



2023 Graduates - Juan, Kaitlyn and Gene

Celebrating Our Scholars

MercyFirst is so proud of our "Class of 2023 Scholars" and celebrates the educational achievements of our youth! This spring, four students from our family foster care and residential foster care programs graduated from college! Six youth graduated high school and have plans to pursue college or a vocational program. Twenty-two college students successfully completed the school year and will be continuing their studies in the fall.

Through the generous support of our Scholarship Fund donors, we are able to provide scholarship assistance to students like Juan, Kaitlyn and Gene as they pursue college or vocational school.



"Comfort Drop" Event for MercyFirst Youth

The youth at our Merrick Community Residence were gifted with a "Comfort Drop" event hosted by the Precious Dreams Foundation. The event included each youth receiving their own comfort bag of items, and pillowcase decorating where the youth focused on what made them unique and special. The highlight of the event was New York Times best-selling author, Susan Verde, reading her book "I Am Peace" to the kids and autographing another book for each of them. Many thanks to Nicole Russell, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Precious Dreams Foundation for putting together this event!

Our Merrick Community Residence program is a therapeutic home-like setting for youth experiencing emotional difficulties. Our specially trained therapeutic staff work with youth who are not able to safely be in their home, and help them to learn self-regulation, emotional management and self-care skills.



MercyFirst Awarded Help for Children Grant

MercyFirst is pleased to announce the recent grant award from Help for Children. Through a competitive application process, Help for Children selected MercyFirst to receive \$10,000 in support of the *A Safe Way Forward (Intimate Partner Violence) Program*.

A Safe Way Forward is a prevention services program that provides support to the whole family by addressing the root causes of family violence. The goal of the program is to keep children safe with family by providing education, reducing trauma, and rebuilding strong and healthy families.



Bridges to the Future Annual Youth Retreat

The team from our Youth Development program, Bridges to the Future, took a trip up to Frost Valley, NY for a weekend of teambuilding, camping, and adventurous outdoor activities.

Fifteen youth from our family foster care and residential foster care programs attended the weekend, participating in teambuilding and leadership activities. Everyone was prepared to push past their comfort zone as they walked over a cable bridge at night, participated in a blind-folded trust activity and zip line, just to name a few activities! Throughout the weekend, the youth were encouraged to write messages of motivation and positivity for each other to help overcome their fears or insecurities. By the end, new friends and memories were made, along with gained self confidence through successful completion of the many challenging activities.



Celebrations in June

Students and staff came together to create a special art project of what **Juneteenth**, an official MercyFirst holiday, means to them- some of the words used were power, strength, freedom and unity. The collection was installed at our Syosset campus for all students and staff to view.



To celebrate **Pride Month** our Youth Development team, youth and staff, came together to create a beautiful mural at our Brooklyn office. LGBTQIA+ youth as well as LGBTQIA+ allies decorated feathers as a unique as themselves to create a pair of large wings.

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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.



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