a good quality bag to reassure them that they, or their belongings, are NOT disposable.

To see our wish list, visit: goo.gl/2CKaux

Other Ways You Can Help:

There are many ways you can help children in foster care. Even if you can't be a foster parent right now, you can get involved by helping in other ways.

Donate Online

at FamilyRes.org.

Help Us Spread the Word

in our community about the need for forever families.

Visit StopTheBounce.org

to learn more about other ways you can make a difference.

Network Happenings



SKILLS UNLIMITED, INC.

SKILLS CREATES FACEBOOK PAGE

We are excited to announce the launch of our Network Partner, Skills Unlimited, Inc.'s, brand new Facebook Page!!! Make sure you like their page so you can keep up with all of the amazing things they do each day!

Check it out by searching for Skills Unlimited, Inc. on Facebook, or visit <https://www.facebook.com/Skills-Unlimited-Inc-1419837484982401/>.

SKILLS UNLIMITED GARDEN

FREE's Eat Smart New York Team, and the wonderful group at Skills Unlimited, Inc. put together the new 2,500-square-foot garden at Skills.

Special thanks to the entire group that worked so hard to fill the 12 boxes, which include herbs, tomatoes, lettuce, spinach, peas, eggplant, bok choy, peppers and radishes. In the upcoming weeks we will plant cucumbers, squash and zucchini.



TRI IN THE NEWS

We are excited to share that TRI was featured in New York Industries for the Disabled's (NYSID) Newsletter for being Member Agency of the Year! Also spotlighted was Thomas F., an individual who receives services, for being named Employee of the Year.



TRI/ACDS PEN-PAL PROGRAM

Valued Team Member, Jacqualeen Scholl, initiated a Pen-Pal Program. TRI had sent out the first batch of letters and are expecting response letters from their new friends at ACDS in the very near future!

TASTE OF THE TOWN

TRI's Kitchen to Table program was designed to offer the senior citizens in the Town of North Hempstead, who call TRI for Project Independence Services, the opportunity to purchase a hot meal and have it delivered to their home at the price of \$2.75 per meal. To date, we have provided more than 70 meals.

UNITED WAY AWARDS

- Pronto of Long Island, Inc. received \$12,100 for Healthy Living
- Adelante of Suffolk County, Inc. received \$27,648 for Youth Leadership and Family Education
- Skills Unlimited, Inc. received \$14,500 for Long Term Sheltered Employment
- And TRI received \$7,000 for Supported Employment



ADELANTE CARDIAC HEALTH EVENTS

Southside Hospital hosted Adelante's After School Program for an evening of Cardiac Health Education and Nutrition information. Dr. Harold Fernandez shared his story as an immigrant with the visiting students. Northwell Health/Southside Hospital brought free services (blood pressure, glucose, BMI, and cholesterol screening), as well as CPR training to Adelante's community. Two Physicians were on hand providing free one-on-one consultations in English and Spanish.



CONGRATULATIONS PRONTO!

We would like to offer a big congratulations to our Valued Affiliate, Pronto of Long Island, Inc., for winning the Award for Social Impact at the 5th Annual Long Island Imagine Awards!



Miriam Morales Reaching High to Achieve More

Born and raised in Brentwood, NY, Miriam Morales discovered her passion for performing early in life. She began acting in church performances at a young age, and when she was in middle school, she played Katherine from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. As her passion for the arts continued to grow, a guidance counselor suggested that she apply for The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, a two-year performing arts conservatory, to hone her craft. But how would she be able to pay for this? "At the time, I was the first one in my immediate family to go to college, so I didn't have anyone to help me through the process of applying for financial aid or grants," Miriam said. "I had no idea how to get money to help pay for school."

Luckily, Adelante of Suffolk County, Inc. was offering a scholarship. "I was in high school at the time and my heart was set on going to school for the arts," Miriam commented. "When I applied for the scholarship, I had to write an essay and go through a whole interview process with one of their board members and I won the scholarship. That money helped me to start my dream."

After graduating from The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Miriam continued her studies at TVI Actors Studio in Los Angeles before returning to her East Coast roots. Following her return to New York, she enrolled at Fordham University at Lincoln Center, where she graduated with degrees in Communications/Media Studies, as well as Latin American/Latino Studies.

Miriam is quickly making a name for herself on the small screen. Her big break came when she landed the recurring role of Ramona "Pidge" Contreras on the smash hit Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*. Pidge is a feisty inmate who works at the nail salon alongside Dascha Polanco as Dayanara, and Jessica Pimentel as Maria. *Orange is the New Black* has become a well-known series, earning recognition from the Screen Actors Guild Awards for "Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series," a Critics' Choice Television Award for "Best Comedy Series," and a Satellite Award for "Best Cast – Television Series." The series was also nominated for "Best Television Series" at the 2016 Golden Globe Awards and is currently filming its highly-anticipated fifth season.

Outside of acting, Miriam is a budding philanthropist. Drawing from personal experiences within her own family and her role on *Orange is the New Black*, she has a passion for helping women transition smoothly back into society after serving time in prison. "It's something that I really want to get involved with because my sister was in prison," Miriam stated. "Not having someone around for five or six years – it's not only a life changing process for the person coming out, but it's also an adjustment for the people that she's going to be around. Although every situation is obviously different for women coming out of the system, my advice to them is to stay positive and to set goals for when you come out. Make sure that you are surrounding yourself with family and friends that support you and care about you, and that they're going to protect you and help make sure you don't make the same mistakes again."

Over the years, FREE has developed relationships with a number of law enforcement agencies, such as the Suffolk County Police Department, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, among others, and have worked with youth transitioning from incarceration. FREE is looking to build on those successes and expand to another population that has significant needs in this area, such as women being released from prison.

"From being on *Orange is the New Black* I have learned that the people you are around become your family," added Miriam. "I think that there could be better programs in the prison to help these women, just so they are not waiting to get out to restart their life. They can begin setting things up so they are prepared for when they are released. I don't know if there is some kind of therapy that they can offer, not just for the person that is in there, but for the families as well. This way you don't have to wait until someone comes out to start the healing process."



Photo Credit: Paul Gregory

In the future, Miriam also hopes to start a foundation in honor of her cousin, Jonathan, who was born with a rare developmental disorder called Smith-Lemli-Opitz Syndrome (SLOS). Even though Jonathan is on the very extreme end of it, where he can't walk or talk, it's important to stay positive. "You should not consider your disability an obstacle," Miriam expressed. "It shouldn't stop you from being happy and living your life, no matter what it is you want to accomplish."

"Growing up, I didn't know I was living in a lower-class neighborhood – I know that now – but having lived there, it shaped me into who I am and gave me perspective just overall on life, and with my experiences with friends and family," Miriam added. "Everything that has happened in my life happened for a reason. It helped me to grow and become the person that I am today, so I wouldn't change anything about it."

Although Miriam is too humble to consider herself a role model, she has been quite successful so far and will continue to reach high and achieve more because of her wonderful outlook on life. "I've been contacted by people telling me how helpful I have been," Miriam said. "It's nice to know that I have been doing so. But I think that what you guys [at FREE] do for the communities on Long Island is really great and hopefully it will also make me become better in some way."

For more information on Miriam, visit TheMiriamMorales.com.

What Will Your Legacy Be?

If you want to build your legacy at FREE, consider a gift in your Will or Trust. It has these benefits:

Simplicity: A few sentences in your Will or Living Trust are all that is needed to complete your gift.

Flexibility: Until your Will or Trust goes into effect, you are free to alter your plans.

Versatility: You can bequeath a specific item, an amount of money, a gift contingent upon certain events or a percentage of your estate.

Tax Benefits: Your estate is entitled to an unlimited estate tax charitable deduction for gifts to qualified organizations like ours.

How a Gift in Your Will Works: Your estate planning attorney can help you structure a gift to the FREE so your loved ones will be taken care of af-

ter you're gone. You can give a certain amount of cash, securities or property, or you can give a percentage amount. All it takes is a few simple sentences. For specific language to provide to your attorney, please contact us.

Why Leaving a Percentage Makes Sense: When planning a future gift, it's sometimes difficult to determine what size donation will make sense. Emergencies happen and you need to ensure your family is financially taken care of first. Including a gift of a percentage of your estate or a percentage of your residual estate ensures that your donation will remain proportionate to your estate size, no matter how it fluctuates over the years.

These types of gifts also make you a member of the 1977 Legacy Society.

For information and help in determining the type of gift that would work best for your unique circumstances, please contact Nancy Cohen, CFRE, at 516-870-1612 or NCohen@FamilyRes.org.



Nancy Cohen, CFRE

The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.
— William James

Speakers Bureau

The Speakers Bureau was established to empower the individuals at FREE by teaching them advocacy skills and to encourage the individuals to write and share their inspirational stories to educate others and to increase awareness of disabilities.

The "FREE Your Mind" Speakers Bureau includes presentations that foster understanding, respect, education and enlightenment. It will also provide presentations to school districts, colleges, professionals, families, recipients of services, and other groups on topics including, but not limited to, self-direction and empowerment, advocacy and awareness, the power of positive language, living with a disability, befriending the bully, and inclusion; customized presentations are also available.

To schedule a presentation, contact Claire Miller at 516-870-1645, or by e-mailing CMiller02@FamilyRes.org.

The FREE Thinkers

The FREE Thinkers consists of individuals from FREE's OPWDD Day Programs. They work closely with the Self Advocacy Association of NYS (SANYS) and are active in legislative action. They have traveled to Albany and NYSACRA for events to advocate for more funds and programs to help individuals and staff in the Human Service field.

For details, contact Michelle Flood at 631-273-1300, ext. 3503, or by e-mailing MFlood@FamilyRes.org.

Family Advocacy Group

FREE's Family Advocacy Group was created by families with a mission to support our family members and each other. Family Advocacy meetings are held every quarter where we support families, share ideas and committee reports, and listen to informative speakers. We meet in FREE's Old Bethpage location from 7-9 p.m. and dessert is always served!

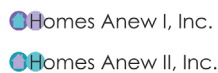
For details, contact Mickey Michaels, Coordinator of Family Advocacy at FREE, by calling 516-870-1694, or by e-mailing MMichaels01@FamilyRes.org.

FREE To BE

FREE To BE is a community of men and women with disabilities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). The support network is dedicated to socialization, advocacy and education, while providing a safe, engaging space for LGBTQ individuals, families, staff, friends and allies. We have established a partnership with The Long Island LGBT Network. We provide inspirational guest speakers, workshops, open discussion, social events, and educational and support services. Meetings occur on the last Tuesday of the month.

For more information, contact Claire Miller at 516-870-1645, or by e-mailing CMiller02@FamilyRes.org.

Family of FREE Network



FREE, headquartered in Old Bethpage, benefits more than 4,000 individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities, mental illness and traumatic brain injury and their families each year.



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