



**Mercy
First**
hope is unstoppable



Celebrating Pride Month Through Art. MercyFirst youth and staff have participated in a variety of art projects and activities throughout the month to celebrate Pride Month. Featured here is a colorful mural created by teens in our art therapy program at our Syosset Campus. Visit us on our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) pages to see more of the rainbow-inspired expressions of pride that have taken place this month.



Student Social Justice Club Learns About & Celebrates Juneteenth

MercyFirst's Art Therapist Melissa Rubenfeld and Youth Development Specialist Alexa Hartgrove led youth in our Social Justice group in an art therapy project recognizing Juneteenth. The youth were actively involved in the design and creation of the colorful and powerful image, discussing the meaning of the work from a broad and personal perspective.



MercyFirst Awarded Sisters of Mercy Grant

MercyFirst received a \$40,000 grant from the Sisters of Mercy and the Board of Directors of Mercy Ministry Corporation for our Creative Arts Therapies Program. The grant will be used to enhance our individual and group creative arts, including music, animal assisted therapy, and recreation-based activities that provide our residential, group home and unaccompanied immigrant youth with opportunities for personal and collective reflection and healing from the chronic trauma they have experienced.

Youth enjoy participating in drum circle groups led by a Music Therapist.



Vidal (center) attended her High School graduation ceremony with MercyFirst staff by her side, Youth Support Counselor Felicia Copeland (left) and Program Manager Sharene Williams (right).

Update: Meet Vidal, Class of 2022!

Last month we shared a story about Vidal, a young woman in our Mother/Baby Group Home who spoke at our golf outing. She told her story of being in foster care and all the struggles that come with being a new mother. We are happy to share that this month Vidal received her High School diploma and walked in the graduation ceremony with her fellow graduates! Vidal has also completed her Certified Nursing Assistant program at the Long Island Educational Opportunity Center and took the final exams. The entire MercyFirst team is so proud of Vidal and her achievements and will continue to support her as she works towards creating a bright future for her and her daughter!



IN THE NEWS: “MercyFirst pursues a worthy mission” – Newsday Editorial

“When the Sisters of Mercy paid \$7,500 for 120 acres of farmland in Syosset in 1894, they did so to provide a summer retreat for the children at the Sisters’ Brooklyn orphanage.

But the order quickly decided its ministry for children would be better served by another orphanage at the location, and it thrived for over a century. When residential foster care was a more accepted option, it housed 100 children or more. High school sports teams won league basketball championships. Kids were adopted, or graduated, and went on to independent lives.” [READ FULL COLUMN](#)

To learn more about MercyFirst’s decision to voluntarily close its Residential Foster Care program, read our statement [here](#).

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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.