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

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**NATIONAL FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH SPURS NON-PROFIT
PRESIDENT TO SHARE EXPERIENCE OF BEING AN ADOPTIVE
FATHER**



Dr. Long with five sons: Jason; Jonathan; DJ; Alex and Michael

Old Bethpage, NY – Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE) President Dr. Christopher Long, 47, of Lindenhurst, has made adoption, and foster care, a priority in his personal and professional life. In an effort to raise awareness of the need to help children in foster care to #StopTheBounce, Dr. Long would like to share his very personal experience with the subject:

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“In honor of National Foster Care Month (MAY) I share with you my story

I often joke that some people collect stamps while I collect children (just kidding)! My dream of becoming a father was one that I relentlessly worked toward accomplishing soon after I completed graduate school. Being a gay man certainly limited the options but I spent countless hours researching routes that included: co-parenting, surrogacy, international and domestic adoption. Foster care was a distant thought and honestly, I feared pursuing that avenue of opportunity as the “system” is riddled with dysfunction and obstacles that often create countless barriers for the child and interested parent. Most people I spoke to at the time—foster parents, professionals, etc. shared undesirable experiences and my fear was exacerbated. However, after I learned the staggering statistics of children waiting for adoptive homes (right here in my own backyard) coupled with the confounding facts that the majority of children who grow up in foster care do not finish high school, are unable to secure employment, go to jail and/or become homeless (at age 18); I was moved to action.

I adopted the attitude that “IF IT IS STILL IN YOUR HEART AND CONTINUES TO FEEL RIGHTTHEN YOU SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER TAKING A CHANCE” and that we did. My partner at the time and I made the commitment that we would take the punches and pursue our dream of creating a family despite the many challenges we knew we were bound to face on this journey. The process was, at times, tumultuous and heart-wrenching however well worth the investment. This life-changing experience was met with a lot of tears and angst but the determination, boundless laughter and love lead us to where we are today. Fast forward over a decade later we have adopted, raised and continue to co-parent five incredible young men of character and integrity. These young men are a nothing less than a gift. We have learned as much from our children as I hope they have and will to continue learn from us.

Although being a parent of five boys certainly presents its array of challenges, the love of family and the strength of the bond we share far outweighs the tribulations of the process that is now a distant memory.”



The Long Brothers: Top Left to Right: Jonathan; DJ, Jonathan and Alex; DJ Bottom Left to Right: Alex; Michael and DJ and Jason

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2015) there has been a steady increase in the number of children in foster care since 2011 as the latest Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data reflects nearly 500,000 children are in care today. Further, the Children Welfare League of America suggests that the total is roughly double the number of children in foster care in the mid-1980's. Of those children, nearly 120,000 are waiting to be adopted. The American children currently in foster care are among the most at-risk children in American society. Research shows that adults who were formerly in foster care are more likely than the general population to succumb to poor life outcomes. Former foster children are more likely to not complete high school, unable to secure employment, become homeless, incarcerated, or dependent on state services.

About Dr. Long

Christopher D. Long, Ed. D, is the President of Family Residences and Essential Enterprises, Inc. (FREE), a not-for-profit agency that supports individuals of all abilities with community living opportunities, employment, day services, clinical, education and after-school support, and other assistance. Dr. Long joined FREE in January of 2010. He has been recognized as a professional whose exceptional skills and dedication profoundly affect the lives of people with disabilities. Throughout his career, he has held various administrative positions in residential/housing services, day services, schools, supported employment and professional development.

Prior to joining FREE, for 10 years Dr. Long held multiple executive management positions at several not-for-profit health-related and human service organizations. Additionally, Dr. Long has a considerable amount of higher education teaching experience. In 2009, he joined the adjunct faculty at St. Joseph's College in Patchogue and teaches graduate courses for the Child Study Department. Dr. Long is also an adjunct faculty member at Stony Brook University in Long Island, NY.

Dr. Long holds a doctorate degree in special education, a Master of Arts in special education, a master's degree in educational leadership and Bachelor of Arts in secondary education/psychology. He holds a New York State Special Education permanent teaching certification and a New York State School Building Leader certification. Further, he completed post-doctorate work in preparation for his CASAC license.

Dr. Long was the 2005 winner of the prestigious Zella Bronfman Butler Award for outstanding contributions in the field of special education/human services. He is also the author of the inspiring book, "Swimming in a Pool of Peanut Butter," written from the perspective of children with ADHD. Dr. Long's second book, "Stop the Bounce," portrays the experiences of foster children who are hoping to one day find their forever family.

Dr. Long's diversified professional experience and passion for the human services and special education industries has provided him the skills necessary to be an effective leader, a confident visionary and an innovator.

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