



Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE)
191 Bethpage-Sweet Hollow Road, Old Bethpage, NY 11804
Phone: 516-870-1600 Fax: 516-870-1660

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

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CONTACT: Patrice Radowitz, Tel: [516-870-1621](tel:516-870-1621)/Cell: [631-553-7432](tel:631-553-7432)
Email: pradowitz@familyres.org

Andy Robles: 516-603-0447
Email: familyres.free@gmail.com

**LOCAL LGBTQ ADVOCACY GROUP HONORED BY SELF-ADVOCACY
ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK**



L-R: Dennis Murphy, President of FREE To BE; Monique Medina, Hospitality Chairperson of FREE To BE; Stefanie Russo, FREE Advocacy Peer Mentor; Claire Miller, FREE Advocacy Coordinator and Steven Paul, FREE DSP

Old Bethpage, NY – Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE) is proud to announce that

More...

FREE To BE, FREE's LGBTQ advocacy group, was presented with the **Self-Advocacy Group of the Year Award** on Friday, September 9th, 2016 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 the SANYS has recognized that work by naming them the 2016 Self-Advocacy Group of the Year," said Robert S. Budd, CEO, FREE.

FREE co-hosted the first LGBTQ and Allies Meet and Greet on Thursday, September 8th, the first day of the conference, with Pamela Boyle, AHRC Sexuality and Socialization Specialist and **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 and self-advocates from around the state. On Friday, September 9th, 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 Murphy, President of **FREE To BE**, Monique Medina, Hospitality Chairperson of **FREE To BE** and EEDA self-advocate Christine Barker, 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 (GSA's) statewide. The workshop was full and participants engaged in a lively discussion of next steps in further expansion of LGBTQ advocacy throughout the state.

To learn more about **FREE To BE** or to become a member, email us @ freetobe@familyres.org.

For more information on how to get involved in SANYS statewide or SANYS Long Island region, please visit www.sanys.org.

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 Family of 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.