Sometimes it’s easy to feel like we’re alone when we face a challenge. Feeling as though no one understands or cares can make us want to give up on ourselves if we feel that no one is in our corner.

This past July, high school students with disabilities from across the state realized just the opposite as they participated in the 2014 Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) in Tallahassee. Over the course of four days, delegates learned about leadership, social & civic responsibility, business etiquette, college and university resources, STEM careers, and many other topics that will help them identify and pursue postsecondary options and a career path.

Madeline Nunez said that she will continue to build her leadership skills by encouraging others in her school to speak out against bullying. She aspires to be a registered nurse upon graduating from college.

“One thing I learned about myself at YLF is that I’m capable of way more than what I expected,” she said. “Just because we may have to work a little harder, we cannot be quitters.”

“Just because I have a learning disability doesn’t mean I have to set myself at a lower level to please popular opinion,” delegate Scott Schoeneman added.

YLF alums Shavaughn Barnes, Valerie Baker, and Mervin Hernandez participated in a panel discussion during the annual Mentors’ Luncheon, sharing their personal YLF (continued on page 4)
A Message from the President

The Able Trust Board of Directors met in the Jacksonville area in September, and welcomed many friends and guests to a community reception on September 18. During the reception, Senator Aaron Bean was recognized as the Able Trust 2014 Senator of the Year for his steady and passionate support of the work of The Able Trust. Guests were also privileged to hear from one of the many alumni of Able Trust programs, Shavaughn “Shevie” Barnes. I am including most of Shevie’s speech below, to allow all of our supporters and friends to know what the work of The Able Trust can and does mean to a young job seeker with a disability. Please enjoy these comments from Shevie.

“Hi, my name is Shavaughn Barnes although most people call me Shevie. I am 26 years old with an ultimate dream to be the sign language interpreter for the President of the United States. I have been a substitute teacher here in Jacksonville, Florida for 3 years and had my most recent experience teaching here, at a school called Beautiful Mind and Soul Leadership Academy for middle school and high school students. My experience there led me to return to school for my education degree. I am proud to say if everything goes as planned. I will have it in about 4 months.

The early part of my life was in New York with my parents and two younger brothers. We moved to Florida when I was beginning second grade. Moving to Florida was a cultural shock for all of us kids. My younger brother had never seen grass and for weeks he cried every time he had to walk on it. The cultural shock for me came on my first day of school. In the city there were a lot of children who had disabilities. I had gone to a school for children with cerebral palsy which is my diagnosis. I had no idea what independence is. I had my own apartment, got to know the transportation, and even got to fight for some changes. Jacksonville has been what I like to call my breeding ground - it’s where I have made my own life. It’s where I truly came to understand what independence is. I had my own apartment, got to know the transportation, and even got to fight for some changes. Jacksonville has been what I like to call my breeding ground - it’s where I have found out who I am supposed to be. I hope to return soon so that I can return the favor.

My entire family has been a vital part of me becoming who I am today. It may seem strange that I was eight years old when I discovered my disability, but to understand that, you have really to understand my family dynamic. For instance, the story of how I learned to walk. I was four years old and my one-year-old brother was learning to walk. He was getting all the attention, and I just could not have that. So despite what doctors told my parents, I got up and wobbled around too. By age four, I could walk just as fast as anyone. We would be in the store and I would fall, and everyone would fumble wanting to help me up. My mother would keep walking and she would look back and say, “Come on Shev, you can do it, get up.” She had to start me, I examined both of us and I asked her what was wrong with me. That is what the work of The Able Trust can and does mean to a young job seeker with a disability.

My entire family has been a vital part of me becoming who I am today. It may seem strange that I was eight years old when I discovered my disability, but to understand that, you have really to understand my family dynamic. For instance, the story of how I learned to walk. I was four years old and my one-year-old brother was learning to walk. He was getting all the attention, and I just could not have that. So despite what doctors told my parents, I got up and wobbled around too. By age four, I could walk just as fast as anyone. We would be in the store and I would fall, and everyone would fumble wanting to help me up. My mother would keep walking and she would look back and say, “Come on Shev, you can do it, get up.” She had to start teaching me the important lesson of independence.

During recent years Jacksonville has become an important part of my own identity. Here is where I have made my own life. It’s where I truly came to understand what independence is. I had my own apartment, got to know the transportation, and even got to fight for some changes. Jacksonville has been what I like to call my breeding ground - it’s where I have found out who I am supposed to be. I hope to return soon so that I can return the favor.

This lesson has gotten me through so many trials and obstacles in my way. It is in fact what led me to The Able Trust. I remember the morning my guidance counselor gave me the application to attend The Able Trust’s Youth Leadership Forum. When I received my letter of acceptance I couldn’t have been more excited. As I prepared for my first flight without my parents and my first out of town trip alone as well, I was just so happy and as my mom sent me on my way she told me to be brave. Though I saw tears in her eyes she knew it was the best move. The first year with Able Trust was great, but it’s the years after that have been the most rewarding. Each year as I
return to the Forum as a mentor, I gain something new. I see my own first year mentees returning, and I smile to think that I made a difference. The Able Trust has become such an important part of my world that when I interview for a job, I let potential employers know I will be missing a week in July to attend the Youth Leadership Forum. The Able Trust has become and I really believe will always be what I like to call my “energy drink” of the year.

It’s amazing that I am given the opportunity tonight to meet some of the faces who are the reason that I can attend YLF. I could not even find the words to express my gratitude. I would not be who I am without your donations or your time or your energy being given to this organization. Thank you and if you forget everything just remember my favorite quote. “Our Deepest Fear is not that we are inadequate - it’s that we are powerful beyond measure.”

Shevie will do well and go far in spite of her cerebral palsy. She is one of the many young job seekers The Able Trust is proud to support through wonderful programs and projects throughout the state. I hope that our readers are inspired by her words, as were our guests at the Jacksonville meeting.

Enjoy some additional inspiring stories in the following pages of the Grantor, as we celebrate Disability Employment Awareness Month in October and related activities throughout the fall.

Kindest regards,


Dr. Susanne F. Homant, MBA
President & CEO

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The Able Trust Welcomes A New Board Member

The Able Trust proudly announces the addition of Les Goldman to its Board of Directors. He is a Global Product Manager with Verizon, and has leveraged his customer, marketing and MBA experiences to successfully launch award-winning global Managed Unified Communications solutions. His unique vision permitted Les to receive a patent for his work with integrated telephone services years before the advent of the term “Unified Communications”.

Les, and his wife Karen, have two children. As parent to Sarah, born with Cerebral Palsy, Les has collected the necessary experience to help ensure his daughter’s success. Sarah is completing her Master’s of Social Work degree at Florida State University, and has been a model advocate for other students with disabilities, serving as a mentor and facilitator at The Able Trust’s Florida Youth Leadership Forum. Five years ago, Les founded North Tampa Athletic Association’s Buddy Ball program, which enables children with disabilities to experience America’s favorite pastime. The Able Trust is pleased to add Les’ expertise to the work of the Board of Directors.
experience with an audience of nearly 200. Valerie is a junior at Florida Gulf Coast University pursuing a degree in marketing. She has served as a group facilitator for several years.

“Before coming to YLF, I wasn’t sure I would be able to go to college and have a true college experience; live on campus and do what my friends were doing,” she added. “But after coming here and learning about all the resources available to me, I learned that I could go to college and be away from my parents and live independently.”

“One of the things I’ve enjoyed about coming back each year is seeing the students make the progression from delegates to staff members,” Mervin added, a 10-year YLF participant and volunteer who now lives in New York. “Seeing them come back with stories of how they’ve left home and gone away to college; that’s very, very powerful.”

Able Trust Board Chairman Richard Cole addressed delegates and volunteers on the importance of leadership. A native of Pennsylvania, Cole was a successful lawyer who advocated for people with disabilities. A motorcycle accident many years ago resulted in the amputation of his right leg.

“After two months in the hospital, and the long rehab afterward, I had a long time to think about my future; what my new life would be like,” Cole said. “In that time I noticed people looked at me differently, simply because my right leg was missing. People made snap decisions about my abilities. And for the first time in my life I understood what many of my clients with disabilities dealt with on a daily basis. At first I was angry. But in time that anger changed into determination to do whatever I could to erase the stereotypes against people with disabilities.”

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**Partners Making A Difference - The Hall Family**

*by Zoltan Karpathy*

The Halls became Able Trust donors in 2010, the year their son Sean was selected as a delegate for the Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). It is an experience that has changed his life. So much so, that Sean has returned to YLF each summer as a staff person, volunteering his time to help impact the lives of young people with disabilities.

“We were so impressed with what he came back with that first year,” Sean’s mother Deborah said. “He overcame real anxiety about that first bus ride away from home. YLF gave him self-confidence, new friendships and a face full of smiles. When we give back, The Able Trust is a top priority – now and in the future.”

Sean will soon graduate from the University of North Florida; an achievement few would have predicted. He was born 10 weeks premature, with complications due to a birth defect in his brain. Sean faced many challenges growing up, among them hypersensitivity to temperatures and diminished muscle control. Major surgery for Scoliosis in 2008 left Sean with chronic mobility impairments, but it hasn’t stopped him from moving ahead.

“I am a YLF mentor for new delegates,” Sean proudly proclaimed. “I practice the leadership skills I learned from my parents and the YLF presenters.”

Toxey Hall, Sean’s father, is a civil engineer who runs his own engineering firm, Clearview Land Design in Tampa. Deborah is a highly informed advocate for disability issues, especially for her son.

“Dad takes it a little easier on me; mom pushes me,” Sean said.

The future is promising for Sean. With the completion of his education in sight, he looks forward to a productive, prosperous life.

“I’m a tech guy. But I can see myself doing work at a church, maybe in the ministry,” Sean said, his mom nodding in approval.

“Sean will be married and working, thanks to The Able Trust’s emphasis on getting a job and doing your best,” she added. “And even after that we will continue to support The Able Trust!”

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![Programs like The Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) have made a lasting impact in the lives of Sean (right) and his mother Deborah (left), a faithful supporter of The Able Trust’s youth programs.](image-url)
In September, The Able Trust kicked off its first Strategic Employment Placement Initiative grant with a check presentation to The Dan Marino Foundation, Inc. in Fort Lauderdale. The grant will support the Career Launch Employment Program. Recipient of a three-year grant in the amount of $250,000, the Foundation is busy creating employment for participants at their expanded Marino Campus. Staffing now includes a Certified Work Incentive Counselor who will help individuals navigate employment successfully over the long term. The grant will also support a renewed effort to develop relationships with the business community in South Florida, further expanding employment opportunities.

By supporting and counseling individuals over a three-year time period with funding from The Able Trust, staff at The Dan Marino Foundation can help participants not only gain their first job, but strive toward promotions and lateral transfers as well.

The Able Trust is now reviewing submitted proposals for the next round of Strategic Employment Placement Initiative grants. Awardees will be announced in the Spring of 2015. For further information about The Able Trust grants program, visit www.abletrust.org and click on Grant Information.

The Able Trust has awarded more than $33 million to grantees across the state of Florida, enabling thousands of Floridians with disabilities to enter the workforce.
October is Disability Employment Awareness Month. And October 15th will mark the nationally-celebrated “Disability Mentoring Day”.

However, thanks to the efforts of The Able Trust and other event supporters, the state of Florida will not contain this vital mentoring and job-shadowing experience to a single day or month in the year. These employment-building opportunities for Floridians with disabilities will be held throughout the year, allowing for even more significant interaction, and flexibility in the participation of businesses and people with disabilities.

This year, a record 14 individuals and businesses are generously supporting the DEAM/DMD campaign.

It is not too late to plan or engage in DEAM!

If you are a business that would like to host a site tour or job shadowing, or if you are a disability service agency and want to schedule job shadowing or other activities, please contact the Able Trust at info@abletrust.org. Staff is ready to help you make your plans and connect you to other partners.

DEAM 2014 Sponsors

WellCare
Publix Super Markets
Florida Power and Light
Florida Hospital
Darden Restaurants
Moore Communications Group
Miami Dade EmployAbility Network
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Dan Marino Foundation
Florida Chamber of Commerce
Goodwill Manasota
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Raymond James
Richard and Barbara Cole
Grantee Spotlight: St. Petersburg College & Stand Among Friends

by Guenevere Crum

Grant funding for the Professional Career Placement grants began nearly three years ago for St. Petersburg College Foundation in Pinellas County, and Stand Among Friends in Palm Beach County. Each organization is now in their final grant year, and still busy helping young professionals with disabilities gain their first career-path job, or negotiating their return to their professional field.

St. Petersburg College Foundation has assisted more than 200 participants through their collegiate outreach program, and of these, 66 individuals have gained employment. The St. Petersburg staff members are building the interview and resume-development skills for students, in addition to assisting them in successfully passing their licensure and certificate exams in their chosen careers. Each case is as unique as the disabilities served, but with the funding provided by The Able Trust, the staff at St. Petersburg College has successfully responded to their student’s employment needs.

“This grant has helped to enhance the College’s exposure in the business community. We network closely with the local Chambers of Commerce, and have exposed the business community to the advantages of hiring students with disabilities. Close to 300 business contacts have been made since the inception of the grant, and the business network continues to grow. None of this could have happened without the funding from The Able Trust.”

Stand Among Friends – housed on the campus of Florida Atlantic University, Department of Nursing in Boca Raton – has assisted more than 100 participants, of which 34 have become employed. They have worked hard to find the best assistive technology for their clients, assisting each in overcoming their unique challenges as they strive for success in the classroom and the work place. Funding from The Able Trust has allowed Stand Among Friends to broaden its impact, providing responsive services for all types of disabilities such as autism, traumatic brain/spinal cord injury, vision impairments, and mental illness. With the right technology, individuals have been able to keep their schedule up to date by working flex-location positions, conducting remote interviews, and excelling in everyday office computer situation with their own unique accommodations.

The Able Trust is proud of the accomplishments of these organizations, and will continue to work with each as they move through their final grant year.
In September, The Able Trust Board of Directors hosted a business reception for Duval County and surrounding areas. Nearly 20 local organizations were represented, hoping to learn more about the employment initiatives of The Able Trust and how they have impacted the lives of Floridians with disabilities.

“The Able Trust is dedicated to helping people with disabilities find successful employment,” Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant said. “Since 1990 we, along with our community partners, have put thousands of people with disabilities into meaningful work. Duval and surrounding counties have produced programs and completed projects that have been significant in the achievement of our mission. We have worked with approximately 30 agencies in Duval, Nassau, St. John’s, and Clay counties, granting nearly $5 million to those counties.”

Able Trust Senator of the Year, Aaron Bean, was also on-hand and officially received recognition for his tireless support of the organization. Serving the Senate districts of Duval and Nassau counties, Senator Bean has long been a supporter of the mission of The Able Trust, working to help assure that Florida remains a model for inclusiveness and diversity throughout his legislative career. Senator Bean helped The Able Trust to restore funds to its High School High Tech (HSHT) program during the 2013 legislative session, and during the current session, he again stepped up to help restore lost endowment funding from civil penalties.

“Able Trust, you’ve come so far,” Senator Bean said. “Never forget the great things you’ve done. There are still folks out there that need you. Independence; that’s all anybody wants. The opportunity to do for themselves. The dignity of work is basic.”

YLF alum Shavaughn Barnes addresses the audience as she shares her personal story of perseverance.
The Florida High School High Tech Program (HSHT) Improves Postsecondary Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

by Allison Chase

Florida HSHT achieves this by setting 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 a student has 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 STEM careers. HSHT partners with business and industry leaders through local Business Advisory Councils (BACs) to ensure 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.

The Florida HSHT program is expanding this year from 39 to 41 sites to include Pasco and Okaloosa counties, with the Okaloosa site serving youth within the Florida juvenile justice system.

EMPOWERMENT

During the summer of 2014, 256 students participated in summer internships, 85% of which were paid through a stipend by the employer, the HSHT program site, the local Workforce Development Board, or another community grant provider.

HSHT Internship Partners Include: UF Health Shands Hospital, Publix Supermarkets, Consulate Healthcare, Jacksonville Museum of Science & History, Fairpoint Communications, Challenger Learning Center, Universal Studios, Lakeland Ledger, Union Lasteel, SeaWorld, Florida Wild Mammal Association, local school districts, city governments, and numerous local businesses.

EDUCATION

During the 2013-2014 school year, the Florida HSHT program served 1,207 students with disabilities in 38 Florida counties. Services were provided in 98 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

83% of Florida HSHT graduates entered postsecondary education, continuing education, or employment upon graduation. In addition, 198 Florida HSHT students, representing all grades, secured employment through program services.
Increasing Employment Opportunities through Internships

by Joseph D’Sousa

The Able Trust will soon launch an exciting new program aimed at providing more opportunities for people with disabilities through real-life, work place experience via internships.

Internships are a respected method for entry into the workforce for young job seekers, giving them the hands-on experience necessary for success. For businesses, internships can make the learning curve less steep for new employees, create a direct talent pipeline, reduce the risks normally associated with new hires, and fill the human capital needs of the organization.

The Able Trust realizes the numerous benefits internships have for the workforce of Florida, and will be holding five free training seminars throughout the state that will provide businesses the tools and information they need to develop their own internship program.

Designed for small and medium-sized organizations – but relevant to businesses of all size – the seminar will give participants all the information and tools necessary to create internship programs of their own. Seminar and course materials will provide enough information for participants to leave with a turn-key internship program, or a solid base to develop a customized program geared toward their specific needs.

If you would like additional information on the seminars or would like to attend please contact The Able Trust at info@abletrust.org.

Developing an Internship Program Seminar Dates

November 6 - Winter Park          December 11 - Tampa
January 15 - Palm Beach           January 29 - Miami
February 19 - Jacksonville

NOTE: There is NO COST to attend these seminars, and breakfast is included, compliments of The Able Trust.

Recent Grant Awards

The Able Trust Board of Directors recently met in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida and awarded the following grants under the General Support for Employment Placement Programs totaling $200,000.

Baptist Health South Florida - will receive $60,000 for the hiring of a Vocational Specialist for the ASPIRE Program. This individual will assist participants in gaining job skills, successful completion of an internship, and ultimately employment in the Miami-Dade area.

Quest, Inc. - will receive $50,000 for Project SEARCH at Florida Hospital East. Funding will provide curriculum instruction and job training for transitioning youth in employment positions in a hospital setting in the Orange County area.

Service Source/Abilities Inc. - will receive $60,000 for the Acquired Brain Injury Life (ABIL) House. Funding will support an employment placement program at the newly-established ABIL House for individuals with Traumatic Brain Injuries in Pinellas County.

Easter Seals Society of Southwest Florida, Inc. - will receive $30,000 for the Employment Services Program, providing for a Sarasota County area Employment Counselor position at the organization, which has been understaffed.
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: ____________________________

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 $33 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.

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 2014
Disability Employment Awareness Month

November 2014
Hire A Veteran Month

November 6, 2014
“Developing an Internship Program Seminar
Winter Park, FL.

December 1, 2014
Applications for the 2014 Florida Youth Leadership Forum will be available online

December 11, 2014
“Developing an Internship Program Seminar
Tampa, FL.

December 12, 2014
Able Trust Board of Directors Meeting