

FLORIDA GRANTOR

25th Anniversary Edition

Official Publication of The Able Trust • www.abletrust.org

October 2015

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The Able Trust Celebrates 25 Years!

by Ray Ford, Jr.



At the September 17 celebration, Karen Carper offered her perspective regarding the impact of Able Trust programs like Florida High School High Tech (HSHT), which changed the life of her son.

It has been said that in striving for perfection, the objective is not in the end-goal, but the ensuing journey.

For 25 years, The Able Trust has made a commitment to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. On the evening of September 17, hundreds of Able Trust supporters (former board members, staff, and beneficiaries of various Able Trust initiatives) gathered in Orlando to celebrate this important milestone.

It all began with one man's vision, seeing the need for an organization dedicated to helping Floridians with disabilities find jobs. Thanks to the efforts of Senator Stephen R. Wise, in 1990, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation. In 1991, the Governor appointed The Foundation's first Board of Directors, and a year later, The Able Trust made its first grant award. Since inception, The Able Trust has awarded more than \$35 million in direct-support grants to community organizations. Youth initiatives like The Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) and Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) – both nationally-recognized programs – came along later, helping several of Florida's teens pursue post-secondary education, as well as entry into the workforce.

“Tonight marks the celebration of The Able Trust's 25 years of serving Floridians with disabilities, helping to change employer perceptions about the talent in the workforce of people with disabilities, and importantly, opening doors so they could go to work! We don't exactly know how many people The Able Trust has helped put to work, but we know it is thousands and thousands,” Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant said.

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THE
ABLE
TRUST

25TH

ANNIVERSARY

The Able Trust's mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment.

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A Message from the President



The mission of The Able Trust is jobs - successful employment – for Floridians with disabilities. As the Board and staff of The Able Trust dedicate resources towards that mission, they are mindful of the economy of the state of Florida, the projections for the future economic growth of Florida and the directly related employment opportunities. They are focused on the skill sets and knowledge that current and future businesses will require, and are directing programs and activities to guide job seekers with disabilities to become trained in those skills that not only suit their personal interests, but also fit the needs of the employers.

Florida is projected to have a population of 26 million by 2030 - from approximately 19 million today. It is estimated that the state will need to secure two million more jobs to support the additional population growth, so there will be competition for the jobs, competition that Floridians with disabilities will need to face and work within to secure jobs and a career path.

The Able Trust Board considered these economic projections in its planning session in June that was continued at its meeting in September. The Directors identified the following important areas for emphasis for at least the next three years, to help those the organization serves to find their place in Florida's economic future.

- *Continue annual grants to suit short term needs, while keeping a major focus on multi-year, strategic grants that fund new strategic initiatives, designed to move job seekers to needed post-secondary education and on to a career.*
- *With all program support, emphasize post-secondary training, whether that be certification or degree-based.*
- *Expand some modifications of HSHT into populations like foster care settings.*
- *Develop and fund an initiative to help businesses with paid internships. Internships have been shown to help remove employment barriers, and importantly to help job seekers test out an industry or profession for further pursuit.*
- *Place a heavier emphasis on outcomes like positive changes in the unemployment rate, pay scale, hours worked, and length of employment for people with disabilities.*
- *Refine and continue the transportation assistance pilot program.*

These areas of emphasis will be built into the four primary strategic areas of The Able Trust: Grant Award Program, Youth Programs, Work Experiences, and Communications/Business Relationship Development. These are research-based decisions that the leadership of The Able Trust believes will make a positive difference in generating employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities.

As we begin our 25th year of serving Floridians, we are reinforcing our commitment to assure that the businesses in Florida welcome people with disabilities as workers, customers, and leaders.

Kindest regards,

Dr. Susanne F. Homant, MBA
President & CEO

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Karen Carper offered a unique perspective into programs of The Able Trust, chronicling the journey she and her husband, Chuck, have traveled after adopting their 11-year-old son Brandon from the foster care system, knowing that he was a special-needs child.

“He couldn’t read, couldn’t even write his own name. We were told he would never get past the fourth grade,” Karen recalled. “They tried to put a label on our child, and we refused to accept that.”

But thanks to lots of help from programs like Florida High School High Tech (HSHT), Brandon not only honed his academic skills, but gained self-confidence as well. Last summer Brandon completed an internship experience in a local engineering firm.

“Wow, look at what HSHT does! You can see the success of it; taking a child who was anti-social and without direction to now knowing what he wants for his future.”

President and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Mark Wilson, served as the evening’s keynote speaker. Wilson expounded upon his belief that the economy of Florida will only be healthy if the state continues to address the diversity of its population, promoting inclusiveness in the workforce.

Coupled with the 25th Anniversary was the annual Ability Awards, honoring 11 individuals and businesses representing every corner of the state for their efforts to promote employment for Floridians with disabilities, and advance the mission of The Able Trust.



President and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Mark Wilson, addressed Florida’s growing population and what that means for employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities.



Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Executive Director Jesse Panuccio (middle) is presented the 2015 Public Employee of the Year Award by Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant (left), and Able Trust Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. (right).

Recipient of the Public Employee of the Year Award, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Executive Director Jesse Panuccio lauded The Able Trust in its efforts, expressing pride in the strides his organization has made toward creating a more inclusive workforce for the State of Florida.

“I am honored to receive this award from the Able Trust,” he said. “Although given in my name, I know it is truly a recognition of the many dedicated employees at the Department of Economic Opportunity, who work every day to ensure that every Floridian who wants a job can get one.”

“The Able Trust is a tireless partner in this effort,” he said. “And together we know the significance of helping an individual with a disability find a good job: it affirms the inherent worth of the individual and proves to the world that a disability is not a barrier to living a productive life.”

The Florida HSHT Program of the Year was the Polk County site, operated by The Center of Independent Living of Central Florida. While honored to be recognized for their work with high school students with disabilities, the Center endeavors to continue its work.

“To say that the Center for Independent Living Inc. is proud to accept this recognition is a gross understatement! We are thrilled!” Coordinator Nicole Torres said. “The work of CIL staff on this project exemplified CIL-CF’s organizational mission and vision. We accept this award on behalf of the students, teachers, and school administration of Bartow and George Jenkins high schools. This success was made possible by their willingness to open new avenues to learning for students living with disability.” ■

Read more about each of the 2015 Ability Award winners on page 5.

Sights From the 25th Anniversary Celebration!



The night started with a reception and opening remarks by Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant, who acknowledged the contributions of many in the audience, and prior President & CEO Sharon Griffith.



Able Trust Board Secretary Karen B. Moore (left) served as the evening's emcee, welcoming among others, Prita Chhabra (right), who saluted The Able Trust's "Unstoppable" mission through song.



Thanks to the vision of Senator Stephen R. Wise (left, center), 25 years ago, an organization was created to help Floridians with disabilities pursue employment. Decades later, Joseph Murray (middle), with his mother, Donna, and Karen Carper (right), with her son, Brandon, are some of the beneficiaries of his vision.

Visit www.abletrust.org to see all the photos from the 25th Anniversary Celebration.

25th Anniversary Sponsors

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Congratulations to the 2015 Ability Award Winners

Beverly Chapman Award for Outstanding Employment Placement Program

ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE FOUNDATION

FRANCES NEU, VICE PRESIDENT INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT, FOUNDATION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Able Trust Board Chairman Richard Cole and President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant present St. Petersburg College (represented by Executive Director Frances Neu) with the Beverly Chapman Award, with Board Member Scot Laferté.

St. Petersburg College Foundation has become a campus leader in supporting the Disability Resources team to create a focus on gaining employment. In 2012, the Foundation received a three-year Strategic Grant from The Able Trust to create a Career Placement program, and since that time the program has assisted more than 225 students with disabilities with career placement services. The student support and outreach relationships with employers have enabled more than 150 students to gain employment. Participants represent various disabilities such as learning disabilities, mental health diagnoses, Autism, hearing impairments, visual impairments, ADD, ADHD, and physical and medical disabilities. Fields of employment have ranged from registered nursing, teaching, paraprofessional, legal assistant, dental hygienist, respiratory care, clerk, technical assistant, corrections, culinary, payroll clerk, and hospitality & tourism. Organizationally, this grant opportunity has provided a change in culture, changing how the Disability Resources Team has aligned with resources available at the College. As a result, the Disability Resource Job Placement Specialist hired with grant funds in the past three years has recently become a full-time employee at the College. The expanded support and career focus championed by the St. Petersburg College Foundation for students with disabilities in the college's general "College Experience" paradigm has enabled participating students to be economically successful alongside their peers at graduation and beyond.

Dr. George Spelios Leadership Award

LEE NASEHI, PRESIDENT & CEO

LIGHTHOUSE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

ORLANDO, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant and Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. present Lee Nasehi with the Dr. George Spelios Award, with Board Treasurer Marcy Benton.

Mrs. Nasehi became Executive Director of Lighthouse of Central Florida in 2000, moving up the ladder from her days working in the development office, as a volunteer, and as a family recipient of services. She and her husband are the proud parents of four children. The eldest, Joe, was a recipient of the Lighthouse's early intervention services that equipped him and his family to meet the challenges ahead. Lee Nasehi grew up in Central Florida, attended Florida State University and Rollins College, and worked many years in the areas of substance abuse and mental health before starting her decades of leadership and service to the Lighthouse. As Executive Director, she has strengthened the overall infrastructure of the organization, demonstrating the vision to expand the employment services for those in Central Florida with sight impairments. In 2012, this expansion included the founding of Lighthouse Works!, created to provide increased employment opportunities along with establishing working relationships with area businesses. Her pursuit of these unique business enterprises, fueled by her drive to create employment opportunities has made her the kind of leader that Dr. Spelios—a former chairman of The Able Trust—sought in community leaders, creating meaningful and long-term change for individuals with disabilities.

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Media Representative Award

FLORIDA PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICES

JANYTH RIGHTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Able Trust Board Member Jeff Hurst presents Florida Public Broadcasting (represented by Executive Director Janyth Righter) with the Media Representative Award with Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. and President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant.

Florida's Public Broadcasting Service operates throughout the state to bring important news to all Florida communities, potentially reaching every citizen. The 13 stations in the network (established in 1975 – the oldest PR network on the US) have strong audiences and do a great job of reporting on high-interest topics. Over the past several years, The Able Trust has worked with public radio stations throughout the state to carry its message of employment for people with disabilities, and enjoyed excellent placement with them. This year, public radio has taken a special interest in issues related to disabilities, partially prompted by the anniversary of the ADA, and also prompted in local areas by the relationship that public radio staff members have with The Able Trust and the organizations it supports. During the summer of 2015, FPBS ran a week-long series on disability rights, and hosted frank discussions on the benefits and limitations of the ADA. FPBS reporters have always been amenable to report local stories about disability events, and offer volunteers to assist local charities. Representatives of the WFSU station have consistently volunteered to help at The Able Trust's Florida Youth Leadership Forum. The FPBS network is very deserving of the Able Trust's 2015 media award.

Adult Leadership Award

JOSEPH MURRAY

LAKE WORTH, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Florida Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Mark Wilson and Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant present Joseph Murray with the Adult Leadership Award, with Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr.

Joseph Murray's life exemplifies what it means to live and give, not simply seeking success for himself, but others as well. Determined not to allow himself to be defined by his disability, Joseph was accepted into the Gulfstream Goodwill Academy in Boynton Beach. Following his passion for food, Joseph honed his culinary skills at the Florida Culinary College where he educated his palate through study of international cuisine. Thanks to his training, Joseph is currently employed at the Boca Raton Resort and Club – a Waldorf Astoria Resort – located in Boca Raton, Florida, where he has worked for the past five years.

A 2008 alum of the Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), Joseph has been invited to return each year as a staff volunteer, serving first as a support staff member, and eventually becoming a coordinator of YLF travel and facilities; duties that he still performs. Joseph has also addressed delegates on the subject of disability history and several other topics. He has been a remarkable role model and leader for first-time students participating in YLF.

An avid bowler and golfer, Joseph's passion and dedication to teaching high school students with disabilities to be advocates, along with his humble, helpful attitude have made him a popular YLF adult volunteer among students and fellow staff members. In addition to his other YLF tasks, each year Joseph chaperones a dozen YLF participants as they fly from South Florida. A strong advocate for students with disabilities, Joseph continues to serve as an example of what hard work and commitment can accomplish.

Young Adult Leadership Award

CARLY FAHEY

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Able Trust Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. and President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant recognize Carly Fahey (represented by her grandfather, Richard Sancel) as the Young Adult Leader of the Year, with Board Member Les Goldman.

Carly Fahey is a 2006 alum of the Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). Since her first experience as a YLF participant, Carly has returned as a support staff member and volunteer. In 2008 Carly was promoted to group facilitator, and has recently served as a training facilitator, creating protocol to help prepare new group leaders to assume the role.

Carly has spent her life advocating for Floridians with disabilities, and has served as a spokesperson for many initiatives, including The Able Trust's Florida Disability Employment Awareness Month. After her first YLF, Carly co-wrote legislation on Disability History and Awareness as part of the Florida Youth Council. That same year, she was appointed by President Bush to the National Council on Disability's Youth Advisory Committee, where she became one of the youngest individuals in history to receive unanimous U.S. Senate Confirmation in that role.

A recent graduate of the University of Utah with a bachelor's degree in Communications and a minor in Political Science, Carly seeks to continue serving as a positive voice for change, impacting the lives of Floridians of all ages and abilities.

Employer of the Year Award

LOCKHEED MARTIN

KERI KELSEY, EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY MANAGER

ORLANDO, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Able Trust Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. and President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant present Lockheed Martin (represented by Director of Electronic Systems, Bob Akins) with the Employer of the Year Award, with Board Member Anne Marie Taglienti.

Lockheed Martin is not only a leader in the Aerospace and Defense industry, but also demonstrates an outstanding commitment to people with disabilities in their diversity and inclusion practices. The Company engages with multiple groups and organizations dedicated to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce such as the National Industry Liaison Group, US Business Leadership Network (BLN), National Technical Institute for the Deaf, American Association of People with Disabilities, and the Orlando BLN to name just a few. Internally, Lockheed Martin maintains Employee Resource Groups that assist with the development and retention of employees with disabilities, and support the company's disability education and recruitment efforts. In 2015, the company launched a 25 Able Ambassador campaign that highlights the personal stories of 25 employees with disabilities to raise awareness of the contributions of the People with Disabilities Community with a focus on their abilities.

In addition to being an industry leader that has a history of implementing exceptional inclusion practices, Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control in Orlando has been extremely welcoming and engaging to the Florida High School High Tech program, conducting programs and facility tours that provide students the opportunity to interact with employees and learn more about the important work that the aerospace giant performs. Annually, Lockheed Martin participates in National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) by conducting a national People with Disabilities Leadership Forum for its leaders, various education and awareness events and external outreach throughout the month of October.

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High School High Tech Program of the Year

CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING OF CENTRAL FLORIDA - POLK COUNTY HSHT



(from left to right) Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant with Brandon Carper and Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. present Polk County HSHT (represented by Nicole Torres, Jacinth Lawrence, and John Hurt) with the HSHT Program of the Year Award, with Board Treasurer Marcy Benton (middle).

Under the leadership of program manager Jacinth Lawrence and program coordinator Nicole Torres, the Polk High School High Tech team exemplifies dedication, commitment, and expertise in furthering the education, leadership, and career preparation of students with disabilities – the core intent of the HSHT program. Polk HSHT ensures that students experience the depth and breadth of career and youth development through hands-on workshops, leadership development opportunities, and exposure to real-world employment situations. Polk HSHT has shown innovation through its student officer election process, public speaking program, parent involvement activities, and summer internship experiences. In the two years that Polk HSHT has been in operation, 100% of Polk HSHT seniors graduated from high school. Seventy-five percent of graduates went directly to post-secondary training or employment. As a result of successful community and business partnerships, Polk HSHT has an active and engaging Business Advisory Council which provides program leadership and resources. The Able Trust commends Polk HSHT for creating and sustaining a highly successful program.

Public Employee of the Year

JESSE PANUCCIO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant presents Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Director Jesse Panuccio with the Public Employee of the Year Award, with Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr.

Mr. Panuccio has been Executive Director of the State of Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity since January 2013, taking on the leadership of Florida's newest agency with a mission of helping Florida's economy grow, and assisting Floridians with employment issues – from job search to career progression to management of the re-employment program. He is responsible for coordination of statewide workforce programs, community development opportunities, and economic development initiatives. In February 2014, Director Panuccio met with The Able Trust to discuss assistance with legislative requests, which would be instrumental in helping Floridians with disabilities to become employed. The Director agreed that Floridians with disabilities have a place in the workforce, and went on to assist The Able Trust in expanding its programs through a new legislative appropriation. Through the process of legislative approval and the implementation of the programs funded, the Director was supportive, open, and accessible, resulting in providing employment assistance to hundreds of people with disabilities over the past year. Director Panuccio is a Harvard-educated attorney, has practiced law in Washington D.C. and served as General Counsel to Governor Scott.

Volunteer of the Year

JOSEPH C. MELLICHAMP III
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Joe Mellichamp first became acquainted with The Able Trust through its Youth Leadership Forum. His Rotary Club, the Rotary Club of Tallahassee, began to financially support the YLF several years ago, and also began to provide volunteer support for YLF activities. Joe realized the positive benefits of the YLF to the participating high school students with disabilities, and became one of the regular Rotary volunteers for the Forum each summer. Volunteering meant spending time at the airport on both arrival and departure days to assist traveling students, recruiting a group of other Rotary volunteers to help, and a couple of years ago, increasing his volunteer hours to include serving the students at the annual etiquette dinner – actually waiting on their tables and serving food while they learned proper dining etiquette. Joe has served in a leadership role with his Rotary, obtaining volunteers and funding, and volunteering for YLF duties since at least 2008. He is an attorney, retired from the Florida Attorney General's office, and formerly with the law firm of Carlton Fields. He is a graduate of the University of Florida College of Law, has expertise in tax law and several areas of government and administrative law. Despite his retirement, Joe continues to volunteer each year for YLF duties, and encourages his fellow Rotarians to continue in their support as well. He is an excellent example of a Rotary belief, service above self. (Joe was unable to attend the awards ceremony, but will be recognized in his home town of Tallahassee).

Public Organization of the Year

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

CHRISTINA DALY, SECRETARY

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA



(from left to right) Able Trust Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. presents the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (represented by Secretary Christina Daly) with the Public Organization of the Year award, with President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant and Board Secretary Karen B. Moore.

For the past seven years, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has partnered with The Able Trust to provide High School High Tech transition services to incarcerated youth in Escambia and Okaloosa counties. Under the leadership of Department Secretary Christina Daly, and through staff dedication to quality education and career development opportunities, youth served in these programs have achieved a recidivism rate of 27%, well below the state average of 44%. DJJ makes every effort to ensure youth have access to career-development experiences, including industry tours, service learning, and technical certifications – all of which lead to greater employment opportunities for youth upon their release. The Able Trust commends the Department of Juvenile Justice for its commitment to providing career education and training services to incarcerated youth with disabilities, leading to more productive lives and community reintegration.

Small Employer of the Year

WEST END ANIMAL HOSPITAL

DR. DEBORAH & MR. IAON COTTRELL

NEWBERRY, FLORIDA



Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant and Board Chairman Richard L. Cole, Jr. present Iaon and Dr. Deborah Cottrell with the Small Employer of the Year Award, with Board Member Arlene Shackelford.

West End Animal Hospital (WEAH) has been a partner of the Florida High School High Tech Program in Alachua County for nearly a decade, providing job-shadowing and internship experiences to students every year. Owners, Dr. Deborah & Iaon Cottrell, along with office manager, Michelle Holder, are committed to exposing students to a variety of skills that are required of a veterinary technician, including basic animal care, bloodwork, surgery assistance, and customer service. Students are encouraged to continue in a voluntary capacity upon completion of their internship, and many have had the opportunity to apply for a job upon graduation from high school. The owners and staff at WEAH are open to working with students with all types of disabilities, while showing respect and understanding toward them. West End Animal Hospital recognizes the benefits, and exemplifies the commitment required to make employment possible for individuals with disabilities.



Grantee Spotlight: Brooks Clubhouse

by Guenevere Crum

Brooks Clubhouse of Jacksonville is an acquired brain injury program that provides for the long-term community and vocational reintegration needs of survivors. United by a common goal of enhancing recovery after brain injuries such as a stroke, concussion, or injuries sustained by vehicle and cycling accidents, the Clubhouse has served more than 260 individuals ranging in age from 17 to 79. Brooks Clubhouse recently completed a \$64,000 grant received from The Able Trust last summer that provided internship and job placement services to their participants.

Individuals like Feyi benefit greatly from the specialized skills at the Clubhouse. Before discovering Brooks Clubhouse, Feyi had been looking for a job for five years without success. Her culinary skills as a baker, coupled with a robust stamina from years of athletics were overshadowed by her limited speech after surviving a stroke. With training and support in learning some communication strategies for cooking in the kitchen by interning at the on-site facilities, Feyi was ready to start applying again for positions in the field, eventually finding success as a prep cook. Feyi loves her new job – and the new home and car she has been able to purchase now that she is back at work.

Grant funding from The Able Trust allowed Brooks Clubhouse to continue its successful internship and placement program by adding on a job coach. The Job Coach has provided not only one-on-one services to participants like Feyi, but also allowed for job development opportunities with area businesses. The Brooks Clubhouse program continues to impact the lives of its members thanks to funding from a variety of sources, with a mission to unveil the vocational abilities of clients with brain injuries, supporting them in gaining employment in Jacksonville's vibrant business community. ■



Grant support for Brooks Clubhouse has changed the lives of clients like Feyi, paving the way to financial independence and employment success.

The Able Trust has awarded more than \$35 million to grantees across the state of Florida, enabling thousands of Floridians with disabilities to enter the workforce each year.

Recent Grant Awards

The Able Trust Board of Directors recently met in Orlando and made two grant awards totaling \$115,000

- **Hope Haven Children's Clinic and Family Center** - received \$50,000 for *Hope Academy – Project SEARCH*. Funding will be used to expand the Project SEARCH program with additional staffing to UF Health, Baptist Health and Duval County Public School System in the city of Jacksonville.
- **Florida International University** - received \$65,000 for *Panther LIFE: Preparing for Employment*. Funding will be used to expand the program's on-campus job shadowing experiences and community internship opportunities, cultivating a career path for participants in the Miami-Dade county area.

Florida Disability Employment Awareness Month - A New Season of Employment Success

by Joseph D'Souza

Although October is nationally recognized as Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM), the State of Florida has made strives to expand this initiative throughout the year, making it a season of career experiences for students and job seekers with disabilities.

Several activities will begin in late September, and will not conclude until the first quarter of 2016. This year, The Able Trust welcomes Universal Orlando Resort as a new sponsor of Florida DEAM, along with returning sponsors Florida Hospital, Florida Power and Light, The Dan Marino Foundation, Florida Chamber of Commerce, WellCare, Darden Restaurants, Publix Supermarkets, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Moore Communications Group, Mustard Seed Advisors of Raymond James, and Richard L. and Barbara Cole.

Gracing the cover of this year's brochure and posters is 18-year-old Ioana Zanchi. Ioana found her way to The Able Trust through participation in the annual Florida Youth Leadership Forum, a five-day leadership event for high school students with disabilities. A recent honor graduate of H.B. Plant High School, Ioana is now enrolled at the University of Tampa, pursuing education that will enable her to become a stronger advocate for individuals with disabilities.

If your organization is interested in getting involved as a DEAM community liaison, or as a business hosting participants, please contact The Able Trust at 850-224-4493 or info@abletrust.org. ■



Florida High School High Tech: Providing Pathways to Education and Employment

by Allison Chase

Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) sets high expectations; encouraging youth to consider technology-related careers; and promoting the involvement of family members and other caring adults. HSHT recognizes that education in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) is for all youth. STEM career opportunities abound in Florida, whether students have their sights set on going to college, obtaining a 2-year degree, or completing a shorter certification program.

Core features of the HSHT program – job shadowing, industry site visits, mentoring, and internships – are designed to provide hands-on experience that excites and attracts students to technology-related careers. HSHT partners with business and industry through local Business Advisory Councils, ensuring that program standards align with business needs. HSHT fosters business champions that understand the importance of diversity in the workplace, and the benefits of including students with disabilities in STEM education.



"I want to thank you for everything you've done for me and the other students in High School High Tech. The experience from the internships and your encouragement really helped me to get out of my comfort zone and dream big."

–Moriah, Former Alachua HSHT Student and Current Graphic Design Major at University of South Florida

The Florida HSHT Program is expanding this year from 39 to 41 sites, to include Desoto County and a second site in Broward County. ■

Empowerment



During the summer of 2014, **230 students participated in summer internships**, 85% of which were paid through a stipend by the employer, the HSHT program site, Vocational Rehabilitation, the local Workforce Development Board, or another community grant provider.

HSHT Internship Partners

Include: Publix Supermarkets, Marriott, Tallahassee Community College, Santa Fe College, Fairpoint Communications, Florida Orthopedic, South Florida Hospital Baycare, the Miami Theatre Center, local school districts, city governments, and numerous local businesses.

Education



During the 2014-2015 school year, the Florida HSHT Program served 1,282 students with disabilities in 39 Florida counties. Services were provided in 128 high schools and alternative education settings, including a Department of Juvenile Justice facility and a foster care site. **The Florida HSHT Program experienced a 99% graduation rate for all seniors participating in the program.**

Employment



79 % of Florida HSHT graduates entered postsecondary education, continuing education, or employment upon graduation. In addition, 195 Florida HSHT students, representing all grades, secured employment through program services.

MAKE A DONATION TO



Make A Difference With Your Donation to The Able Trust!

There are many ways you can support The Able Trust's programs to make successful employment available to Floridians with disabilities, and a gift of any amount will make a difference. For general contributions in support of our youth, mentoring and grant programs, you may click the "Make a Donation" button on our website, www.AbleTrust.org, or mail your gift with the form below to:

The Able Trust, 3320 Thomasville Road, Suite 200, Tallahassee, Florida, 32308-7906

Tax Deductible Donation Amount (\$): _____

Cash, Check or Credit Card Donations are Accepted. Please make checks payable to The Able Trust.

Is this donation (*check if applicable*):

- To honor someone NAME: _____
- In memory of someone NAME: _____
- For a special occasion OCCASION: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Credit Card Type: _____ Credit Card Number: _____

Credit Card Expiration Date: _____ Credit Card CSV: _____

E-mail: _____

Add me to The Able Trust's email list mailing list

Do you have questions about Able Trust giving opportunities, corporate sponsorships, or endowment and planned giving? Please feel free to contact us at info@abletrust.org or 850-224-4493.

The Able Trust's mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. Since its establishment, The Able Trust has awarded more than \$35 million in grants to nonprofit agencies throughout Florida for employment-related purposes, enabling thousands of Florida citizens of all ages with disabilities to enter the workforce. The Able Trust youth programs have provided career development and transition for thousands of high school students with disabilities since its beginnings, helping to reduce the dropout rate and prepare young adults for life beyond high school.

For more information about The Able Trust visit www.abletrust.org.

THE ABLE TRUST IS RECOGNIZED AS EXEMPT FROM FEDERAL INCOME TAXATION UNDER SECTION 501(C)(3) OF THE IRS CODE AND ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS. FEDERAL ID: 59-3052307. THE ABLE TRUST IS REGISTERED WITH THE FLORIDA DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES AS REQUIRED BY THE SOLICITATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS ACT (#CH957). A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE IN FLORIDA: (800) 435-7352. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

YLF 2015: Pioneers for Change

by Ray Ford, Jr.

“The most amazing thing about YLF to me is understanding my disability, and most importantly accepting it.”

“YLF has helped me learn to be an advocate for myself, and no longer be ashamed of who I am.”

These are but a few of the comments Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) participants made as YLF 2015 came to a close. Nearly 50 high school students from across the state came to Tallahassee and embarked on a life-changing journey; many of them away from home for the very first time, taking the first steps toward independence and self-sufficiency. YLF 2015 participants learned about disability history, advocacy, and business etiquette, as well as responsible use of social media, career exploration, and what life is like after high school.



Neil Romano challenged YLF delegates to make lasting change not only for themselves, but for other teens across the country with disabilities.

Former Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Neil Romano is currently president of The Romano Group. Diagnosed with Dyslexia, Romano struggled in school, even having teachers and administrators severely limit the opportunities he had approaching graduation. Addressing a crowd of 200 during the annual YLF Mentors Luncheon, Romano encouraged YLF participants to reach for the stars and not let outsiders limit their progress.

“You’re important because you are pioneers,” Romano said. “You have to go out there and prove the world wrong. I don’t want to be what you want me to be. I want to be what’s in my heart.”

Samantha Falstrom served as the final speaker of YLF 2015. A 2012 alum of the program, she is an honor student at Tallahassee Community College and has plans to transfer to Florida State University in the fall to complete her study of pediatric medicine in hopes of becoming a doctor. The road has not always been an easy one for

Samantha, as she expressed to YLF 2015 delegates the importance of determination and tenacity in the face of adversity.

“While my friends were going home and watching TV or taking a nap after school, I spent that time working on my classes. Sometimes what took another person an hour might take me two, but I was determined to work hard. If I can do it, so can you.” ■

The Able Trust 2015 Holiday Card Contest: Now Accepting Entries

**Assist The Able Trust in celebrating the holidays and New Year
by creating an original greeting card front piece.**

Open Call to Florida Artists!

1st Prize \$150

2nd Prize \$100

3rd Prize \$100

Contest Opens: September 15, 2015 Entry Deadline: November 6, 2015 at 5 PM.

Format: Original Artwork on paper no larger than 8 ½ X 11 OR on a JPEG file between 750KB-1MB on disk.

Artwork should be sent along with an “About The Artist” statement of 50 words or less. The Statement should provide a personal statement about the artist, the submitted piece of art, the holiday season, and disabilities.

Both submitted Artwork and Statement should be labeled with the Contact name, complete address, phone number and email of Artist.

Attention: Original Artwork will be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed and stamped envelope. Not responsible for lost or damaged pieces. One Artwork Submission per Artist. Artists must currently maintain a Florida address. Artists with disabilities encouraged to apply. Artwork submitted in formats other than outlined above will not be considered.

Selected Artwork: Images of the top 3 Selected pieces will be retained for any use by The Able Trust for up to 2 years from the date of selection. Winners will be notified after December 1, 2015 of their selection. Entries are encouraged to be festive and reflective of Florida’s diverse culture.

Send To: The Able Trust; Holiday Card Contest; 3320 Thomasville Rd, Suite 200; Tallahassee, FL 32308 and arrive no later than 5 PM November 6, 2015.

Questions: 850-224-4493 or info@abletrust.org More information about The Able Trust can be found on www.abletrust.org

Partners Making A Difference - Raymond James

by Zoltan Karpathy



Endowment donors like Thomas James ensure that the mission of The Able Trust – providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment – will continue for generations to come.

Thomas A. James, chairman of Raymond James Financial, recently made a major gift to The Able Trust. As is the case with many donors who make such gifts, a deciding factor was confidence that it would stay true to his business philosophy. Corporate responsibility has been a hallmark principle of Raymond James since its founding in 1962. The firm’s associates across the nation give back to their communities through beach cleanup; walking for a cause; house painting and repairs, blood drives; and volunteering at Ronald McDonald House.

James and his company believe that real success comes to those with a long-term view. That is why Raymond James made a \$10,000 donation to The Able Trust Endowment. The Able Trust is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and its growing endowment has enabled more than \$35 million in grants to charities state-wide, helping Floridians with disabilities achieve successful employment.

“Happy 25th Anniversary Able Trust. Raymond James shares The Able Trust philosophy that successful employment for persons with disabilities creates financial security, enhances one’s dignity and self-esteem, and contributes to good citizenship that builds our community,” James said. “Raymond James is pleased to help build an endowment that will further this philosophy for The Able Trust’s next 25 years and beyond.”

Able Trust ambassador and Vice President of Investments at Raymond James, Joe Blanton, advocated for this endowment gift. He noted that this gift came after careful scrutiny and deep research of The Able Trust programs and outcomes. Additionally, Blanton has a very personal stake in seeing The Able Trust succeed. Both he and his daughter have learning disabilities, yet have achieved beyond expectations.

“I want to help persons with any disability reach their maximum potential,” Blanton said.

The endowment gift he helped make possible will do just that. ■

“Raymond James shares The Able Trust philosophy that successful employment for persons with disabilities creates financial security, enhances one’s dignity and self-esteem, and contributes to good citizenship that builds our community.”

- Thomas A. James, Able Trust Donor



The Able Trust
3320 Thomasville Road, Suite 200
Tallahassee, FL 32308-7906
(850) 224-4493 Voice or TDD

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Memorial Gifts

There are many ways for you to make a gift in remembrance of someone special that will have meaningful significance for years to come. Here are a few options to consider:

Make a Deductible Gift and Receive Life Income

You may wish to make a memorial gift while providing current life income for yourself. If your memorial gift is made to fund a charitable remainder trust, you can receive income monthly, quarterly or annually. You receive a charitable deduction for your gift this year and avoid paying capital gains tax on the sale of your appreciated assets. The remainder passes to us as a gift in memory of your loved one. Please contact us for more information on charitable trust plans.

A Memorial Gift of Cash or Property

A gift of cash is one of the simplest ways to remember your loved one or friend. You receive a tax deduction for the value of your gift to The Able Trust. Please designate the person you wish to remember and the best way that we can honor them. If you are making a memorial gift of non-cash property, your deduction may depend on the type of property proposed for gifting. Please call us to discuss the treatment of your gift and the best way to transfer your property to us.

Contributions are deductible according to applicable IRS guidelines. The Able Trust is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and in compliance with the Florida Solicitation of Contributions Act.

Upcoming EVENTS & MEETINGS

October 2015

Disability Employment Awareness Month

November 2015

Hire A Veteran Month

November 6, 2015

Able Trust Holiday Card Contest Entry Deadline

November 10, 2015

Able Trust Strategic Employment Grant applications are due

December 9, 2015

Able Trust Board of Directors Meeting