



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PARK WEST FOUNDATION CO-SPONSORS "JUMP SHOT YOUR FUTURE"
FOR PAST AND PRESENT FOSTER CARE YOUTH**

Contact: Khadija Walker-Fobbs at (248) 921-8282

Southfield, MI. (January 17, 2013) – The Park West Foundation-Blue Babies and the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative-ESP are teaming up to sponsor "Jump Shot Your Future," a youth-led and supported program for 14-25 year old men and women who were or still are in foster care. The event will be held on Sunday, January 20 from 3pm - 7pm at the 5e Gallery, 2661 Michigan Avenue in Detroit.

"This very special event will include presentations by a number of participating organizations on what resources and services they have available for those young people who were or still are in foster care," said Saba Gebrai, Program Director of the Park West Foundation. "The day's agenda also features a panel of former foster care youth who will discuss their college experiences and the challenges they faced and overcame to graduate." Participants can expect to enjoy inspiring messages from local poet Mic Write, as well as refreshments and music, along with all of the helpful resources at the event.

Gebrai also said Michigan Department of Human Services Director, Maura Corrigan, believes "Jump Shot Your Future" will help increase access and success for Michigan's foster care youth who have a desire to pursue a post-secondary education.

The organizations expected to be represented at Sunday's conference include: Ferris State University, University of Michigan-Flint, Wayne State University, Eastern Michigan University, Western Michigan University, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Michigan Educational Trust, Tuition Incentive Program, Educational Training Voucher Program, Focus Hope Learn & Earn Program, Fostering Success Michigan, Youth in Transition, Michigan Opportunities Initiative-Educational Success Program, Wayne County Educational Planners and Detroit College Promise.

Former and current foster care residents will also learn how they can qualify for a \$5,000 annual scholarship from the Educational Training Voucher Program. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) a grant of \$387,849 to be used Feb. 1, 2012 through Jan. 31, 2015 to support improving outcomes for Michigan

youth aging out of the foster care system. The Kellogg grant will specifically support the Education Success Program (ESP) by matching funds that youth save for education expenses. This match will be leveraged with additional MYOI dollars to provide a total three-to-one match for all participants. Funds matched by ESP could go toward tuition, application fees, books, computers, printers, software, study abroad, university activities or campus housing. ESP also supports financial literacy and independent living skills by providing trainings around health, education, employment, housing, and community engagement.

MYOI's Director of Development, Khadija Walker-Fobbs, says this grant is crucial in supporting the needs of MYOI youth. "We are so excited to work with the Kellogg Foundation on this program. ESP will give youth aging out of foster care the opportunity for post-secondary education that they have never had," she says. "Only three percent of young people from foster care will earn a college degree and a mere 58% will graduate high school by age 19, compared to 87% nationally. This program will help provide the supports and guidance these young people need to have a successful future."

Additional event sponsors include the North American International Auto Show, Park West Gallery, Detroit Pistons, ECS Partnership McDonalds and Big Family of Michigan.

The Park West Foundation (www.parkwestfoundation.org) was formed in 2006 by Albert and Mitsie Scaglione, founders and owners of Park West Gallery, to provide a range of services for children and families in the form of foster care, family preservation, family life education, counseling, teen parent services, residential placement and adoption.

For media inquiries and additional information about the Park West Foundation, please contact Saba Gebrai at sgebrai@aol.com or Khadija Walker-Fobbs at (248) 921-8282 or kfobbs@myoifund.org.

#