Thirty-five high school students with disabilities were selected to receive refurbished laptops as part of a technology initiative by The Able Trust and the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST). Forest High School student Elizabeth Silva proudly displays her laptop along with (from left to right) Lisa Kennedy, Forest High School ESE Teacher; Cindy Hunt, Marion County High School High Tech Program Coordinator; Allison Chase, Florida High School High Tech State Director; Amy Thorpe, Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida High School High Tech Program Manager; and Cassandra Mesnick, Forest High School Career Preparation Instructor.

This generation will be the first to take technology for granted.

Words such as Ipad, Chromebook, and smartphone were foreign concepts to Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. These and a plethora of other gadgets have come along and made life much easier... for those who can afford them, that is.

Unfortunately, even in the 21st Century a technology gap still exists. For those who have access to the aforementioned items, tasks such as conducting research for a term paper or applying online for a job are commonplace.

For the have-nots, it could be the difference between succeeding and failing in school; in getting the job or never even getting a call for an interview.

Thanks to an initiative spearheaded by The Able Trust and the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST), 35 high school students with disabilities received refurbished laptops loaded with all the latest software. Students were required to compose a 200-250 word essay describing themselves and how a laptop would enhance their lives. After receiving hundreds of moving personal statements, winners were selected and awarded just in time for the holidays.

(continued on page 4)
A Message from the President

College Ready and Career Prepared

That’s the popular education slogan these days – something of interest to every parent, every teacher and every student, as well as those who govern and operate Florida’s education system. We hear that goal as it is connected to graduating from high school, returning from military service, choosing post-secondary education, and seeking a life as self-supporting as possible. But what does that mean to students and young job seekers with disabilities? What is college ready? What is career prepared?

We at The Able Trust believe that the end result - a job that leads to a career – is an individual matter, and being college ready and career prepared are tools to that end, which are thus defined best by what is felt to be successful employment. Thanks to the extensive economic studies Florida and the country has available, we have a reasonably reliable list of jobs of the future, and those high-demand jobs that will have significant career path opportunities, so providing direction towards industries of opportunity is more of a science than a guess. Regardless of which career path job seekers with disabilities take, it is likely they will need at least some knowledge of technology, and thus some knowledge of what is needed to pursue a STEM-related career. What is really critical is to make sure that our younger job seekers are directed to the appropriate post-secondary education. As is becoming evident, that may mean a six-month or 12-month training program for certification in a particular field; it may mean a two-year degree, or a bachelor’s or graduate level degree, or anything in between. Through The Able Trust programs and grantee projects, we are working to make sure our young job seekers with disabilities identify the best, most appropriate post-secondary education for their career goals and skill set. For someone interested in the culinary arts, that may mean directing them to a one or two year cooking school. For those interested in nursing related careers, that will lead to consideration of additional education needed to become a nursing assistant or a home health aide or an LPN or RN, which can mean one, two, four or more years of post-secondary education. If they are interested in the accounting field, a two-four year study in that discipline may be the best post-secondary choice. The important issue is that education after high school needs to reflect the interests of the student, the jobs that will be available, and the education needed to make a good job fit, to satisfy the needs of Florida’s employers.

The direction to education that is best suited for careers of choice is a major change in academic thinking, but a necessary change, a change that will take some time to mature. Helping our students with disabilities towards education and training for such positions of interest and job growth is a major part of our mission and is critical to making sure that we are nurturing future employees that are desirable to Florida’s businesses. That is the focus of Able Trust youth programs and of grantee projects that we help to fund.

The Able Trust Board of Directors spent a great deal of time and analysis, working to define “successful employment”, a definition that is posted on our website. Career direction and opportunity are a major assumption in that definition, with a preference for full time work whenever possible, and although many will begin at an entry level wage, there should be opportunities for advancement and raises. The majority of jobs should be in competitive settings and the workforce should be integrated. Directing our students with disabilities towards education and training for such positions of interest and job growth is a major part of our mission and is critical to making sure that we are nurturing future employees that are desirable to Florida’s businesses. That is the focus of Able Trust youth programs and of grantee projects that we help to fund.

The direction to education that is best suited for careers of choice is a major change in academic thinking, but a necessary change, a change that will take some time to mature. Helping our students and other job seekers with disabilities to find their best fit in the world of work will improve more than the employees’ quality of life, it will improve the communities where they live, and those are goals worth pursuing.

Dr. Susanne Homant, MBA
President & CEO
**Meet the Board of Directors**

The Able Trust is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors, all appointed by the Governor of the State of Florida. The Board of Directors is primarily responsible for the overall governance of the organization, which includes fiduciary duties to assure the financial viability of the organization, to provide strategic and long-term direction to the organization, to approve grants, and to hire its CEO. The Able Trust is very fortunate to have nine very talented Directors, all of whom have extensive knowledge of the disability network or have a disability themselves, and all of whom have impressive business backgrounds.

**Jeff Hurst**

Jeff Hurst is Senior Vice President of Finance at Florida Hospital, one of America’s largest hospitals. With more than 2,100 beds, the seven-hospital system admits more patients annually than any other hospital in the U.S., and is the largest provider of Medicare services.

Hurst has worked at Florida Hospital for more than 14 years and has served in various roles, including Vice President of Revenue Management, Assistant Vice President of Revenue Management, Director of Patient Financial Services, Director of Ancillary Financial Services, and Director of Finance. Prior to joining Florida Hospital, Hurst spent 10 years serving in the United States Air Force.

Hurst received his Bachelor of Arts in International Business degree from The University of Nebraska and his Master of Business Administration degree from Creighton University. He is the proud father of two daughters, and grandfather of another girl. He and his wife and family reside in Orlando.

**Karen Moore**

Karen Moore is an acknowledged leader in the media relations, public relations, crisis communications and public affairs arena. Called by Henry Kissinger, “one tough lady,” Karen is the CEO and Founder of Moore Communications Group. This innovative marketing communications firm (with offices in Tallahassee/Miami/West Palm Beach/New Orleans/Washington DC) is one of the largest independently-owned PR firms in the nation, representing clients across the U.S. and the Caribbean. The firm is recognized by PR Ranking as “Top 3 Branding Companies in the US” and “Top US Latino Marketing Firm” by Latism. The firm has been named by Inc. Magazine as one of the “Fastest Growing Business in America” and by Florida Trend Magazine “Top Place to Work in Florida.” The firm has received more than 350 state and national awards for their PR and public affairs programs.

Karen has published numerous articles and has facilitated strategic marketing/planning, advocacy and media training sessions for Fortune 500 companies, and the British Olympic Team. Recognition for her work has brought numerous honors including: the Silver Medal Award by the Advertising Federation, the Stan Tate Award for Lifetime Excellence and Achievement by the Public Relations Association, the Distinguished Leader Award by the National Association of Community Leaders and the Florida 2013 Economic Development Champion of the Year.

In addition to serving on The Able Trust Board of Directors, Karen serves on numerous others including Florida CURED, Economic Development Council, Florida BIO, Tallahassee Community College Board of Trustees, Honor Flight, Florida TaxWatch and Hancock Bank. She is an active member of St. Peter’s Anglican Church and owns one of the largest private antique “Book of Common Prayer” book collections in the nation.

Karen has a B.A. in Russian History, M.A. in Education, and is only one of a select number of individuals in the U.S. who holds both an Accredited Public Relations (APR) and a Certified Public Relations Counselor (CPRC) designations. Karen resides with husband Richard and son Jarrod in Tallahassee.
Kennith Smith of East Gadsden High in Quincy is visually-impaired. He has to sit close to the chalkboard to read his assignments, and finds it difficult to keep up when lessons are given at a fast pace.

“My teachers are very patient with me,” he said. “They sometimes give me large print assignments to complete. I would love to have a laptop, because it would be a valuable tool to use at school and at home, looking up resources that can help me complete my assignments.”

Trent Studenwalt of Port Charlotte High has a short-term memory disorder. It takes him a little longer to read his assignments, which translates into more time spent on the one computer he shares at home with his parents and two brothers. For him, his own laptop is nothing short of a blessing.

“I have a problem with my short-term memory, which makes me a slow reader. Having my own computer will let me be able to use it as long as I need to in order to get my schoolwork completed.”

Since 2011, The Able Trust and The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services & Technology (FAAST) have awarded nearly 100 refurbished Dell laptops to deserving high school students and young job-seekers with disabilities across the State of Florida.
The Able Trust awarded a grant of $40,000 to the Culinary Institute at ARC Broward in Sunrise, Florida in the summer of 2013. These funds have helped individuals with disabilities participate in post-secondary programs designed to provide intense instruction in the culinary arts. Participants will graduate with experience in meal production, catering, and go on to gain employment in restaurants, resorts, catering companies, and cruise lines.

For individuals like Tiana, the program has been the path to employment. She and her classmates graduated from the curriculum with the preparation of a three-course meal for their Student Chef Luncheon that included potato soup, grilled shrimp, cornbread, and berry cobbler with ice cream and mint.

Tiana’s kitchen skills and technical know-how have earned her a position at an area grocery kitchen, where she is in charge of preparing foods for customers with special dietary needs, and maintaining the temperatures on the line equipment. Tiana’s success has enabled her to secure an entry-level position with a company she loves, and encouraged her to eye various management positions in the future.

This is just one of 24 students impacted by The ARC Broward’s Culinary Institute, as they provide specialized training and placement in culinary positions to the local Sunrise/Broward County area during their grant year.

“While there are many specific factors that lead to a person having challenges – mental or physical illness, chemical dependency, a sudden financial hardship – arguably the underlying factor of all these is a lack of connection to a supportive community,” Vice President of ARC Broward, Julie Price said. “That’s why it is critical for ARC Broward to restore a student’s connection to their community, or provide that community if one never existed. By doing so, we support our students as they gain the skills and training necessary to build new futures for themselves, and to achieve their goals of self-sustainability, employment and ultimately, ending their personal cycle of challenges.”

The Able Trust looks forward to the program’s future success as it helps create outcomes for successful employment for Floridians with disabilities.

Thanks to grant funds provided by The Able Trust, Tiana is living her dream of being independent, employed, and doing a job she loves.

Thanks to the financial support of our partners, The Able Trust has provided employment support to thousands of Floridians with disabilities, while awarding more than $31 million to grantees across the state, enabling many of Floridians with disabilities to enter the workforce each year.
Florida High School High Tech Finds Ways to Make STEM Education Fun
by Allison Chase

Thanks to some innovative education tools and tactics, Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) students across the state are acquiring core tech knowledge that will lead to high-tech careers.

Hour of Code

Florida HSHT students in six counties – including the HSHT foster care program – participated in “Hour of Code”, a nationwide campaign to promote computer science education. The initiative led by Code.org, and endorsed by other industry leaders such as Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, encouraged schools, teachers, and parents across the country to introduce more than 10 million students of all ages to computer programming during Computer Science Education Week (December 9-15, 2013). Designed as a game that teaches basic coding principles, Hour of Code featured coding tutorials from popular games such as Angry Birds and Plants vs. Zombies. HSHT students in Nassau, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Hendry, and Glades counties spent an hour learning basic coding language now considered a basic foundational field in the 21st century.

Video Blogging

HSHT students in Leon County are learning about their career interests and other passions through the lens of a video camera. Video blogging has become a central teaching tool for the local program. By sharing and rotating roles for each project, students are able to acquire a wide range a skills including technical skills, written and verbal communication, research, teamwork, and creativity. The group has produced several information videos which include:

- Researching and Obtaining College Financial Aid
- Brain Injury Association of Florida Promotional Video
- Florida Disabled Outdoors Association Promotional Video
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Student Orientation Video (http://rehabworks.org/stw.shtml)

Ted Talks

The Program Coordinator for the Sarasota and Manatee HSHT site knows how important it is to excite students about the many possibilities available through science, technology, engineering, and math. One way she has found to spark that interest is by using Ted.com. This online video library contains short presentations (or TedTalks) from some of the world’s most innovative and inspiring minds in the fields of technology, science, humanities, business, government, and more. HSHT students can choose to watch the video presentations, or view the more in-depth TedEd Lessons which encourage students to Think, Dig Deeper, and Discuss subject matter with their peers. HSHT students have explored subjects ranging from the neuroscience of a cockroach brain, to the development of an urban garden.

“This project funded by The Able Trust and the Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.”

“Florida’s Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves youth with disabilities transitioning from school to work and has partnered with the HS/HT initiative to meet the needs of these students. VR Transition services are designed to assist students with disabilities from high school to a successful employment outcome and inclusion in the community as a productive citizen. Learn more about the VR School-to-Work Transition Program by contacting the Division at (800) 451-4327. You can also visit the DOE/DVR website at www.rehabworks.org.”
Mind Over Matter: The 2014 Florida Youth Leadership Forum
by Ray Ford, Jr.

It’s sometimes easy to underestimate the power of the mind. In many cases, simply believing in yourself and your ability to control your environment is the difference between success and failure.

The Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) seeks to instill a positive self-core evaluation in each of its student delegates through leadership and social training, introducing them to a myriad of local and state resources that can help them strive for higher levels of achievement not only in high school, but later on in life.

“I was diagnosed with epilepsy at age eight, and then Aspergers at 10,” YLF 2014 applicant Devin Nassar-Keis of Renaissance Learning Academy said. “At first, I was in denial about it. But now I realize I can’t let either of these define who I am as a person.”

The application process for YLF 2014 has begun, in hopes of attracting another group of high school students with disabilities, inspiring them to achieve the highest level of educational and personal independence possible. Students are recommended by their school teachers, guidance counselors, and ESE (Exceptional Student Education) coordinators, and must demonstrate leadership potential through community and school involvement. They also must complete a four-part narrative describing themselves, their aspirations, and why they feel they should be selected.

“I feel this experience will be amazing,” South Sumter High student A-Charia Jackson said. “Earning the chance to see a whole ‘no-ther world and explore different ideas that will shape my future decisions. This program will help me on my way to success, giving me the extra push to excel and never give up on myself.”

JUST THE FACTS:
YLF 2013

- 91% of YLF delegates say that the forum has helped them make goals about life after high school
- 93% of YLF delegates say they now have a better sense of their career plans
- 100% of YLF delegates say their self-confidence has increased as a result of attending the forum, and they actively participate in leadership activities
Another Year of Success: Disability Employment Awareness Month/Disability Mentoring Day 2013

by Joseph D’Sousa

For 12 years, Florida Disability Employment Awareness Month/Disability Mentoring Day (DEAM/DMD) has successfully matched job seekers and employers, providing successful employment outcomes. This year was no different. The goal of DEAM/DMD is to recognize the contributions and capabilities of workers with disabilities, while highlighting the continued need for a diverse and inclusive workforce. DEAM/DMD introduces businesses on an individual basis to people with disabilities to begin a dialogue of the capabilities of these talented workers. This dialogue allows businesses to interact with students and job seekers with disabilities in a less formal workplace environment, simultaneously increasing their knowledge and comfort level working with people with disabilities.

DEAM/DMD participants are provided opportunities for one-on-one job shadowing, group site visits, career fairs, or career workshops. DEAM/DMD events provide opportunities to interact with someone that has insight and experience in a profession or field that interests the participants.

DEAM/DMD was successful due to the hard work of 80 community liaisons working in 61 counties throughout the state. Their efforts produced career experiences for more than 2,600 participants. In addition to the work of community liaisons, DEAM/DMD would not happen without the support of businesses and organizations. In 2013, more than 250 businesses and organizations opened their doors and minds to people with disabilities for job shadowing or industry tours.

The Able Trust’s fall communication campaign and DEAM/DMD were made possible in part by the financial support of these special statewide supporters:

- Dan Marino Foundation
- Darden Restaurants
- Florida Chamber Foundation
- Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs
- Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Florida Power and Light
- Publix Super Markets
- TD Bank
- WellCare

Financial sponsors like TD Bank (left) and Publix Super Markets (right) went the extra mile in their support of DEAM/DMD, providing job-shadowing opportunities in their places of business.
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 (please check one):

- To honor someone
- In memory of someone
- For a special occasion

NAME: __________________________________________

NAME: __________________________________________

OCCASION: ______________________________________

Name: __________________________________________

Address: _________________________________________

City, State, Zip: _________________________________

Credit Card Type: ________________________________

Credit Card Number: _____________________________

Credit Card Expiration Date: ________________________

Credit Card CSV: ________________________________

E-mail: ________________________________

Please add me to The Able Trust’s ☐ email list ☐ mailing list (please check one or both).

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 $31 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 provide 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 next deadline for The Able Trust grant program is April 7th, when the organization will accept proposals for the General Support for Employment Placement Programs. The objective of this opportunity is to provide one year of support for organizations to purchase equipment, or provide for staffing needs during a grant year that will assist individuals with disabilities to gain employment. Programs can consist of the expansion of an existing program, or the creation of a new program. The grant opportunity will result in awards that range up to $65,000 for a one-year grant period. Full guidelines can be found in the “Grant Information” section at www.abletrust.org.

For those organizations that wish to create a multi-year, strategically-directed employment placement program, please take a close look at the guidelines for the Strategic Employment Placement Initiatives also in the “Grant Information” section of The Able Trust website. This is the major granting strategy of The Able Trust, and provides support for qualified organizations to seek a grant award of up to $250,000 over a three-year period. The next deadline to submit an application is September 5th.

The Strategic Employment Placement Initiative guidelines require the applicants to organize themselves to engage their own training and placement efforts with individuals with disabilities and the established employers in their respective communities in a strategic manner. It is the desire of The Able Trust that these grant funds result in significant numbers of individuals gaining employment, ultimately in career path employment, with the wages to match. Applicant organizations are expected to have an active Board of Directors committed to the program along with a well-developed network of community resources – both financial and intellectual – to carry out the program under consideration. The multi-year grant structure provides applicant organizations the stability to implement a program with long-term vision that is coupled with goals and results for each of the grant years.

The review process is currently underway for the final candidates that began the process last September of the current Strategic Employment Placement Initiatives, with final awards scheduled to be announced this March.

Do you need some help navigating the waters of the new grant procedures? Don’t worry. There are plenty of organizations that are asking questions, and The Able Trust encourages you to do the same. There are instructions on the website with all the details on how to apply, in addition to a “Frequently Asked Questions” section on each of the instruction pages. To contact us electronically, send an e-mail to info@abletrust.org, or give us a call 850-224-4493. The Able Trust is looking forward to receiving proposals and hearing about the employment placement strategies of Florida organizations.
Introducing Zoltan Karpathy, Regional Director of Charitable Giving

Zoltan Karpathy, ACFRE, has joined The Able Trust team as its Regional Director of Charitable Giving, with fundraising responsibilities for Able Trust Youth programs and other special initiatives. He comes to the organization with more than 30 years of successful fundraising experience, has worked as a national fundraising consultant with more than two dozen charities, and has special expertise in major gifts, charitable estate gifts, and capital campaigns. Recently serving as VP of Philanthropy for Pines of Sarasota Foundation, Zoltan also served as President of the Goodwill Foundation, Sarasota, and President of the Hospice Foundation of Southwest Florida. He will be working throughout the state, with an emphasis on central and SW Florida.

Originally from Romania, Zoltan has called Florida his home for more than 30 years. He holds a BA degree from Kenyon College, and completed graduate business coursework at Carnegie Mellon University. He is married with two sons, is a Coast Guard licensed captain, a private pilot, and a scuba diving instructor.

Zoltan can be reached at zoltan@abletrust.org or 850-688-2070.

Governor’s Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities Meets

The Commission held its quarterly meeting on Friday, February 7, 2014 on the lovely Wolfson Campus of Miami-Dade College in downtown Miami. The Commission welcomed commentary from several individuals and businesses in the area, as it continued its goal of incorporating current, major issues into its recommendations and report to Governor Scott. The Commissioners heard from Bromberg & Associates, Baptist Health; the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, a pediatrician from St. Petersburg, three representatives of transit authorities from different areas, Florida Veterans Association, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, and individuals with disabilities.

The Commission is working on recommendations to the Governor for its July, 2014 Report, in the following five areas:

1. Efforts to prioritize employment within public programs;
2. Identification of strategies on collecting and reporting employment data;
3. Continuation of Employer outreach efforts on a long term basis;
4. Improvement of employment readiness among students with disabilities;
5. Addressing the transportation barrier to employment for people with disabilities.

Anyone who wishes to provide comments on any of the above issues should send those comments to the Commission’s Executive Director, David Darm, at David.Darm@dbs.fldoe.org. The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for Friday, May 9, 2014 in Orlando.
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

March 13, 2014
Board of Directors Reception
Orlando, FL

March 14, 2014
Board of Directors Meeting
Orlando, FL

June 20, 2014
Board of Directors Meeting
Tallahassee, FL

June 20, 2014
Able Trust Ability Awards
Tallahassee, FL

July 16 - 20, 2014
Able Trust Florida Youth Leadership Forum
Tallahassee, FL