

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Rhode Island Foster Youth at First Star URI Academy Complete Inaugural Summer**

*Rhode Island becomes second state to host innovative academy*

*Kingston, RI - August 2, 2012* — Less than 3 percent of America's foster youth earn four year degrees compared to 30 percent of the general population.<sup>1</sup> Today, for the 20 foster youth who completed their inaugural summer at the First Star URI Academy, there is hope that those numbers will change. Thanks in large part to the founding support of [Hasbro, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: HAS), as well as the support of [Identity Theft 911](#), [Adoption RI](#) and the state Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF), Rhode Island has become the second state to host this innovative Academy. The program includes a focused four week residential program, located on the University of Rhode Island's Kingston campus, with curriculum designed to provide rising ninth graders with the tools and training they need to succeed for when they exit the foster care system. Monthly meetings and sessions will continue to engage students throughout the year.

"It is an honor to become the second university in the country to host this innovative program and help to make a dramatic difference for foster children in our home state," said URI President David M. Dooley. "Foster youth across the country often lack a stable family environment, but today, I want these 20 young men and women to know how proud we are to have them as part of our University family."

Last summer, national nonprofit [First Star](#) piloted the first Foster Youth Academy on campus at UCLA, which was inspired by USC professor and URI Harrington Board member, Dr. Kathleen Reardon's book "Childhood Denied" and made a reality by film producer Peter Samuelson who leads First Star's efforts. Hasbro was also one of the lead funders in the UCLA pilot program and played an instrumental role in replicating the model in its home state of Rhode Island. The company's support for the URI Academy includes a grant through the Hasbro Children's Fund and countless hours of pro bono management and leadership support. Hasbro supports programs that provide stability to children in crisis situations in areas where it has operating facilities, including Los Angeles and Rhode Island.

"After witnessing the dramatic impact of the UCLA program we were determined to bring this across the country to help foster youth in our home state," said Karen Davis, vice president of community relations, Hasbro, Inc. "We know that we can help change the outcomes for these children by helping them be prepared for college and to realize that their dreams can become a reality with hard work and the support of a program like the First Star URI Academy. It has been a privilege to get to know these wonderful and brave students and to work alongside Matthew Cullina, CEO of Identity Theft 911, Darlene Allen, executive director of Adoption RI, Matthew Buchanan, executive director of our Academy, Tom Dougan, vice president for student affairs at URI and Dr. Janice DeFrances, director of DCYF to make the Academy a reality."

Data compiled by First Star confirms the grim consequences of the collective failure to adequately prepare foster youth who age out of the system without being adopted. In addition to the low

percentage of foster youth earning four year degrees, similar facts are tied to issues of employment, housing and identity theft:

- Employment. Less than half of former foster youth are employed by age 24.
- Housing. 24 percent of former foster youth will experience homelessness
- Credit. Identity theft is a growing problem among foster youth — a problem many do not discover until they exit care as adults (i.e. when applying for an apartment, a car loan, etc.)

“The First Star URI Academy is a beacon of hope for foster children in Rhode Island who often times do not have the opportunity for post-secondary education,” said Dr. Janice DeFrances, director of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF). “With 150 youths aging out of Rhode Island’s foster care system each year, we’re truly blessed to have this innovative program with the University of Rhode Island, Hasbro and First Star to provide the tools, support and hope these kids very much wish for.”

The issues of education, employment, housing, and credit are intertwined and can affect more than 2,000 children in Rhode Island's foster care system each year. For those aging out of the state foster care system, the lack of familial support and a safety net not only increases the likelihood of negative outcomes, but can spiral into a lifetime of poverty.

The First Star URI Academy is giving the 20 students participating an opportunity to change that outcome by providing them with full on-campus immersion, including:

- An introductory college immersion program, including an official welcome into the URI community and four-week campus stay
- A head start on college with three URI undergraduate course credits and networking opportunities
- A caring adult network of foster “alumni” and young adult mentorship
- Individualized attention and services, including interdisciplinary URI campus programs and resources
- Cooking classes provided to the students by the Mario Batali Foundation
- Multimedia training and tools to document student experience through video
- Monthly follow-up programs

After the summer immersion program, foster youth will work with their mentor throughout the year until they return to campus the following summer. The consistent contact and guidance will continue until they exit the foster care system and head to college at the age of 18.

In addition to the training and education provided through the Academy, DCYF and organizations such as Adoption Rhode Island will continue in their tireless effort to find permanent families for state foster youth. The Academy will remain involved with these youth throughout their high school years.

The First Star URI Academy is a reality because of the tireless dedication and support of many groups. Together with First Star, the University of Rhode Island, DCYF, Adoption Rhode Island, Hasbro and IDentity Theft 911 were critical in providing leadership and program development. In addition to the leadership grant made by the Hasbro Children’s Fund, in-kind and financial support was provided by CVS, MetLife, IDentity Theft 911, The DeWolf Family, The Providence Journal, The Tri-Mix Foundation and the Mario Batali Foundation.

### **About First Star**

First Star, a national 501c3 charity dedicated to improving the lives of America's abused and neglected children, is restoring hope through Foster Youth Academies programs around the nation. These Academies offer college-focused 4-6 week residential programs strategically located on college campuses with monthly follow-up programs. Our students receive superior academic support, enrichment and encouragement to help them prepare for and enter two- and four-year colleges. Thus, the Academies are laying a foundation to improve the likelihood that these youth will seek and attain higher education, good jobs, personal wellbeing, career advancement, economic independence, and the ability to contribute to society as responsible citizens. This groundbreaking program was first envisioned by First Star Board Member, Dr. Kathleen Reardon, in her book *Childhood Denied*, and first implemented on campus at the University of California, Los Angeles in the summer of 2011. For more information on the First Star Foster Youth Academy program visit: <http://www.firststar.org/programs/foster-youth-academies.aspx>

### **About the University of Rhode Island**

The University of Rhode Island is known locally and worldwide for its innovative, big ideas, adaptive intelligence and breakthrough solutions to today's puzzling problems. URI's pioneering research extends the University's influence well beyond its coastal borders, while its unique interdisciplinary courses provide its 16,000 undergraduate and graduate students with global opportunities in an intimate environment. Think Big. We Do.

### **About Hasbro, Inc.**

[Hasbro, Inc.](http://www.hasbro.com) (NASDAQ: HAS) is a branded play company providing children and families around the world with a wide-range of immersive entertainment offerings based on the Company's world class brand portfolio. From toys and games, to television programming, motion pictures, digital gaming and a comprehensive licensing program, Hasbro strives to delight its global customers with well-known and beloved brands such as TRANSFORMERS, LITTLEST PET SHOP, NERF, PLAYSKOOL, MY LITTLE PONY, G.I. JOE, MAGIC: THE GATHERING and MONOPOLY. The Company's Hasbro Studios develops and produces television programming for markets around the world. The Hub TV Network is part of a multi-platform joint venture between Hasbro and Discovery Communications (NASDAQ: DISCA, DISCB, DISCK), in the U.S. Through the Company's deep commitment to corporate social responsibility, including philanthropy, Hasbro is helping to build a safe and sustainable world for future generations and to positively impact the lives of millions of children and families every year. It has been recognized for its efforts by being named one of the "World's Most Ethical Companies" and is ranked as one of Corporate Responsibility Magazine's "100 Best Corporate Citizens." Learn more at [www.hasbro.com](http://www.hasbro.com).

### **About IDentity Theft 911®**

Founded in 2003, IDentity Theft 911 is the nation's premier consultative provider of identity and data risk management, resolution and education services. The company serves 13 million households across the country and provides fraud solutions for a range of organizations, including Fortune 500 companies, the country's largest insurance companies, corporate benefit providers, banks and credit unions and membership organizations. Since 2005, the company has helped more than 150,000 businesses manage data breaches. IDentity Theft 911's management team has more than 200 years of insurance and financial experience, having served at companies such as AIG, Liberty Mutual, MetLife, Allstate, FM Global, and other leading institutions. For more information, please visit [www.idt911.com](http://www.idt911.com), [www.facebook.com/idt911](https://www.facebook.com/idt911), and [www.twitter.com/idt911](https://www.twitter.com/idt911).

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<sup>i</sup> **Data and statistics have been compiled by First Star and are publicly available on their web site:**  
[www.firststar.org/library/national-statistics.aspx](http://www.firststar.org/library/national-statistics.aspx)