

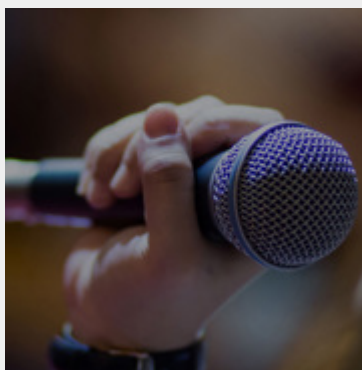


**Mercy
First**
hope is unstoppable



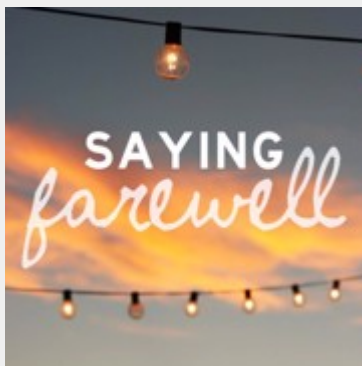
NCPD's Second Precinct Officers Join Us for Fall Fun

MercyFirst hosted a fun Fall Festival at our Syosset Campus with Nassau County Police Department Second Precinct **Officers Chris Lovelace, Andy Oswald, and John Hadrigan**. The special guests played a few games of volleyball and basketball with our kids and enjoyed a pizza dinner. MercyFirst staff prepared a craft activity where everyone decorated bags with positive messages and drawings. The festive bags were later filled with sandwiches and snacks and delivered to our neighbors at The INN (Interfaith Nutrition Network). It was a great opportunity for our youth to experience the joy of giving and helping others in need.



“Despedida” (*Farewell*) - A Musical Performance

One of our START with Hope youth put on a beautiful musical performance of songs that he wrote to say good-bye to the MercyFirst team who cared for him during his stay. His Art Therapist, **Erin Bivens**, help him build up the confidence and skills he needed to perform his powerful songs, which included one called “Despedida” (*Farewell*). “I fulfilled one of my dreams of hearing my music come to life and performing for others,” said the youth when asked about his experience and the unforgettable memories he will have after he leaves MercyFirst.



The START with Hope program at MercyFirst provides unaccompanied migrant children with temporary shelter and care while the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement determines the next step on their journey. On average, there are 20 youth in the START program, who attend school on our campus or in our group homes. Their length of stay averages between 10-45 days, with most relocating to family or sponsor homes out of NY state.



Former MercyFirst Board Chair to Take Polar Bear Plunge (Again!)

On January 1, 2022, **Scott Gildea**, former MercyFirst Board Chair, will be taking his tenth Polar Bear Plunge to raise funds for MercyFirst. This annual tradition of Scott's has helped to raise much needed funds for MercyFirst programs. Last year, Scott's plunge raised over \$20,000! We are so grateful for Scott's continued willingness to dive into the icy waters for MercyFirst. Show your support of Scott by making a [donation today!](#)



NYS Coalition of Children's Behavioral Health Services Honors MercyFirst Staff; Names MercyFirst CEO to its Board

Congratulations to **Kristen Whelan, Medicaid Behavioral Health Services Director** and **Jason Montalvo, Art Therapist** (pictured left) on their recognition from the NYS Coalition of Children's Behavioral Health Services as **Employees of the Year** for their outstanding performance in implementing Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) at MercyFirst! We are proud of each of their accomplishments and honored to have them part of the MercyFirst team!

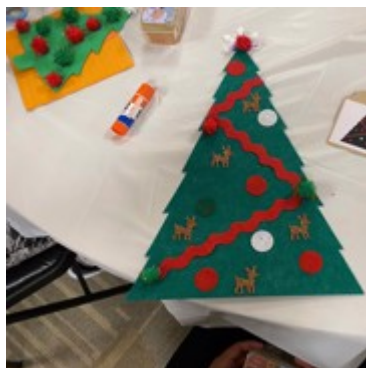


MercyFirst CEO, Renée Skolaski was recently elected to serve alongside other human service agency leaders on the coalition's Board. The Children's Coalition provides a unified voice for children mental health care providers and the families they serve, across NY State. Strengthening the array of children's mental health services, improving family and youth involvement in treatment planning, and leading public policy development and advocacy for funding of children's mental health services are the Coalition's priorities.



Volunteer Spotlight: Great Neck Rotary Club, Lety Anez and Members from Shelter Rock Church

Volunteer groups helped make Thanksgiving special for MercyFirst youth this year. The **Great Neck Rotary Club** generously donated 52 turkeys plus all the fixings for families in need. Staff from our Family Support Services and Care Management programs, along with our Maintenance team, worked together to deliver the food to families throughout Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx, making sure they would have a delicious Thanksgiving dinner!



Meanwhile, volunteer **Lety Anez** and the wonderful community from **Shelter Rock Church** provided a Thanksgiving meal and holiday craft making activity for some of our youth. This terrific group has been volunteering with MercyFirst for nearly 5 years, including last year when they continued to volunteer virtually!

There's still time to support our children & families this holiday season.

www.mercyfirst.org/holiday

E-mail ksneden@mercyfirst.org or call 516.921.0808 x 1114





Wishing you a Happy Holiday Season!

The artwork for this year's holiday appeal was created in MercyFirst's Art and Creative Therapies program by unaccompanied migrant children in our START with Hope program who collaborated to paint the **Bird and House** mural, saying it reminded them of home. The tangible and intangible losses of migration and leaving their country without a parent are felt deeply by these children. The ability to express through the arts what is valued, loved and remembered provides youth with an emotionally supportive and soothing experience as they process loss and grief.

[Make a Donation Today](#)

ABOUT MERCYFIRST: Rooted in a legacy of mercy spanning more than a century, MercyFirst inspires hope and promotes healing for the most vulnerable children and families in New York City and across Long Island. Founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1894, today MercyFirst offers a range of innovative programs and services that provide stability and support and help individuals and communities thrive.