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**Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE)**  
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**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

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**SPECIAL NEEDS ARTISTS HONORED AT LENZ WINERY**

**Artists Have Art Work on Exhibit at LENZ**



**Pictured L-R: Jeff Bailey, LENZ Winery; Sue Sorrentino, SVP FREE; Jerol Bailey, Director of Sales, LENZ Winery; Mike O'Connell, FREE artist; Town of Southold Supervisor Scott Russell; Joseph Stoyer, FREE artist; Angelo Puzzo, FREE artist; Robert S. Budd, CEO, FREE, Angel Athenas, FREE artist; Wendy Santillo, FREE artist; Andrew Baum, FREE artist; Desiree Louis, FREE artist; Jessica Gallone, Senior Director, FREE; Ed Regensburg, Director Art Therapy, FREE**

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**OLD BETHPAGE, NY** – Artists participating in Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE) Fine Art and Art Therapy Programs, who have their works exhibited at The LENZ Winery, were honored at a “Meet the Artists” reception at LENZ. Attendees were able to meet the artists and hear them speak about their work. The exhibit, “Ascension”, runs through September 4th, 2017, at the winery, which is open 7 days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. All are encouraged to view the works and perhaps purchase a piece. The proceeds of sales go towards supporting the artist and his/her program. At this year’s reception alone seven pieces of art were purchased by private collectors.

“We’re thrilled to continue our special partnership with LENZ,” said Robert S. Budd, CEO, FREE. “We have talented artists at FREE, and LENZ understands the importance of providing our artists with a venue to show their work, and for that we are thankful,” he continued.

The LENZ Winery, one of Long Island’s oldest and most prestigious North Fork vineyards, has long been a supporter of FREE. They have hosted a number of showcases for artwork created by members of FREE’s art program.

FREE, a leader in the field of human services dedicated to helping individuals of all abilities realize their full potential believes that Art Therapy provides a powerful means for healing and communication for anyone, but especially for people who find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings through spoken words alone.

“Ascension” is FREE’s second Professionally Juried Competition of artwork created by the Artists of FREE. Over 40 paintings were submitted to this year’s competition! The artists represented are the finalists whose quality of work “rose high” to have garnered entrance into this glorious collection. Eighteen Tier One pieces were selected along with First, Second and Third place winners by esteemed judge, Kevin Larkin, Director of the b.j. spoke gallery in Huntington and award-winning artist.



**First Place Winner Mike O’Connell with his piece THE WAVE**

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 the process, weekly emotional and spiritual self-revelation spiraled FREE’s 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.

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“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. The artists 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 FREE’s dedicated staff. It was their patience and unerring commitment to “stay the course” and believe that FREE’s 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 FREE’s 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 the artists’ successful, ongoing contributions to the community through employment, volunteerism and cultural enhancement for us all.

#### **Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE)**

Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE), founded in 1977, benefits and proudly supports more than 4,000 individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, mental illness and traumatic brain injury. It is the mission of FREE to assist individuals of all abilities realize their full potential. FREE provides a diverse array of supports and services including: housing; recovery services; transition to work; employment; day, community and family services; respite; crisis services; education and after school support; specialty health services; and advocacy.

FREE also collaborates with a variety of diverse 501(c)(3) nonprofit partners on educational, vocational, rehabilitative and a myriad of other creative initiatives to enhance the local communities and the lives of more than 25,000 people that reside within them. Each of the valued partners of the FREE Network has a unique mission, vision and strategic goals that are aligned in purpose, and embody the spirit of the meaningful work we do every day. For more information, please call 516-870-7000 or visit [www.familyres.org](http://www.familyres.org).

#### **About The LENZ Winery**

Founded in 1978, The LENZ Winery has some of the most mature vines in the region and given the extensive replanting of California vineyards to avoid further damage from the phylloxera louse, in the country as well. All LENZ wines are estate bottled, meaning they are made from grapes grown entirely in the LENZ vineyards. We strive to create wines that will be among the very best of its type, made anywhere in the world. The LENZ Tasting Room is open daily from 10am - 6pm. For more information, please call 631-734-6010.

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