Florida Teens with Disabilities Receive the Gift of Technology

by Ray Ford, Jr.

Nearly 40 high school students across the state have received refurbished Dell laptop computers loaded with software. (from left to right) Stand Among Friends President & CEO Shawn Friedkin, Able Trust President & CEO Dr. Susanne Homant, and Michelle Galloway (middle, standing) honor students Carrie and Jose during an award ceremony just before Christmas.

Florida’s unemployment rate is just below 9%. However, for citizens with disabilities, the numbers are much worse. Negative stereotypes in the workplace have unfairly labeled citizens with disabilities, in many cases preventing them from even getting a chance to prove themselves. Therefore, in order to give our students with disabilities a competitive advantage, we must educate them on the importance of receiving the highest level of education and training possible.

That education must take place in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

According to a study conducted by Change the Equation (an organization that supports STEM education), there are approximately 3.6 unemployed workers for every job in the United States. When it comes to STEM workers, one is unemployed for two unfilled STEM jobs throughout the country. That means many jobs are going unfilled simply for lack of people with the right skill sets.

Thanks to a partnership between The Able Trust and The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST), several high school students with disabilities across the state of Florida are getting a much-needed boost when it comes to closing the technological divide that unfortunately still exists in our country. This quarter, nearly 40 deserving students received refurbished laptops loaded with all the latest software,
For the past seven years, The Able Trust has been honored to work with a number of volunteer networking groups who have been active in their communities in the promotion of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Known as Business Leadership Networks (BLNs), the members of these groups were often strong and consistent supporters of workforce diversity that included people with disabilities in good jobs with career potential. As the BLN movement was growing, The Able Trust provided membership services and support, which included some internship grants, funding of a statewide “Look at my Ability” campaign, maintenance of a website, development of communication items, and hosting regular meetings. As the need for BLN member services grew beyond the resources of The Able Trust, we facilitated membership in the national BLN organization, known as the USBLN. Some of the local BLNs have taken advantage of membership in the national affiliation, and others have re-formed and renamed their organization at the local level, remaining committed to the goal of successful employment for Floridians with disabilities.

The end of January marked the conclusion of The Able Trust’s role as the Florida BLN, recognizing the USBLN as the national organization which has a mission more directly related to supporting these local networking groups. We were honored to help the BLN movement get underway in Florida, and look forward to working with many of these groups and individual members as partners in our continuing and joint efforts to assure that Florida’s workforce includes people with disabilities, and that people with disabilities have career opportunities in the industries and businesses that are the best match for their skills and talents. Our thanks to the following 2012 BLN Leadership, who assisted in the transition.

Lara Burnside, Florida BLN Chair
Lynne Kettells, Chair, Bay Area BLN
Cecilia Lopez, President, Big Bend BLN
Betsy Farmer, Executive Director, Brevard BLN
Julie Kreafle, Executive Director, Broward BLN
John Mirra and Gail Waller, Co-Chairs, Emerald Coast BLN
Christopher Oakley, Chair, First Coast BLN
Erin Lansberry, President, Fort Myers BLN
Lisa Hancock and Doreen Soto, Co-Chairs, Orlando BLN
Benjamin Mills, Chair, Manasota BLN
Bob Bromberg, Chair of former Miami – Dade BLN
Mary Thomas, Chair, Palm Beach BLN
Lara Burnside and Joel Hullet, Co-Chairs, Panhandle BLN
Dick Pellegrini and Karen Mitchell, Co-Chairs, Polk County BLN
JoJo Ruby-White, Harriett Jordan and Robert Haber, Co-Chairs, Tampa Bay Metro BLN

It should be noted that during the creation and development of the Florida BLN, many, many other volunteers assisted in the effort, and the network of people with disabilities has been truly served well by all of these gracious volunteers. We hope they will all continue to work collaboratively with their communities and the USBLN as they advance the mission of successful employment in their local areas. I personally will look forward to partnerships with many of these volunteers as we move onward in helping to create diverse and inclusive workforces in all of Florida’s industries.

Kindest regards,

Dr. Susanne F. Homant
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 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. The Grantor features two of its Board Members in this edition.

Marcy Benton

Appointed to The Able Trust Board of Directors in 2010 to fill a vacant position, Ms. Benton has continuously served the mission of the organization, and was elected to officer status in 2012, currently serving as The Able Trust Treasurer. She has been a valued employee at Publix Corporation since 1992, recently promoted to Director of Retail Associate Relations, after a long tenure with Publix human resources department as the Publix Manager of Associate Diversity. In that position she helped to champion the Publix culture of diversity and inclusion throughout the organization. She has a passion for workforce diversity and working to ensure that opportunities are provided to all members of society, and has been instrumental in promoting Disability Mentoring Day experiences in Florida and Georgia at a number of Publix locations. She grew up in public housing in Florida, and vouched as a child to attend college in order to be a change agent for herself and her family. Director Benton achieved that dream and more, earning her BS degree in business administration from the University of Florida, and her MBA from the University of South Florida.

Marcy serves The Able Trust on its Executive Committee, also chairs the Finance Committee, and serves as a member of its Grant Committee. In addition to her extensive volunteer work with The Able Trust, she serves other charitable organizations in Florida and elsewhere, working to create opportunities for inclusion in a wide variety of settings. She has lived in Florida since birth, is married to Steve, and is the very proud mother of Bryce.

Anne Marie Taglienti

Ms. Taglienti was appointed to The Able Trust Board of Directors in the fall of 2010, and brings extensive grant review and marketing expertise to the Foundation. She is the VP of Global Philanthropy for JP Morgan Chase and works out of the company’s Miami offices, responsible for grant-making, community relations, and volunteerism for the JP Morgan Chase Foundation in South Florida. Previous employment includes work at the American Express offices in Fort Lauderdale, serving as its Director of Corporate Affairs and Communications. Prior to her appointment to the Board, Director Taglienti worked as a volunteer on The Able Trust mentoring programs, assisting her employer with the creation of mentoring and job-shadowing experiences for high school students and young job-seekers, contributing to their knowledge base on career choices. As a Director, she serves on the Ethics, Bylaws and Policies Committee, the Development and Marketing Committee, and Grant Committee of The Able Trust.

Anne Marie earned her BA degree from the University of Florida, and is completing her MBA degree at Nova Southeastern University. She has a history of serving charitable organizations and advancing philanthropic missions throughout the state. She brings extensive experience in grant-making and outcome analysis to her position on the Board, as well as marketing expertise. Born in NY, she has worked in several northeastern states, but calls Florida her home. She is the mother of three wonderful children, and active in their lives.

3 The Able Trust
CareerAbility Aids People with Disabilities in Their Search for Employment

Able Trust Grant Funds Boca Raton Nonprofit

A core job requirement for an artist is strong visual skills. Sean Martell has them, but a visual impairment in his left eye and a learning disability presented challenges as he tried to enter the graphic design profession. Martell needed more than a college degree in graphic design to show he was qualified; he needed help to overcome the obstacles that people with disabilities can face when searching for employment.

Enter Stand Among Friends, a Boca Raton nonprofit that helps college students and adults with disabilities prepare for, seek, and secure employment. Michelle Galloway, an employment consultant with SAF’s CareerAbility program, came to Martell’s aid. She helped him prepare for interviews and worked with him on how to write a strong resume and cover letter as well as create a portfolio that would impress prospective employers.

“My goal was to help Sean be more marketable as he made another attempt to find a part-time job,” Galloway said. “We needed to lower, if not remove, any barriers that could get in his way of convincing an employer that he would make a great hire.”

Lending support to Stand Among Friends and its CareerAbility program was The Able Trust, a state-funded initiative that seeks to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. Last March, The Able Trust awarded Stand Among Friends a three-year, $200,000 grant. As a result of this support, Galloway and Martel’s efforts paid off. In September, a Boca Raton publishing company hired the 33-year-old aspiring graphic artist, where he is now gaining professional experience.

“Through CareerAbility, we built a connection with the company to provide support to them and Sean,” Galloway said.

Among the support CareerAbility helped provide Martell was assistive technology equipment. For example, through CareerAbility’s Vocational Rehabilitation program, he was equipped with an Apple computer loaded with voice recognition software called Dragon SpeakingNaturally. Among the software’s features is a speech-to-text program that helps Martell produce text faster and more accurately than he could by typing.

“That software program made a huge improvement in his efficiency as a graphic artist,” Galloway said.

After 90 days on the job, Martell’s transition into the working world was considered a success, according to Galloway.

“The only thing he needed was a chance to prove he was capable of working as a graphic artist,” she said.

A 2010 Harris Interactive survey titled “The ADA, 20 Years Later,” found that only 21 percent of persons with disabilities aged 18–64 are employed full- or part-time, far below the 59 percent reported for persons without disabilities. Ensuring that the underrepresented disability community can find employment appropriate to their background and skills is a top priority of The Able Trust.
(continued from page 1)

in hopes of giving them a competitive advantage in the workforce and postsecondary education. Simply put, this gift could be a game-changer when it comes to the quality of life they can now choose to lead, achieving their educational and employment aspirations.

“Through an extraordinary collaboration that FAAST was proud to be a part of, The Able Trust and High School High Tech Programs sought out needy students with disabilities and distributed 40 refurbished Dell laptops across the state,” FAAST Executive Director Steve Howells said. “This direct service enables these students to cross the digital divide when accessing electronic information, and helps level the playing field for them to compete.”

Four students from the Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) Program were awarded laptops at a ceremony before Christmas. Eighty applications were submitted. Recipients were overjoyed not just by the award itself, but what it means to their futures. With these laptops, they are equipped with a powerful tool that will aid them in achieving their life’s goals. Dreams of college and vocational school are now a reality.

“The students who received these laptops have focused career training goals,” Goodwill Port Charlotte HSHT Coordinator, Angela Hemstreet said. “One of my students told us that having her own computer will mean having unlimited access to online training videos. Removing the barrier of time constraints on studying is a pretty big deal.”

“The important work of The Able Trust in partnership with those in the HSHT Programs brings to mind a famous quote from Abraham Lincoln,” Howells said. “‘Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way.’”

Since 2011, The Able Trust and The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services Technology (FAAST) have awarded 64 refurbished Dell laptop computers to high school students with disabilities across the state of Florida.
Words to Inspire

Jennifer French - 2013 Ability Celebration Keynote

Join The Able Trust at its 2013 Ability Celebration in Orlando on March 9 and enjoy an inspiring presentation by featured speaker Jennifer French, U.S. silver medalist for the SKUD-18 in sailing at the 2012 Paralympics Games in London. French is a member of the U.S. Sailing Team Sperry Top-Sider, an eight-time winner of the Milan-Gruson award for top female skipper with a disability, and a silver medalist from the 2011 & 2012 IFDS World Championships.

Jennifer became a quadriplegic as a result of a snowboarding accident. Although doctors told her she would never get out of her wheelchair, Jennifer participated in the clinical trial of a neuroprosthetic system that now enables her to stand up and move around using her own muscles, stimulated by 24 surgically-implanted electrodes.

Jennifer continues to help the research team test new features, pushing the limits of her strength and endurance while proving the viability of this new therapy for thousands of other potential recipients – including injured soldiers returning from war. She also advances that work as the Executive Director of Neurotech Network, a non-profit organization dedicated to improve the education of, and the advocacy to access neurotechnology for persons with impairments.

Partners Making A Difference - Dianne and Elliott Steele

by Kathryn McManus

A family tragedy brought on by mental illness led Dianne and Elliott Steele on a long and frustrating search for community resources. Unable to find what was needed, the Steeles eventually took the bold step of founding a new organization themselves. Recently celebrating 10 years of service, Vincent House is a recovery-through-work membership community in Pinellas Park that helps hundreds of its members find renewed and fulfilled lives. For many of them, that has also meant successful employment. Dianne and Elliott attribute the success of their programs to the support provided over the years by The Able Trust, and have also become regular donors in support of The Able Trust’s programs.

“We feel we have an obligation and duty to support those that support us,” Elliott said, “and it would be great if others stepped up and joined us.”

“Working with The Able Trust has been a pleasure and delight,” Dianne added. “And we cherish the relationship we have.”

Not only have the Steeles benefitted from the financial support of The Able Trust, but the association has opened up an entire disability support network they never knew existed. They found it particularly notable that The Able Trust goes beyond just being a grantor.

“It’s a continuing conversation,” Elliott said. “The Able Trust has helped us make connections with other grantors and resources, creating new collaborations.”

We appreciate Dianne and Elliott’s personal and financial support, and are proud of our cooperative efforts in achieving successful employment for Floridians with disabilities. Congratulations on 10 years of changing lives at Vincent House!”
Mario Ramirez can now look back on the mental health crisis he had in 2010 and say with a smile that everything happens for a reason. Up until that moment, he never held a steady job and lived in virtual isolation as he struggled to cope with schizophrenia.

“When you have a mental condition and some people know you have that, it’s a stigma,” Ramirez said. “I wasn’t socially accepted.”

Getting a job and holding it was nearly impossible for him, even though he had a college degree in civil engineering. So he toiled as a painter, making ends meet with the help of his father until he passed away 10 years ago.

But it was that crisis that changed everything for the better, with Ramirez finding himself being in the right place at the right time about a year later. Prescribed a new drug that controlled his mental disorder, Ramirez, 44, felt ready to become a member of society. He began volunteering at The Key Clubhouse of South Florida, a facility that helps people with mental illnesses learn life skills, find jobs, and become meaningful members of society. There he met the Clubhouse’s executive director, Stephanie Solovei, who became a mentor to him.

Supporting The Key Clubhouse’s mission is The Able Trust, a state-funded initiative that seeks to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. Last March, The Able Trust awarded the Miami-based nonprofit a $32,000 grant.

For Ramirez, the Clubhouse came to represent a pivotal point in his life. The Key staff helped him apply for a job at Macy’s as the holidays approached, and he got a job as a sales associate. He started on Black Friday, one of the most stressful days to work in retail. He loved the job and was quickly promoted to holiday ambassador, a position that entrusted him with collecting and depositing money.

Then fate smiled on him again only a few months later while he was back at the Clubhouse as a volunteer and still working for Macy’s. Leading a group of Department of Children & Families (DCF) workers on a tour, Ramirez so impressed a DCF supervisor with his confidence and bilingual skills that she suggested he apply for a job with the state agency. He got a full-time position—his first professional job—handling complaints and reports on assisted-living facilities. He has been at DCF’s Miami office for a year.

“That makes me happy because I’m a contributor to society,” Ramirez said. “I’m empowered to do the things I couldn’t do in the past. I always had the will to work, but now I have the confidence to work with people. Confidence is the key.”

A 2010 Harris Interactive survey titled “The ADA, 20 Years Later,” found that only 21 percent of persons with disabilities aged 18–64 are employed full- or part-time, far below the 59 percent reported for persons without disabilities. Ensuring that the underrepresented disability community can find employment appropriate to their background and skills is a top priority of The Able Trust.
Grantee Spotlight - Creative Clay

by Guenevere Crum

In the Spring of 2012, Creative Clay, Inc. received a grant from The Able Trust to provide expanded supported employment opportunities for individuals interested in arts and art administration careers in the Pinellas County area. One such participant is Carolyn, who has attended Creative Clay’s weekly arts program for many years. She developed skills in creating small painted sculptures, and her work is featured in the commercial gallery at Creative Clay in St. Petersburg. She enjoys creating art, but has always expressed a desire to work with small children. She had an opportunity in the past to volunteer at a preschool, but soon discovered that finding employment in this field was difficult.

“Before coming to Creative Clay, I worked at a medical office cleaning bathrooms, and I didn’t like that. I don’t like to work alone. I also worked at a coffee shop cleaning up the bathrooms, mopping, sweeping, and doing dishes. And I didn’t like it because it was too much on me,” Carolyn said.

With funding from The Able Trust employment grant, Creative Clay employment specialists were able to place Carolyn as an assistant art teacher (with guest artist instructor Calan Ree) at the Imagine Charter School. In her new position, Carolyn is able to combine her artistic skills with her desire to work with children. Ree says Carolyn helps her keep an eye on the class, and lets her know if someone is misusing the materials. She also sorts and organizes art supplies, creates templates, helps with art presentations, and assists with the hanging of artwork.

“I’ve always wanted to work with children,” Carolyn told us. “It makes me feel very good that I am an artist and a teacher. It makes me feel good that I am helping the children. Knowing that I can get a job that pays me makes me very happy. It’s fun to get the pay for working with kids.”

Creative Clay staff members have helped Carolyn develop a job description and task list to assist her in maintaining focus and effectiveness on the job, and her Employment Specialist visits her weekly to ensure her role in the classroom is flowing smoothly. Carolyn’s teachers, family, and other supports are proud of her, and are encouraged to see her doing meaningful work that she finds satisfying.

“Carolyn is able to express herself better, and is more involved in what’s going on around her,” her mother, Mary, said. “She’s always wanted to work with children. That has been one of her goals for many years, so this job is the culmination of what she has been looking for.”
In the Summer of 2012, The Pepin Academies, Inc. of Tampa received a grant award from The Able Trust to work with students between the ages of 18 and 22 who have graduated high school with a special diploma or certificate of completion, and are transitioning into adult employment. Pepin Academies has distinguished itself by developing collaborative programs in their community, such as a training program with the Public Defender’s Office – 13th Judicial Circuit (which was previously funded with a grant from The Able Trust in 2008). Pepin has now developed a new work site with the Tampa Police Department, which allows students to learn on-site job skills and appropriate work behaviors in various areas at the police department, such as computer-related technology, office skills, and environmental services. Participants will also work on self-determination skills as they learn to navigate downtown Tampa, moving from classroom to job site between the Public Defender’s Office and Tampa Police Department, serving as staffers at both locations.

The Able Trust grant has provided supplemental support to the program in the form of an additional job coach and technology equipment. These items are essential in achieving the results that Pepin Academies and the Hillsborough County Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are set on achieving for participants. As is often the case with a grant from The Able Trust, there was a gap between what was provided for in established funding resources, and what was needed to make the program successful for the participants. The technology and job coaching additions have made a huge difference for all the participants, Brandon in particular.

Brandon has been in the Pepin Transitional Program for three years, and in that time he has trained at four job sites. But he’s struggled with the maturity required to be successful at work. However, his most recent job site at the Tampa Police Department has resulted in a perfect fit. Pepin Academy staff have witnessed Brandon’s potential flourish, and his willingness to learn additional skills has changed to such an extent that he has become a leader among the other students.

“I like to stay busy and move around while working, so maintenance is a good fit for me,” Brandon said about his position in the maintenance department.

Painting, changing light bulbs, and moving equipment are skills he has learned from his designated department mentor. When extra help around the department is needed, Maintenance Supervisor Dennis Wade calls on Brandon to work on projects, like a recent assignment to paint a new roll call room.

“Trim work can be hard, but Dennis showed me how to properly use the brush and to use a rag to wipe up any mistakes while I’m painting,” Brandon said.

Brandon feels more confident in the new skills he is learning, and hopes to obtain full-time employment by the end of the academic year.

The Able Trust has awarded more than $30 million to grantees across the state of Florida, enabling thousands of Floridians with disabilities to enter the workforce each year.
Planning for the 2013 Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is already underway.

Applications from high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors with disabilities are coming in from all across the state in hopes of being selected to participate in this one-of-a-kind leadership event. The Able Trust will host the 14th Florida Youth Leadership Forum in Tallahassee, Florida from July 17-21, 2013. Fifty students will be invited to participate as delegates.

“After attending YLF last year, I’m going for bigger and better goals than I ever have,” 2012 delegate Naomi Frederick said. “I’m serving as the first president of my school’s inaugural Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) Program.”

The purpose of the YLF is to attract young people with disabilities who possess leadership potential, in hopes of honing that potential in preparation for the future. As a result, these students take leadership, citizenship, and social skills into their lives as they reach adulthood. Students will learn about business and dining etiquette, advocacy, college and careers; community service, and the various community, state, and federal resources available to them. Former delegates like Naomi are also sending in applications to return as Support Staff for YLF 2013. Having experienced the event first hand a year ago, these students see the importance of the program and want to serve as volunteers, helping a new crop of delegates learn the same lessons they did.

“I want to come back this year to let the new delegates know that everybody has their strengths and weaknesses; that everybody is not perfect,” 2012 delegate Lacesha Owens said. “But you can learn from other people’s disabilities and realize that when you’re at YLF you are not alone.”

For more information about YLF, visit www.floridaylf.org.

(from left to right) Delegates Keaunia and Heather raise their hands as they participate in a mock legislative session in the House Chambers of The Florida Capitol. Able Trust Chairman Richard Cole (right) addresses delegates on the importance of being leaders in their home communities.

(from left to right) Tallahassee Police Department Officers Oscar Brannon and Anitra Highland joined more than 20 career mentors at the annual career fair, emphasizing the importance of science, technology, engineering and math in their work. Afterwards, Secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families & Florida’s Chief Operating Officer David Wilkins served as the keynote speaker for the annual mentors’ luncheon.
The Florida High School High Tech Program Improves Postsecondary Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

by Allison Chase

The Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) Program is committed to improving postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities by setting high expectations; encouraging youth to consider technology-related careers; and promoting the involvement of family members and other caring adults.

Core features of the program – job shadowing, industry site visits, mentoring, and internships – are critical components that help students form postsecondary education and employment goals as they transition from school into the world of work.

The HSHT program is based on the five nationally-recognized, evidenced-based Guideposts for Success: School-Based Preparatory Experiences, Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning, Connecting Activities, Youth Leadership & Development, and Family Involvement & Supports. Research has shown that each guidepost is essential to what youth with disabilities need to succeed in adulthood.

The Florida HSHT Program operates in 35 sites throughout the state, including juvenile justice settings and a pilot foster care site.

Empowerment

HSHT helps youth to learn and practice independent and informed decision making for academic and career preparation. This is facilitated through program workshops, leadership development, and real-world work experiences including job shadowing and summer internships. During the summer of 2012, 192 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.

Education

During the 2011-2012 school year, the Florida HSHT Program served 1,549 students with disabilities in 35 Florida counties. Services were provided in 122 high schools and alternative education settings, including Department of Juvenile Justice facilities and a foster care pilot site. The Florida HSHT Program experienced a 1% high school drop-out rate for all seniors participating in the program.

Employment

Eighty percent of Florida HSHT graduates entered postsecondary education, continuing education, or employment upon graduation. In addition, 178 Florida HSHT students, representing all grades, secured employment through program services.
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 Chief Development Director Kathryn McManus at info@abletrust.org or 850-224-4493 x151. Thank you for your support!

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 each year. The Able Trust youth programs provide career development and transition for thousands of 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 Able Trust is recognized as exempt from federal income taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code and eligible to receive tax deductible contributions. Federal ID: 59-3052307. The Able Trust is registered with the Florida Division of Consumer Services as required by the Solicitation of Contributions Act (#CH957). A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free in Florida: (800) 435-7352. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the State.
Florida celebrated its 11th Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) this past October. Businesses throughout the state opened their doors to students and job seekers with disabilities, giving them the opportunity to learn more about potential careers, while their hosts broadened their horizons about a largely untapped workforce. The goal of DEAM focuses on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce, and in many cases DEAM serves as the initial point of dialogue between businesses, potential employers, and Floridians with disabilities. DEAM continues to be the catalyst for Florida’s inclusive workforce.

More than 40 Community Liaisons from across the state served as the vital link between students and job seekers with disabilities and businesses, setting up various DEAM events. This year, Community Liaisons embraced the importance of continuing DEAM events beyond October, holding events from September into December. As a result of their efforts, 2,625 students and job seekers with disabilities were able to visit job sites and take part in mentoring experiences at one of 353 participating businesses.

It is the goal of The Able Trust to ensure that DEAM is not pigeon-holed to one month out of the year, but becomes an ongoing movement.

Florida DEAM would not be possible without the generous financial support of Darden Restaurants, Publix Super Markets, Florida Power and Light, and the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Corporate employers participating in DEAM activities statewide were: Darden Restaurants, Florida Power and Light, Publix Super Markets, Wal-Mart, Sam’s Club, CVS, Florida State Park System, and AmeriCorps.

“Thank you again for the opportunity to share a little bit about our industry with the graduating, and soon-to-graduate students of Hillsborough County. I look forward to this every year, and each time I learn something new.”

- Kaitlyn Roseman, International Ship Repair and Marine Services

“DEAM at Kennedy Space Center was a great success, thanks to everyone’s contributions.”

- Helen P. Kane, Education Program Specialist, Kennedy Space Center
With a college degree in hand, Nicole St. Clair recently entered a job market that would look unwelcoming whether she had a disability or not. Fortunately, she didn’t have to go it alone in her search for employment. By St. Clair’s side was a mentor from St. Petersburg College’s nascent Student Employment Project, a program that helps students with disabilities find jobs that complement their degrees.

For St. Clair, who is hearing impaired, the relationship with Kelley Ferranti proved to be the key to success, helping her overcome barriers that often keep people with disabilities out of the workforce.

“Kelley went out to speak to companies on my behalf,” St. Clair said. “She would send me e-mails telling me what positions the companies said I was qualified to seek. Then she helped me with my résumé and prepared me for interviews. She was fabulous; she went above and beyond.”

After four months of searching, St. Clair found a job as an enrollment specialist with Universal HealthCare. She processes requests for additional coverage. St. Clair hopes the position will lead to a long-term career at the company.

While at St. Petersburg College – from which she graduated last May with a bachelor’s degree in management and organizational leadership – St. Clair was among 60 students participating in the Student Employment Project. The program is funded by a three-year, $200,000 grant awarded by The Able Trust, a state-supported initiative that seeks to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. The Student Employment Project helps open doors and improves job opportunities for people with disabilities who have the education and skills required to succeed as professionals. The program provides students with disabilities “job placement specialists”, like Ferranti. The specialists help students write effective résumés and teach them interview skills. They also assist with identifying employment opportunities, as well as educating them on workplace behaviors.

“Able Trust Grant Funds Student Employment Project Initiative

Kelley Ferranti (left), career placement specialist at St. Petersburg College, works with former student and Student Employment Project member Nicole St. Clair (right) on her resume
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 appreciated stock or real estate, your deduction may depend on the type of property gifted. Please call us to discuss the treatment of your gift and the best way to transfer your property to us.

PLANNED GIVING

Please feel free to contact The Able Trust at 850-224-4493.
You may also visit our planned giving website at www.myabletrust.org.

Upcoming EVENTS & MEETINGS

March 8, 2013
Able Trust Board of Directors Meeting
Orlando, FL

March 9, 2013
Able Trust Ability Celebration Event
Orlando Museum of Art
Orlando, FL

June 14, 2013
Able Trust Board of Directors Meeting
Golden Eagle Golf & Country Club

June 14, 2013
2013 Ability Awards Ceremony
Golden Eagle Golf & Country Club

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

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.