



NEWS RELEASE

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Darden Restaurants Recognized as Corporate Champion by The Able Trust for its Commitment to Helping Youth with Disabilities

ORLANDO, Fla. - Darden Restaurants and its Foundation received the prestigious Corporate Champion Award from The Able Trust at its Ability Celebration on Saturday, March 9, hosted at the Orlando Museum of Art. The Corporate Champion Award has only been presented to two other companies in the history of The Able Trust – Walt Disney World Resorts and Publix. Darden Restaurants was honored for its years of both financial support of The Able Trust's youth programs and its support throughout the state and entire country of providing mentoring experiences for young job seekers with disabilities.

The Award was presented by Sarah Goldman, a student at UCF who has been assisted by programs of The Able Trust which are a part of Darden Restaurants' support.

In presenting the award to Bob McAdam, senior vice president of government & community affairs, and Julio Suarez, director of diversity outreach, Goldman stated, "It is my distinct pleasure to present this year's Corporate Champion Award to Darden Restaurants, a very deserving award for an extremely caring company. Darden Restaurants has continuously supported The Able Trust and its Youth Programs for at least the last five years, with substantial financial support, and also as an active participant in Disability Mentoring Day and Disability Employment Awareness Month activities."

"Darden is well known for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities to work in its restaurants, and has earned national awards such as one of the Fortune '100 Best Companies to Work For,' for its commitment to talented and caring employees and a diversified, inclusive and engaged workforce," said Goldman. "I am personally thrilled to present this award along with Able Trust CEO Dr. Susanne Homant and Board Chair Richard Cole to a company that has helped me, through its involvement with The Able Trust."

In accepting the award, McAdam iterated Darden's commitment to helping youth with disabilities in graduating from high school and moving to a career path of their choosing. He also talked of Darden's

commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce throughout Florida and nationally in all of its restaurants, expressing the company's mission to make its restaurants reflective of the population it serves.

Dr. Homant praised Darden Restaurants for its thorough review of The Able Trust's programs prior to making a commitment of support and involvement in The Able Trust programs. She stated many young job seekers with disabilities have been helped through the efforts of Darden Restaurants, and the informal partnership between the two organizations was the type of investment in change that would make a long term difference in successful employment for those served by The Able Trust.

Created in 1990, The Able Trust is dedicated to playing a key leadership role in providing opportunities for successful employment for Floridians with disabilities. More information on The Able Trust is available at www.abletrust.org.

About The Able Trust:

The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501(c)(3) public-private partnership foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its 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 \$30 million to programs throughout Florida, enabling approximately 2,000 Florida citizens with disabilities to enter the workforce each year. The Able Trust youth programs provide career development and transition to almost 2,000 students with disabilities annually, helping to reduce the dropout rate and prepare young adults for life beyond high school.