



Collaborative Graduation Party Held to Celebrate Foster Youth

A special group of Jefferson County graduates gathered June 10th at the Home of the Innocents to celebrate receiving their high school diplomas or GEDs. The Kentucky Department for Community Based Services, foster care agencies in Jefferson County and True Up joined forces to host the first-ever collaborative graduation celebration for foster youth.



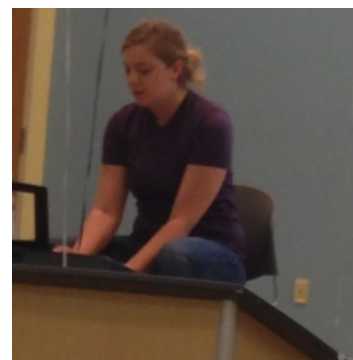
Lorenzo Mauldin, U of L football player, offering inspiring words to the graduates

The idea was simple – to recognize the hard work and dedication of nearly 50 foster youth in Jefferson County who are members of the Class of 2014. The group has beaten the odds by completing their high school education. Statistics show the nationwide high school graduation rate for foster youth is around 50%.

The group heard from University of Louisville football player Lorenzo Mauldin and Western Kentucky University student Jeffery Jordan. Both applauded the accomplishments of the graduates and urged them to continue to follow their dreams.

The atmosphere was festive, with the celebration including a photo booth, DJ, food, gift bags and Class of 2014 t-shirts for the graduates. Chelsea Hoover, a former foster youth, shared her talents with the group, playing the keyboard and singing at the celebration.

The hope is that the collaborative celebration will become an annual event.



Chelsea Hoover plays the keyboard and sings for the group

True Up was pleased to be involved in the collective effort, uniting foster youth who have overcome similar challenges to cross the impressive finish line of earning a high school degree. Participating agencies in the inaugural collaborative graduation celebration included

Department for Community Based Services, Benchmark Family Services, Boys and Girls Haven, Home of the Innocents, Kentucky SAFE, Maryhurst, NECCO, New Hope Foster Homes, Specialized Alternatives for Families (SAFY) and Uspiritus.

More than 20 of the graduates are members of True Up, a youth-driven movement empowering young people in foster care to gain the critical life skills they need to make a successful journey from a structured environment to self-sufficiency.