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## **LONG ISLAND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT ENABLES YOUTH TRANSITION TO WORK PROGRAM**

Old Bethpage, NY – Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE) announced that they have received a grant from the Long Island Community Foundation to help support a **Transition to Work** program for youth in foster and residential care. This program is a collaborative venture between MercyFirst and FREE.

The purpose of the program is to assist youth in foster and residential care by providing them with information, skills and tools needed to secure employment as they age out of the system. Students from MercyFirst participated in an Orientation for the new employment-readiness program on Wednesday, May 13th.

“We at FREE are thrilled to be partnering with a prestigious organization such as MercyFirst, who have such a long tradition of helping this underserved population,” said Robert S. Budd, CEO, FREE. “We are grateful to the LICF for funding this important job readiness program that will provide the youth with valuable tools to help them transition to the world of employment.

Approximately 25 students will participate in a 10-week program aimed at helping them explore career paths, identify their strengths, develop resumes and cover letters, and learn how to navigate the job search and interviewing process, along with tips to succeed during the initial phase of their employment. The participants

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who successfully complete the program will be assisted in finding apprenticeships, internships, and entry-level jobs so that they can be positioned to take the next steps in their career journey.

“This is a terrific collaboration between our two organizations on behalf of the young people in our care. All you have to do is talk with our youth who have participated in it to see what a difference it has made in their level of skills but more importantly in their confidence to succeed in the workplace. We are indebted to FREE for reaching out to us in the first place and making this possible,” said Jerry McCaffery, President/CEO of MercyFirst.

Recent reports by New York State have cited a high incidence of foster care youth leaving facilities without the tools needed to succeed as adults. This reinforces the need for more programs such as this. The **Transition to Work** project will be used as a model for others to utilize to assist foster care youth throughout the region, and eventually the State.

About Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE)

Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE) founded in 1977 and headquartered in Old Bethpage, benefits and proudly supports more than 4,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities, mental illness and traumatic brain injury. It is the mission of FREE to help 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, primary and specialty health care and advocacy. For more information, please call 516-870-7000 or visit [www.familyres.org](http://www.familyres.org).

About MercyFirst

Headquartered in Syosset, NY, MercyFirst is a not-for-profit human service agency founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1894. MercyFirst provides an integrated continuum of care for over 3,000 traumatized and neglected children, teenagers and their families at 15 sites throughout Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk counties. MercyFirst operates Family Support Programs, Foster Homes and Adoption Services, Treatment Family Foster Care, Community-based Group Homes, Mother/Child Residences and Campus-based Residential Treatment Programs. For more information, please visit [www.mercyfirst.org](http://www.mercyfirst.org)

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