The 2013 Able Trust Ability Awards

by Ray Ford, Jr.

Thirteen awardees were recognized at the 2013 Ability Awards, among them Senator Stephen R. Wise (second from the right), who had an award created in his honor, The Stephen R. Wise Founder’s Award. Read about him and our other award winners in this edition of The Florida Grantor.

On the afternoon of June 14 at the Golden Eagle Golf and Country Club in Tallahassee, The Able Trust recognized 13 businesses and individuals who have, through their service and dedication, provided Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. For 12 years, the annual Ability Awards ceremony has saluted everyday men and women whose efforts have empowered and inspired their communities.

However, the 2013 Ability Awards took on a special meaning.

Senator Stephen R. Wise was formally recognized for his role in creating The Florida Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation -- now known as The Able Trust -- back in 1990. Surrounded by family and many who have benefitted from his vision, Senator Wise received a long-overdue thank you.

“We are pleased and excited today to honor the man who created The Able Trust, Senator Stephen R. Wise,” Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant said in front of a crowd of 200. “Without his strong beliefs in the capabilities of people with disabilities, we would not be here today, and Florida would have far fewer people with disabilities working.”

“I’ve spoken to many colleagues of Senator Wise,” Able Trust Chairman Richard Cole added, “and the words ‘Fiscal Hawk’ and ‘Moral Compass’ stuck in my mind. If Steve Wise supported it, it made good sense and was responsible.”

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As The Able Trust works with job seekers throughout the state, one key fact has become abundantly clear. If we are to be a true leader in creating opportunities for successful employment for people with disabilities we must do our best to assure that the young job seekers we serve are equipped with the right training and education to satisfy the needs of Florida's businesses.

The Florida Chamber of Commerce and its Foundation have dedicated many resources to the development of its Six Pillars strategy, designed to direct Florida’s economy to healthy growth and a presence as a dominant economic force. The strategic direction defined within the Six Pillars was created through an extensive process that included input from businesses, educational institutions of all levels, government agencies, and organizations like The Able Trust – non-profit entities that help to shape the future of Florida. Interestingly, the first of the Six Pillars is “Talent Supply and Education”: the sixth Pillar is “Quality of Life & Quality Places.” Both of those critical areas directly relate to the work of The Able Trust – the programs it runs and the programs it supports through grants and technical assistance, as our organization works with others to assure that Floridians with disabilities are a sought-after part of the talent supply, and are thus able to contribute to the quality of life of themselves, their families and their communities.

In the process of the commitment to assuring and sustaining the talent supply that is critical to business and community success, ongoing job-related data verifies that many jobs go unfilled in Florida each month, due to a skills gap between business needs and talent available. This is frustrating to businesses who want to locate to Florida or expand Florida operations, and it is frustrating to job seekers who do not become employed due to their lack of in-demand skills. That sends a clear message to The Able Trust and our partners, that we have a very important job to do in both encouraging businesses to include the workforce of people with disabilities in their hiring activities, and to make sure that workforce has the skills that Florida’s businesses need. That means The Able Trust needs to work to assure that education and training for current jobs and jobs of the future is a key part of its philanthropy. We are working with our youth programs – High School High Tech, and our grantees who work with and within Florida’s colleges and universities to help assure STEM-related education with an additional emphasis on communication skills, for all those with disabilities who are served by these programs. This will enable young job seekers with disabilities to have equal opportunities for successfully landing a job and keeping it.

The Able Trust supports the Six Pillars initiative of the Florida Chamber of Commerce as identifying critical areas for attention, and as a framework to allow for the best kind of positive growth in this state. To learn about all six critical areas and how the metrics in each of those areas change and interact, visit www.flchamber.com and www.thefloridascorecard.com, both of which are updated at least monthly by the state’s very strong and dedicated Florida Chamber of Commerce and Florida Chamber Foundation.

As we move forward in these beginnings of economic recovery for our country and our state, we have an obligation to make sure that people with disabilities have the needed education and training to obtain jobs that are competitive and integrated, and that they have equal opportunities for all positions.

Kindest regards,

Susanne H. Homant, MBA
President & CEO
The Able Trust Welcomes New Board Member Arlene Shackleford

Appointed to The Able Trust Board of Directors by Governor Rick Scott in March, 2013, Arlene Shackleford is Senior Manager, Corporate Diversity & Inclusion of NextEra Energy, Inc, the parent company of Florida Power & Light. Arlene works out of NextEra’s Juno Beach office, and has been a major force in bringing diversity and inclusion philosophy and action to NextEra’s workforce. She is a proven thought leader and business change management strategist with experience in human resources, employee and labor relations, leadership development, conflict management, and equal employment opportunities. She possesses a positive, upbeat attitude, likes to give credit to others, and believes that diversity of any businesses workforce is critical to its success. Arlene has worked at NextEra since 2005. Prior to that, she served the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant in Jensen Beach from 2005 – 2007. Her experience also includes service with the Miami-Dade School Board office; Wachovia Corporation in NC; and US Airways. She earned her MA in Human Behavior and Conflict Management from Columbia College in Columbia, SC.

In 2011 she received the Multicultural Leadership Award from the Florida Diversity Council. She and husband Kenneth have four children, three girls and a boy, and five grandchildren. They live in Port St. Lucie, FL., and both like to travel. The Able Trust welcomes this talented woman to its Board of Directors.

Senator Stephen R. Wise Founder’s Award Created by The Able Trust

In 1990 the Florida Legislature created the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation with a mission to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. That organization is more widely known as The Able Trust. Since its inception, The Able Trust has affected the lives of tens of thousands of Floridians with disabilities by promoting public awareness of this largely-untapped workforce.

Senator Stephen R. Wise saw the importance of this mission, and from the beginning has championed the cause of The Able Trust in the Florida Capitol. It was the pleasure and privilege of The Able Trust to honor him for his tireless dedication to that mission. On June 14, 2013 at the Golden Eagle Golf and Country Club in Tallahassee, Senator Wise was recognized with the Stephen R. Wise Founder’s Award, to permanently cement his efforts. Senator Wise lauded the growth of The Able Trust from its inception, marking the numerous lives that have been affected by its programs and grant awards, and the thousands of people who have become employed due to The Able Trust.

“You have gone above and beyond what started out in the very first Legislative Committee I attended in April, 1988, when I was inspired to create legislation that would allow the organization to fund individuals and innovative programs to help people with disabilities to go to work, and to reward citizens for supporting such programs with their talents and treasures,” he said.

Now retired, Senator Wise is proud to know that the noble work he began so long ago will live on to affect future generations, providing hope and inspiration for all Floridians.

“What you have done over the years is beyond my wildest dreams. It brings to mind a saying, ‘one of us is not as smart as all of us... nothing is impossible if we put our minds and efforts together to make something happen.”’

Senator Wise was born in Canton, Ohio, moving to Florida after graduation from high school. He earned a bachelor’s degree at Florida Southern College, a M.Ed. from Middle Tennessee State University, and his Doctorate in Education from the University of Alabama. He is married to the lovely Kathy, and they will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in August. They currently reside in Jacksonville, Florida and are the proud parents of daughters Kelly and Tara, who are married and live in Florida with their families, including five grandchildren.

In May, 2010, The Able Trust recognized Senator Wise as its Legislative Champion, and was very pleased to create the Stephen R. Wise Founder’s Award to permanently honor the legacy of Senator Wise and his contribution to a better, productive life for Floridians with disabilities.
Adult Leadership Award recipient Thom DeLilla also lauded Senator Wise for his service and commitment to recognizing the talents that people with disabilities can bring to the workforce, and to a healthy Florida economy.

“I’m very honored to be here today,” DeLilla said. “It means a lot to me. But what really means a lot is to salute Senator Wise. He was a very strong friend and advocate in the legislature.”

Karla Radka, Community Based Care Vice President of Community Impact and Leadership Development, accepted the Public Organization of the Year Award on behalf of her organization. This High School High Tech (HSHT) program encourages youth in foster care to pursue careers in technical fields.

“I am so honored to accept this award on behalf of every child and every youth that we service in Central Florida,” Radka said. “Our program focuses on education regardless of the challenges and difficulties they face.”

The Able Trust proudly congratulates its 2013 award winners!
Our 2013 Ability Award Winners

Beverly Chapman Award for Outstanding Employment Placement Program
Hope Clubhouse of Southwest Florida,
Debra Webb, Executive Director
Fort Myers, Florida

Hope Clubhouse of Southwest Florida in Ft. Myers has been an outstanding provider of employment services since opening in 2010. With a small seed grant from The Able Trust several years ago, Debra Webb, Executive Director, staff, and club members have steadily built program services and employment-placement services of quality and consistency. Since its founding, Hope Clubhouse has served 170 members, and through its transitional employment program has assisted 64 members in returning to employment. Currently, the Clubhouse has 77 active members, 26 of whom are employed part-time, with three more employed full-time after being offered permanent positions with their transitional employers. The Beverly Chapman Award recognizes employment placement programs that connect with individuals and help create successful futures.

Dr. George Spelios Leadership Award
E. Gay Hawk, Executive Director
National Alliance on Mental Health Pinellas County
St. Petersburg, Florida

For more than 20 years, Gay Hawk has demonstrated leadership and advocacy skills in the Pinellas County mental health and substance abuse community. As Executive Director, she has guided the Pinellas County chapter for the National Alliance on Mental Health’s (NAMI) support, education and advocacy efforts onto college campuses, treatment facilities for veterans, criminal justice agencies, faith-based organizations, and mental health and substance abuse providers. Ms. Hawk has expanded NAMI programs at the Bay Pines Veterans Administration Center, serving veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental disorders. She serves on the Advisory Committee for the Able Trust Employment Project at St. Petersburg College, and has provided extensive training and support to faculty, staff, and students. Dr. George Spelios was a founding director of the Able Trust who lent his leadership skills to our growth, and had a gift for identifying community leaders that were making a difference.

Media Representative Award
Staci Spanos, Anchor WJXT Channel 4
Jacksonville, Florida

Staci Spanos has been a part of WJXT Channel 4 for the greater Jacksonville community since 1997, making a return to Florida from a reporting/anchoring position in Lubbock, Texas. She is a 1994 graduate of the University of Florida in Gainesville where she majored in Telecommunications. Staci has been a Morning Anchor for several years, providing in-depth coverage of major local and national events. Staci was nominated for this award by Jacksonville resident Megan Mauney, representing the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Ms. Mauney has been interviewed numerous times by Staci Spanos to raise awareness of viewers in the Jacksonville area to the mission and cause of the Foundation Fighting Blindness, and the experiences of individuals with disabilities.
Adult Leadership Award
Thom DeLilla
Tallahassee, Florida

Thom DeLilla is a longtime leader and advocate for individuals with disabilities in Florida. The Able Trust is proud to recognize his many contributions as a program administrator with the Florida Department of Health Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP), an advocate contributing to the passage of the Personal Care Attendant Program, a Florida Youth Leadership Forum mentor, and a small business inventor.

A native of Freeport, Long Island in New York, Mr. DeLilla moved to Florida in 1969 to attend college. He sustained a spinal cord injury in 1972 as a result of a diving accident resulting in quadriplegia. Following his injury, he returned to college and received a bachelor’s degree from the University of South Florida in 1975. He also completed extensive post-graduate study at Florida State University in Rehabilitation Counseling. He married his wife Shellie in 1975, and has a 31-year-old son Jeffrey who is married and lives in London, England. He has created and patented the “Bottoms Up Bar”, an assistive device that allows people to independently transfer from their wheelchair to the floor and back. This device is used in major rehabilitation centers throughout the United States and internationally.

Young Adult Leadership Award
Renzo Burga
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Renzo Burga is a 2009 alum of the Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). This Broward County native has consistently displayed leadership qualities that have earned him an invitation to return to YLF each year. He has been promoted through his service, and now serves as a group facilitator, leading first-time students in discussions and leadership training.

Currently a sophomore at Broward College in South Florida, Renzo is a great role model for incoming students. He has maintained a 4.0 GPA, is a member of Broward College’s Honors Institute and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, all while participating in various disability advocacy events on campus. The Able Trust looks forward to his return to YLF this July, and is proud to recognize him with the Young Adult Leadership Award.

Large Employer of the Year
Publix Super Markets
Lakeland, Florida

The Able Trust proudly recognizes Publix Super Markets for being a dynamic company committed to providing gainful employment to people with disabilities. Publix strives to be a company that is reflective of the communities in which they do business by creating diversity in the workplace. While employment with Publix oftentimes starts with a first job experience for individuals, Publix works to create career opportunities for all associates, encouraging them to explore different positions in their stores and the company region-wide. Publix is known for its work with various organizations in the communities around Florida, ensuring employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These successful partnerships with community organizations assist applicants in preparing for careers at Publix, familiarizing them with the company’s corporate culture. The Able Trust is proud to recognize Publix as the Large Employer of the Year for their commitment to creating inclusive employment opportunities in Florida.
Small Employer of the Year

Crumb de la Crumb, Cindy Shoemake
Valrico, Florida

Cindy Shoemake made a personal commitment two years ago to support the Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) program in her local Hillsborough County area. Cindy has allowed for several HSHT students to have internship experiences at her small bakery business, Crumb de la Crumb. Cindy enjoys her experience as a trainer and support person for the students working at her bakery, and was nominated by the local HSHT project coordinator for her outstanding job of working with each student to help them reach their full potential. She has been outstanding in making accommodations and instructing the participants, ensuring that each student learns the skills necessary to be employed in the future.

Representative of the Year Award

Representative Janet H. Adkins
Fernandina Beach, Florida

After a career in the information systems field combined with a keen understanding of the education needs of current and future workers, Representative Janet Adkins made the decision to become a full-time lawmaker for the State of Florida and was elected to the Florida House in 2008, followed by a successful re-election in 2012. During the 2013 legislative session, she served as the Vice Chair of the House Education Committee and was a member of two education sub-committees. She prioritized the need of The Able Trust to sustain and expand the Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) program, assuring that needed appropriations for the program were known to, and supported by her fellow Representatives. Because of her work in the House of Representatives, the HSHT program will continue to serve thousands of high school students with disabilities, helping them become productive members of their communities.

Representative Adkins earned her Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Science and her MBA degree from the University of North Florida. A native Floridian, she resides in Fernandina Beach with husband Doug and their two children.

Senator of the Year Award

Senator Aaron Bean
Jacksonville, Florida
(accepted by Senator Bean’s sister, Diana Patchen)

Known for his strong and passionate advocacy on health care issues, and his public support of programs that improve the lives and community involvement of Floridians living with challenges, Senator Aaron Bean was welcomed back to the state legislature as a Senator in 2012 representing District 4, filling the seat formerly held by Senator Stephen Wise. Originally elected to the legislature as a Representative in 2000, and subsequently re-elected until term-limited, he supported his district and all Floridians in the development and implementation of public policy. As a freshman Senator during the 2013 legislative session, Senator Bean was named Chair of the Senate Health Policy Committee, and served on the Senate Appropriations Committee as well as Appropriations Subcommittees on Education, and Health and Human Services. During the 2013 session, he was instrumental in assuring that the Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) portion of the state budget was known, supported, and approved by Senate leadership. Because of his work in the Senate, The Able Trust will expand the HSHT program to 4 additional locations, serving even more students with disabilities in Florida.

A native Floridian, he earned his Bachelor of Science in Banking from Jacksonville University, is married to Abby, and is the proud father of three sons. He resides with his family in Fernandina Beach, Florida.

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High School High Tech Program of the Year
Dyslexia Research Institute, Inc.
Port St. Joe, Florida

Dyslexia Research Institute serves approximately 20 students with disabilities in Gulf County for The Able Trust’s Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) program on an annual basis. Under the leadership of Dr. Patricia Hardman and Robyn Rennick, and through the talented work of Program Coordinator Lynne Hauck, the team ensures that students experience the depth and breadth of career and youth development, which is the core intent of the HSHT program. Gulf HSHT has outstanding community and employer support, which is evidenced through its Business Advisory Council. In the last five years, 100% of their seniors have graduated from high school – all of whom going directly to college or employment. This summer, nearly half of their students will participate in paid summer internship experiences as a result of community business partnerships and fundraising on the part of the program leadership and students.

Public Employee of the Year
Aleisa McKinlay, Director Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Tallahassee, Florida

Aleisa McKinlay became Director of the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) on November 1, 2011, and a year later took on the additional role of Interim Director for the Division of Blind Services. She joined VR in February 2009 as the Bureau Chief of Partnerships and Communication, where she did an outstanding job overseeing the Ombudsman Program, Vendor Registration, Centers for Independent Living, Communications and Legislative Affairs, and other responsibilities. In addition to her dual director roles, McKinlay has been appointed by Florida Governor Rick Scott to the Florida Independent Living Council Inc., the Florida Rehabilitation Council, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, and the Governor’s Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities.

Director McKinlay has consistently and publicly supported The Able Trust’s High School High Tech (HSHT) program throughout her years with VR.

Public Organization of the Year
Community Based Care of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

In 2012, The Able Trust partnered with Community Based Care (CBC) of Central Florida for a pilot of the Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) program for students with disabilities in foster care, an idea that grew out of a passion of former Able Trust Board Director and current Ambassador, Attorney General Bob Butterworth. The HSHT pilot program was designed to encourage youths in foster care to pursue careers in technical fields, providing additional focus and support for success in education, work, and personal life. Under the leadership of Glen Casel, President & CEO, and Karla Radka, Vice President of Community Impact and Leadership Development, CBC of Central Florida quickly found its stride with the HSHT program. Along with developing a comprehensive program of career and personal development in a tri-county area, the CBC has collaborated with business and community organizations to enhance program experiences for students while leveraging available resources.

Volunteer of the Year
Lisa Hancock, Manpower
Orlando, Florida

Lisa Hancock is the Executive Vice President of Florida for Manpower where she has worked for 30 years. When she transferred to Florida during the economic downturn, she had plenty to keep her busy given the low employment rate, but contacted The Able Trust upon her arrival and volunteered to help however she could. Since then, she has helped to establish the Business Leadership Network in Orlando, supported The Able Trust in its marketing efforts, and served in a key volunteer role at events in Central Florida whenever called upon. Lisa holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education/Hearing Impaired, and resides in DeBary, Florida with her husband and black lab. They have five children and eight grandchildren, who are “scattered all over the United States.”
“A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities”

Initiative of the Chair, National Governor’s Association

The National Governor’s Association is a national group of state Governors who meet regularly to discuss and address critical issues of mutual interest to the citizens of their respective states. Each year, the Chair of the NGA selects an initiative, bipartisan in nature, that he or she asks the members of the NGA to focus on. This year, Chair Jack A. Markell, Governor of Delaware, selected “A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities.” As he introduced this initiative last summer, he stated: “Today Americans with disabilities are facing disproportionately high rates of unemployment compared to Americans without disabilities. . . . Individuals with disabilities should have, to the maximum extent possible, the same opportunities as all others do:

- To live close to family and friends
- To live independently and in safe communities
- To engage in productive employment; and
- To participate in community life.

Specifically, my initiative will focus on the employment challenges that affect individuals with intellectual and other significant disabilities and the role that both state government and business can play in facilitating and advancing opportunities for these individuals to be gainfully employed in the competitive labor market.”

In pursuit of solutions to the high unemployment of people with disabilities, Governor Markell has devoted much time during the last ten months meeting with senior executives from major companies, government officials, and other organizations to identify the key challenges and practices that can be put in place to help states increase the employment of people with disabilities.

On May 31, 2013, Governor Markell called together several large businesses, organizations from the world of philanthropy, and state and federal agencies to participate in a day-long summit entitled Building a More Inclusive Workforce, to discuss the directions identified thus far in the Initiative’s research. Sue Homant, President & CEO of The Able Trust was invited to participate in the Summit and to provide input. The Summit was structured to allow for extensive interaction, and included the full day presence of Governor Markell and Senator Tom Harkin, Chair of the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, and the “father” of the ADA. Major companies in attendance included Walgreens, Bank of America, Kessler Foundation, Manpower, Walmart, MacArthur Foundation, Marriott, IBM, Deloitte, Capital One, and AMC, along with many others, including a strong representation of veterans groups. The five areas for state action which were discussed are:

- Integrate Disability Employment Efforts into the State Workforce Strategy
- Find and Support Businesses
- Establish States as a Model Employer of People with Disabilities
- Prepare Youth with Disabilities for the Workforce
- Maximize Scarce Resources (including use of federal programs, and especially philanthropy)

The Able Trust will be working with companies and organizations that participate in the initiative, to help promote the areas for action in Florida. This national initiative is directly connected to The Able Trust’s mission of successful employment for people with disabilities through its support of employment opportunities at the community level, and its High School High Tech program, which address skills development for high school youth with disabilities.

This national initiative is another big step in helping businesses to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce, that includes the many skills and talents of people who have a disability.
Have you heard? There are new Grant Program guidelines that have been published on The Able Trust website, www.abletrust.org.

The Able Trust Board of Directors and Staff have spent considerable time reflecting on the grant program goals, and reviewing best practices in the field of grants on both a national and state level, resulting in newly-published grant program guidelines. The grant structure is intended to allow organizations to choose which program would fit their employment placement program needs best. The two grant programs are the Strategic Employment Placement Initiatives and the General Support for Employment Program. The Able Trust Board of Directors envision both of these grant opportunities resulting in employment for program participants, but they recognize that different implementation strategies call for an opportunity to receive the right scale of grant support to implement the strategies. The new grant program design will allow for such scaling with a formal opportunity for organizations to gain multi-year support, which until now was only available on occasion.

The Strategic Employment Placement Initiatives is a major granting strategy of The Able Trust that allows qualified organizations to seek a grant of up to $250,000 in a multi-year grant structure. This type of grant requires the applicant to organize themselves as they engage their own training and placement efforts with individuals with disabilities, and the established employers in their respective communities. Applicants are expected to have an active Board of Directors committed to the program, and developed community resources – in both the financial and intellectual capacity – to carry out the program under consideration. The multi-year grant opportunity provides an applicant organization the stability to implement a program with long-term vision that is coupled with goals and results for each of the grant years. It is the intent of The Able Trust that these funded grants will result in significant numbers of individuals gaining employment, ultimately in career path employment with the wages to match. The annual deadline to apply and start the qualifying process is September 5th. Organizations selected to advance in the qualifying and interview processes will be notified, and a final decision of grant selections will be made by The Able Trust during the 3rd Quarter Board Meeting.

The General Support for Employment Placement Programs is a grant opportunity that will be very familiar to organizations around the state of Florida, as it resembles the past grant application process. For this program, requests should result in employment placement for participating individuals with disabilities. This could encompass equipment and/or staffing needs of an applicant organization to expand an existing program in a new way, or create a new program during a single grant year. The biggest change for this particular program will be the two deadlines associated with it. The first annual deadline is July 5th for a decision at the 1st Quarter Board Meeting, and the second is April 5th for a decision at the 4th Quarter Board Meeting. Awards in this category range up to $65,000 for a one-year grant period.

There are two other grant opportunities that will be announced as they become available, and these are the Board Directed Initiative Grant and a Supplemental Award Grant. The Board Directed Initiative Grant, when available, is defined in an announcement by the Board of Directors for proposals, and will address a specific issue. A release of an Initiative Request is at the discretion of the Board, and may occur at any time during a fiscal year. The announcement will contain instructions on how to apply, and a deadline date. Funding parameters in this category will be described in the published Initiative Request, and will correspond to the described objective of the Board Directed Initiative. The Supplemental Grant is a discretionary grant of additional funds to an existing grant by The Able Trust Board of Directors. There is no application process for this, nor are such grants required to be made in any given year, but are initiated by the Board.

Do you need some help navigating the new grant waters? 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 at www.abletrust.org with all the details on how to apply, in addition to a “Frequency Asked Questions” section on each of those instructions pages.

To e-mail questions, write to info@abletrust.org, or call 850-224-4493. The Able Trust is looking forward to receiving your proposal and hearing all about the employment placement strategies your organization is working on.

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2013 Grant Deadlines

**July 5th** - General Support for Employment Placement Programs grants due

**September 5th** - Strategic Employment Placement Initiatives grants due
Recent Grant Awards

The Able Trust Board of Directors recently met in Tallahassee and made five grant awards totaling $118,262

- **Achievement & Rehabilitation Centers, Inc.** - received $45,000 for the ARC Broward Culinary Institute to fund the position of a Student Services Administrator who will interact with area employers and clients with the trainees certified for work, creating employment opportunities in the metro Broward County area.

- **Florida Outreach Center for the Blind, Inc.** - received $20,262 for Increasing Employment of the Blind Through Training, which will provide additional staff to instruct individuals on how to accommodate their vision loss in employment and everyday living situations in the Palm Beach County area.

- **Hope Clubhouse of Southwest Florida, Inc.** - received $45,000 for the Employment Program Expansion, to provide for additional staffing to expand the employment program that will develop new employer partnerships, and allow additional individuals to gain employment in the counties of Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Hendry and Glades.

- **Lighthouse of Southwest Florida** - in North Fort Myers, Florida was awarded $4,000 for Services for Individuals with Macular Degeneration, from the McKeon Family Ability Fund administered by The Able Trust.

- **University of Miami’s Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, McKnight Vision Research Center** - in Boca Raton, Florida received $4,000 for Research on Macular Degeneration Eye Disease, from the McKeon Family Ability Fund administered by The Able Trust.

Partners Making A Difference - Florida Power & Light

Florida Power & Light (FPL) has a core belief in strength through differences. By leading respectfully, promoting teamwork, building a diverse and inclusive team, and investing in development, they strengthen and engage their greatest asset – their people.

FPL and its parent company NextEra Energy, are committed to fostering an inclusive business environment that values and leverages the diverse talents, perspectives and ideas of all employees. They believe that a focus on diversity and inclusion can directly impact the bottom line. With a diverse customer base, FPL believes it is important to have a workforce whose perspectives and experiences enable it to be responsive to the varied needs of customers.

Through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, in partnership with the Corporate Diversity Council, FPL has integrated the standards of diversity and inclusion into its corporate culture, including:

- **Employee Network Groups** – more than 700 employees are actively engaged in nine Employee Network Groups which includes a Disability Awareness and Support group.
- **Soliciting Employee Feedback** – including a set of diversity and inclusion questions on the company’s employee engagement survey.
- **Workforce Training** – online and classroom resources are available to help employees embrace the commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- **Community Outreach** – active support of various local and national partnerships.

Over the past two years, FPL has partnered with The Able Trust for Disability Employment Awareness Month/Disability Mentoring Day (DEAM/DMD) activities at its general office location in Miami.

FPL has had an overwhelming response from employees interested in serving as mentors. All participants enjoyed the opportunity to meet and gain insight about the company and each other. FPL encourages other companies to experience partnering with The Able Trust for DEAM/DMD. It is a great shared mentoring experience which is a win/win for everyone involved.
Florida Legislature Increases Florida High School High Tech Funding
by Allison Chase

Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) is expanding!

As a result of substantial increases in state revenues, the legislative appropriations bill for fiscal year 2014 increased to more than $74 billion. A large portion of the new money went to education programs, including HSHT, enabling the Legislature to restore the HSHT budget to its original funding level of $500,000. The restored funding will allow The Able Trust to add four additional programs located in Collier, Dade, Lake, and Polk counties, and provide a small increase to the existing 35 HSHT sites.

The Able Trust will partner with Goodwill Industries of South West Florida to expand to Collier County, and with the Center for Independent Living of South Florida to expand in Miami-Dade.

The Able Trust is currently soliciting organizations for the expansion sites in Lake and Polk counties through a request for proposal process which can be accessed on our website (www.abletrust.org).

Florida HSHT has a proven track record for providing quality educational and employment-related services and outcomes for students with disabilities, and looks forward to the opportunity to offer the program to even more students in the state.

YLF 2013 Delegates Vow to Make Their Experience Memorable
by Ray Ford, Jr.

If you were to talk to the students selected to participate in the 2013 Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), most would tell you that more than anything they’re eager to make a new friend. Finding the courage to leave familiar surroundings, these high school students are willing to give up a portion of their summer in hopes of connecting with others who share their plight.

For others, the motivation is more personal.

“Since I have a learning disability, I’m in lower-level science and math classes,” delegate Jenny Quirke told us. “Those lower levels have caused me to be bullied, but I decided to stand up for myself and create an anti-bullying campaign at my school. I love the students I’ve helped. This is my way of getting back at those bullies.”

Empowerment is one of three mantras that guide YLF, and all Able Trust youth programs. This unique, four-day leadership and social training event is sponsored each year by The Able Trust in the hope of shaping the minds and hearts of high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. Empowerment is the first “E” (closely followed by Education and Employment) for a reason. Until one finds the courage to stand up for and believe in their abilities, no progress towards self-enlightenment and independence can ever be realized.

“When I was younger, I went to an Autism Speaks function with my mother,” Palm Beach delegate Christian Mancino said. “I was confused about their goal of finding a cure. If they had a pill to get rid of it, I wouldn’t take it because Asperger’s is a part of who I am. To rid me of it would be no less than to rid the world of me.”

This year’s delegates run track, play football, and cheer on the sidelines at their high schools sporting events. They like to play video games, write novels and short stories, and spend time surfing the Web. In short, they’re no different than any other teenager. Some of them already realize that, and have taken on the task of educating others so that they too can enjoy the same freedom of thought, breaking free from the biases and misconceptions of society.

“I want to be a delegate because I’ve been put into a situation where I need to be a leader,” Jenny said. “This program can help me grow and be a better leader. I want to prove just because I have a learning disability that I’m not stupid, and can do whatever I put my mind 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 (please check one):

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

Name: ____________________________

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Credit Card Type: ______________________ Credit Card Number: ____________________________

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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 $30 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.

Partners Making A Difference - John Pettengill
by Kathryn McManus

As he lay in a coma after an accident that inflicted a severe head injury, doctors told John Pettengill’s parents that in all likelihood he would not survive. Even if by some miracle he did live, they offered little hope that he would be able to walk, see, or communicate. The odds were against him even regaining consciousness. But John says those doctors did not know about “The Great Physician,” and over time he proved them wrong on all counts.

After a period of recovery, John began volunteering at a variety of charities, giving back to those less fortunate. But that wasn’t enough. He wanted to make a larger impact on the lives of others. Before long he was investigating the ins-and-outs of forming his own non-profit, enabling him to make financial contributions to causes that were dear to him. One day someone introduced him to The Able Trust, which provided him the opportunity to create his own fund, easing the effort to make his monetary gifts.

“Partnering with The Able Trust to effect my giving priorities has been highly, highly positive,” John said. “The money goes where I want it to go, and I know what it’s doing.”

Besides his designated gifts, John has also supported the Able Trust itself.

“No matter what your resources, even if your name isn’t Gates or Trump, you’ve got something. And you can help somebody else.”

Thank you, John, for being such an inspiration and for your gifts to improve the lives of Floridians with disabilities.

Disability Employment Awareness Month/Disability Mentoring Day: A Season of Success
by Joseph D’Sousa

For one Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) participant, DMD worked out exactly as it was intended. Michael (pictured on the left) from Pensacola, FL went on a job-shadowing experience at Polanza Bistro. While there, Michael was offered an internship, which he enthusiastically accepted. After a trial period, the internship turned into a paid dishwasher job. Since then, Michael has received two promotions; first as an assistant to the chef, and now working as the head breakfast chef. This experience shows the impact and importance of Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) and DMD.

DEAM/DMD activities for 2013 are only a few months away. In September, The Able Trust will host a State-wide Kickoff in Central Florida. The event will highlight the abilities of individuals with disabilities, and serve as the official start of DEAM/DMD season. DEAM truly is a season, as The Able Trust encourages community liaisons not to be confined by one day, we salute the many liaisons that take it to heart by having job-shadowing events throughout the year.
The Able Trust held its annual Ability Celebration this past March in Orlando, marking the fourth event held in Central Florida. Proceeds benefitted the youth programs of The Able Trust -- the Florida High School High Tech Program (HSHT) and Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). Current and former participants of both served as speakers, presenters, and guests during the evening’s festivities.

“Special thanks go to our Honorary Chair, YLF alumnus Sarah Goldman, and fellow alum Anthony LaCava, who embody the success of The Able Trust’s youth programs, as well as our mission to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment,” Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant said.

Darden Restaurants was recognized as the 2013 Corporate Champion for its direct, positive impact on the lives of thousands of Floridians with disabilities by sustaining a diverse workforce. Corporate Champions are selected based on their support of The Able Trust and commitment to promote diversity in all its forms. Senior Vice President of Government and Community Affairs Robert McAdam accepted the award on Darden’s behalf.

WESH-TV News Anchor Jim Payne served as Master of Ceremonies for a third consecutive year. An avid supporter of The Able Trust, Payne has also served on the Board of Directors for Special Olympics Florida for more than a decade. He recalled the story of a young man with Down’s Syndrome that worked at his local Publix, sharing his personal story of determination and courage.

“I don’t think that young man knows just how much he has inspired me,” Payne said in front of a quiet crowd. “Finding the strength to do something that everyone says you can’t is what makes you a hero, and that young man is a hero.”

Keynote speaker Jennifer French knows a thing or two about heroes. She was awarded a silver medal in sailing at the 2012 Paralympics Games in London. A decorated and accomplished world champion in her sport, Jennifer has overcome numerous obstacles in her quest to not only better her life, but the lives of those around her. A snow-boarding accident many years ago resulted in quadriplesis. However, clinical trials of a neuroprosthetic system enable her to stand up and move around using her own muscles. She chronicles these, and many other challenges in her book, “On My Feet Again.”

Nearly 150 guests came to show their support, participating in a silent auction and enjoying the ambiance of The Orlando Museum of Art (OMA), which was cited by Newsweek as one of the best museums in the South. OMA exhibitions, collections, and programs have been featured in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and hundreds of other major publications.
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

- **July 17-21, 2013**
  Youth Leadership Forum
  Tallahassee, FL

- **September 17, 2013**
  Communications Campaign Launch Luncheon
  Orlando, FL

- **September 20, 2013**
  Able Trust Board of Directors Meeting
  Sarasota, FL

- **October 2013**
  Disability Employment Awareness Month

- **November 2013**
  Hire A Veteran Month

- **December 13, 2013**
  Able Trust Board of Directors Meeting