



## **NEWS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
October 7, 2015

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### **Lakeland program breaking down barriers to employment for students with disabilities** *Center for Independent Living of Central Florida honored by The Able Trust*

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – The Center for Independent Living of Central Florida was recognized as the 2015 Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) Program of the Year for its administration of the Polk County HSHT program. HSHT is designed to help students with disabilities advance their education and prepare them to enter the workforce.

The award was presented by The Able Trust, a statewide nonprofit with a mission to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment.

The Able Trust's annual Ability Awards ceremony – held recently in Orlando – honors businesses, organizations and individuals for their employment, leadership and services that allow more Floridians with disabilities to enter the workforce.

Under the leadership of co-coordinators Jacinth Lawrence and Nicole Torres, the Polk County HSHT team exemplifies dedication, commitment and expertise in furthering the education, leadership and career preparation of students with disabilities. Polk County High School ensures that students experience the depth and breadth of career and youth development through hands-on workshops, leadership development opportunities and exposure to real-world employment situations. One hundred percent of Polk County HSHT seniors graduated from high school, and 75 percent of those who graduated went on to pursue post-secondary training or employment.

“Polk County High School has shown innovation through its dedication to providing young people with high tech training and experience,” said Dr. Susanne Homant, president and CEO The Able Trust. “We commend them for creating and sustaining a highly successful program that is putting students with disabilities on the path to successful careers.”

Through community and business partnerships, a majority of Polk County HSHT students are able to participate in an internship by graduation.

The Able Trust is celebrating 25 years of making a positive impact on the state of Florida. In that time, The Able Trust has awarded more than \$35 million in grants to organizations whose goal is to help Floridians with disabilities gain employment and has developed the nationally recognized Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) program and Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) to

help Florida's teens learn self-advocacy and pursue post-secondary education and/or entry into the workforce.

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**About The Able Trust**

*The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501(c)(3) public-private partnership foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. Since its establishment, The Able Trust has awarded more than \$35 million throughout Florida, enabling thousands of Floridians with disabilities to enter the workforce.*

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