



Looking beyond disabilities Focusing on capabilities Expanding possibilities

On the cover:

Nine year old Oscar Morales flashes a big smile to firefighters from Los Angeles County Fire Station No. 3 as he arrives for a visit. Oscar, along with other children from the AbilityFirst East Los Angeles Center visit the station regularly. But Oscar wasn't always expressive and outgoing.

When Oscar came to the AbilityFirst East Los Angeles Center he was shy and did not communicate his needs well. With input from Oscar's mother, AbilityFirst staff developed a plan and established goals in order to build Oscar's socialization and verbal skills using programs and activities at the center and in the community.

Consistency and determination have paid off. Oscar uses simple words now like "yes," "no," "water," "ball," and "play," and learns new words as he develops new interests like "computer." Oscar's mother is pleased with his progress and that he is learning to do and say more things.

Oscar's new found confidence helps him achieve more. With staff assistance, Oscar can now get out of his wheelchair and participate in more activities, including kicking a soccer ball with professional soccer players!

Today, to the delight of Oscar's family and AbilityFirst staff, Oscar embraces goals with a positive attitude and his familiar bright smile.



MISSION AND HISTORY

AbilityFirst provides programs and services to help children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities realize their full potential.

At AbilityFirst our vision is of a society that values each individual and provides the opportunity for all people to lead full and productive lives. For more than 80 years, we have been looking beyond disabilities, focusing on capabilities, and expanding possibilities.

To achieve that vision, AbilityFirst has 24 locations throughout Southern California where we offer a broad range of programs and services to help children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities realize their full potential throughout their lives, including employment, accessible housing, camping, and recreational and socialization programs.



Our Beginnings

AbilityFirst was established in 1926 as the Crippled Children's Society of Southern California to provide assistance to children with crippling conditions. In addition, in those days reoccurring polio epidemics would leave thousands of children and adults disabled for life.

Becoming AbilityFirst

In 1999, we adopted the name AbilityFirst to better reflect our mission, our vision of the future, and our commitment to celebrating the unique abilities in every individual.

When our organization was founded, the name reflected the thinking and norms of the time. The ensuing decades, however, brought dramatic change. We expanded to provide programs for adults, as well as children. We also broadened our mission in order to meet the needs of those with developmental disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and epilepsy.



Funding

Most AbilityFirst program participants qualify for funding through the state-supported Regional Centers. However, government support provides only about 50 cents of every dollar we need to deliver high quality programs and service. As a nonprofit organization, AbilityFirst relies heavily on the generous support of hundreds of donors who share our vision and make it possible for AbilityFirst to continue helping thousands of people reach their potential.

Leadership

AbilityFirst operates with an executive team working with two boards of directors that are composed of individuals who volunteer their time and talents to advancing our mission. The Governing Board sets policy and the overall strategic direction for the organization. The Housing Board of Directors monitors the financial performance of our HUD (Housing and Urban Development) sponsored housing properties and assures compliance with HUD rules and regulations.

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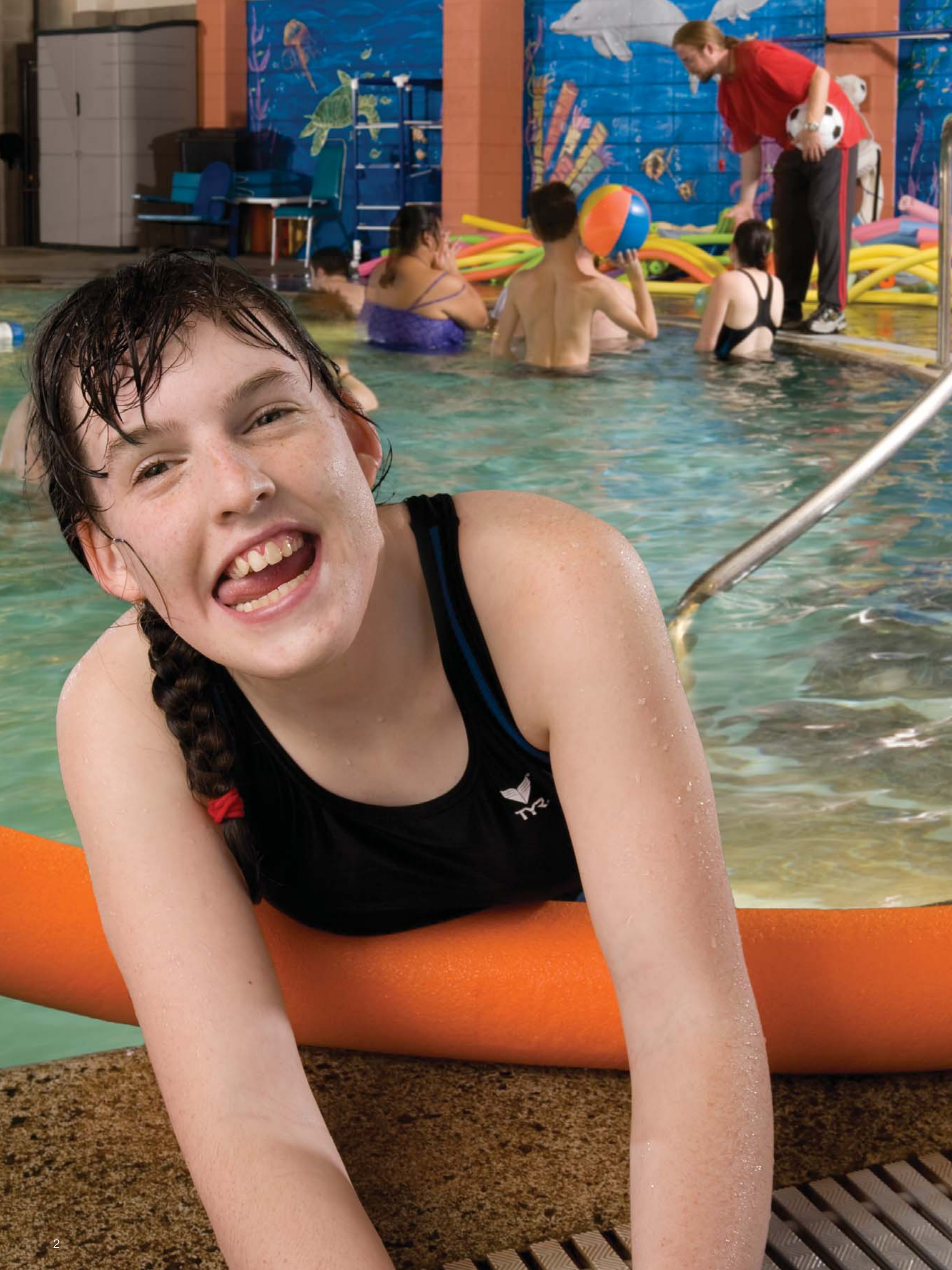
Shortly after its establishment in 1926, AbilityFirst/ Crippled Children's Society programs and services were focused on helping children with crippling conditions, including, but not limited to, polio.

AbilityFirst Camp Paivika, one of the nation's first accessible camps opened in 1947, allowed children and adults to participate in activities many thought were beyond their capabilities.

Today, children and adults with disabilities attend AbilityFirst Community Centers for After School Enrichment and summer programs, and adult socialization programs.

AbilityFirst program participants and their families take part in community events such as the Los Angeles Marathon alongside individuals without disabilities







Laura Stewart loves to swim in the AbilityFirst Claremont Center warm water pool. Her enthusiasm for the water is obvious. Laura focuses her attention on her swim instructor as he demonstrates an exercise. Proud to have successfully completed the activity, Laura emerges from the water giddy and ready for the next lesson.

Laura arrived at the AbilityFirst Claremont Center, a child in need but with no definitive diagnosis. The caring staff immediately began working with her on a number of programs. Then they discovered that Laura loves to swim. Lessons and aquatic fitness sessions taught in the pool became the key to unlocking Laura's possibilities.

Exercise in the pool helps Laura focus and relax. After swimming, she can sit at a computer and hone motor skills by using the keyboard and mouse, or assist with grocery shopping and the preparation of snacks for other participants at the center. Laura's smile brightens a room when she talks about her favorite computer activities, including visiting the websites of her favorite television shows or finding recipes for her mom.

The future is bright for Laura as doors continue to open for her, further developing her life skills. Attending the AbilityFirst Claremont Center has set Laura on the path to independence. And with continued support from AbilityFirst, she is destined to reach her full potential.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

The heartbeat of AbilityFirst is felt in our eight community centers located throughout Southern California.

Through our centers we offer unique programs for children and adults. Children receive after school assistance with homework, and can participate in exercise and music programs. Adult enrichment services can help develop job skills, or teach money management which allow them to remain active and participating members of the community.

Many AbilityFirst Community Centers have warm water swimming pools where innovative aquatic fitness programs are helping children and adults with developmental disabilities remain fit and healthy.



PROGRAMS

At our AbilityFirst Community Centers we offer a broad range of recreational, socialization and employment programs for children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities. Our children's programs are geared toward boys and girls of school age, from 5-22 years old. Our adult programs are intended for women and men at least 18 years of age, with no upper age limit.

A main focus of our programs is on inclusion activities between individuals with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. Social integration partnerships with schools, clubs and other organizations result in enriching and fun activities that are accessible to everyone.

Children's Programs

Through our After School Enrichment Programs for children, AbilityFirst provides creative, nurturing environments for boys and girls with disabilities to learn, develop key life skills, build confidence – and, of course, have fun!

Whatever the degree or type of their disability, every child who participates in an AbilityFirst After School Enrichment Program experiences a culturally-sensitive environment, where each individual is valued. Our well-trained caring staff engage children with age-appropriate activities that nurture social, physical, cognitive and creative abilities. Specific activities vary from center-to-center, but all fall into these four categories: life skills, education, adaptive recreation and day trips.



Adult Programs

AbilityFirst's programs for adults respect each person's right of self-determination. We work to support the choices of men and women with disabilities to pursue activities and work that they find interesting, meaningful and enriching.

Adults who participate in AbilityFirst programs are offered a variety of activities that both suit their personal interests and cultivate their social, physical, cognitive and creative abilities. Our highly-trained, culturally-sensitive staff members work to discover each person's strengths, and then assist them in realizing their goals.

Specific activities for adults fall into four categories: life skills, education, adaptive recreation and our popular Friday Night Socials that offer a fun, party atmosphere that our adult participants look forward to.

Employment

AbilityFirst provides opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities to learn job skills, and find employment, either at one of our three AbilityFirst Work Centers, or directly with a company such as Ralphs Supermarkets or McDonalds.

Aquatics

Learning to swim can be an empowering and exciting experience. In addition to swimming lessons for children and adults, innovative warm water aquatic exercise classes promote joint flexibility, range of motion, muscle tone and endurance, as well as help participants remain fit and healthy.

Three AbilityFirst community centers have heated indoor pools that are open year-round: Long Beach, Claremont and the Harry A. Mier Center in Inglewood. The outdoor pool at the Lawrence L. Frank Center in Pasadena opens seasonally. All are supervised by staff trained in CPR, first aid, lifesaving and water safety.



Camp Paivika

AbilityFirst Camp Paivika in the San Bernardino Mountains offers year-round camp programs for children, teens and adults with physical and developmental disabilities. One of the first fully-accessible camps in the United States, Camp Paivika has been welcoming campers since 1947.

Our camping program encourages independence and broadens social contacts through recreation. As is typical with camps, the emphasis is on fun. Specially-trained staff members provide support for campers whose disabilities range from mild to severe. Camp Paivika is open for full week during summer and weekend camping during winter. Camp Paivika is fully accredited by the American Camping Association.

The children, teens and adult programs include all of the traditional activities of camping: horseback riding, archery, swimming, cookouts and campfires, arts and crafts, and nature hikes and activities, as well as fine arts. All programs are designed to ensure that each camper can participate to the best of his or her ability.

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Excursions to interesting and fun destinations such as aquariums and museums teach children about the world around them.

Aquatic fitness programs promote healthier and happier lives among program participants.

An inclusive Boy Scout troop brings scouts with and without disabilities together.

AbilityFirst's cheerleaders participate in cheer camps and competitions, and perform in numerous community events including parades and sporting events.

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Adult programs at our community centers offer a wide variety of activities to assist them in realizing their goals and greater independence.

Pre-employment training and guidance through AbilityFirst Employment Services helps adults with developmental disabilities obtain jobs in the community.

The children, teens and adult programs at AbilityFirst Camp Paivika include all of the traditional activities of camping including, arts and crafts, horseback riding and nature hikes.

Each day Saprina McAllister pins on her name tag before starting work as a courtesy clerk at Ralphs Supermarket and gives thanks. “When I get up in the morning I say ‘Thank God I have a job.’”

As a mother with a developmental disability, Saprina needs her job. But before working at Ralphs, Saprina required consistent training, guidance and encouragement from the staff of the AbilityFirst L.L. Frank Work Center in Downtown Los Angeles, her first employer.

When Saprina first came to work at AbilityFirst her job assignments involved packaging and assembly. She had trouble learning the proper way to complete tasks. Staff at the work center explained to Saprina that patience and perseverance were the keys to accomplishing the work.

She improved so much that Saprina was recommended to AbilityFirst Employment Services for pre-employment training to help her gain important job and workplace skills so that she could succeed in the business world. Saprina learned the importance of arriving on time, working with others, and developing skills to work in a mainstream company.

When the position at Ralphs came open, Saprina worked with an AbilityFirst job coach on her interviewing skills and practiced bagging groceries. She was ecstatic when she got the job. Her hard work and determination had paid off.

Saprina has a role in her community along with a sense of accomplishment. A regular paycheck allowed her to create a whole new life for her family. She has her own place and pays her own bills. AbilityFirst Employment Services has expanded Saprina’s possibilities.

PRODUCE



Ralphs
SAPRINA
We Appreciate Your Business

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Employment Services

AbilityFirst Employment Services helps adults with developmental disabilities to learn job skills and find employment, either at one of our three AbilityFirst Work Centers or directly with a company. We provide training and evaluation of both the prospective AbilityFirst supported employee and the job at hand so each person's abilities match employer needs. Supported employees also get the help of a job coach to assist with the pre-employment interview, and provide on-the-job training and supervision.

AbilityFirst supported employees have been hired by some of Southern California's largest companies including Ralphs Supermarkets, Macy's and McDonalds.

Work Centers

Our first work center opened in 1946, and today we operate three AbilityFirst Work Centers in Los Angeles County – Los Angeles, Pasadena and Woodland Hills – that offer paid work to adults with developmental and physical disabilities, providing jobs tailored to the skills and abilities of each individual. Job opportunities at the AbilityFirst Work Centers include assembly, secure document shredding, packaging, sorting, collating, mailing and more.

A wide range of corporate clients have retained AbilityFirst for business services provided at our work centers including Union Bank of California, Charter Communications and DirecTV.

BUSINESS SERVICES

AbilityFirst Business Services meets many key corporate needs such as secure document shredding, sorting, packaging, assembly, fulfillment and mailing – while providing employment to individuals with disabilities. Our workers are dependable, highly motivated and committed to quality work.

Secure Document Shredding

AbilityFirst Business Services offers the latest in secure document shredding with our certified state-of-the-art Mobile Shredding Truck. The Mobile Shredding Truck arrives at an office or facility, takes documents, and shreds them immediately on site.

AbilityFirst also offers off-site shredding, providing secure door-to-door document transportation. We custom tailor a service system and schedule for shredding container pick-up and drop-off, providing peace of mind to corporate executives concerned with security for high-risk documents



ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Since 1984, AbilityFirst has been a leader in building and operating residential facilities for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities. Throughout Southern California, the need for accessible, affordable housing is critical. Meeting that need enables us to fulfill our mission of helping children and adults with disabilities realize their full potential throughout their lives.

AbilityFirst's Accessible Housing Program has grown to 12 locations in Glendale (two complexes), Hemet, Inglewood, Irvine, Los Angeles, Moreno Valley, Santa Fe Springs, Signal Hill and Woodland Hills. A "family style" adult residential facility for semi-independent individuals and a facility for seniors are located in Pasadena.



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AbilityFirst Work Centers offer paid work to adults with developmental and physical disabilities.

Through our Employment Services, adults learn job skills to find employment in the community. AbilityFirst supported employees work in landscaping, retail, restaurant and other professions.

AbilityFirst Secure Business Services offers secure document shredding with its Mobile Shredding Truck. Reliable and friendly customer service representatives arrive at businesses for shredding container pick-up and drop-off.

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Our 10 apartment complexes in Southern California provide affordable and independent living to individuals with disabilities.

AbilityFirst is a leader in building and operating accessible residential facilities for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

Corporate partnerships support specific programs and events such as the Los Angeles Marathon and the purchasing of accessible vehicles to transport program participants in the community.

CORPORATE PARTNERS

Partnership with corporate citizens is the backbone of many of AbilityFirst's programs and services. Some corporate partnerships support specific programs and others step up to underwrite AbilityFirst events, donate products or services in-kind and provide direct financial support.

Corporate Partners who have given generously to help advance AbilityFirst's mission include Comerica Bank, Lawry's Restaurants, Inc., Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc. and Union Bank of California.







George Facter likes the view from his second floor window at the AbilityFirst Rancho del Valle Apartments in Woodland Hills. George looks past pine trees, across a wide expanse of lawn to the playground of the AbilityFirst Paul Weston Center. The chest of drawers next to George's bed is covered with family photos. Books that reflect his wide interests fill several shelves.

George has cerebral palsy in the lower extremities and, when he was just three years old, his parents sought help from AbilityFirst (then the Crippled Children's Society). He is proud to say that he's been a part of AbilityFirst since 1948.

From his early years, George wanted independence. As a boy, he attended AbilityFirst Camp Paivika where he participated in activities that many thought were beyond the capabilities of children with disabilities. To further break down barriers, George earned a bachelor's degree in Journalism from Cal State Northridge, worked in the advertising and audio production industries, and volunteered six years on the AbilityFirst Housing Board.

AbilityFirst Accessible Housing services assisted George in moving into his first wheelchair accessible apartment in 1997 in Glendale. But George is a Valley boy and in 2004 he moved to Rancho del Valle to be near his doctors, family and friends. He likes the layout and privacy, and enjoys watching the children on the playground.

A lifetime of AbilityFirst programs and services has provided George with a sense of satisfaction and security. He is an AbilityFirst advocate and considers himself a prime example of the independent life that is attainable through AbilityFirst.

DONATE

As a non-profit organization, we rely heavily on the charitable contributions of hundreds of friends just like you. By giving of yourself, your time and your resources, you can help to ensure the availability of a broad range of employment, recreational and socialization programs to Southern California's children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities.

There are many convenient ways to give. Your gift can be earmarked either for a specific AbilityFirst location or for our general fund, which enables us to use your donation where it is most needed. Demonstrating your commitment to AbilityFirst is easy. On our website you can make a secure donation or download a donation form. Or you can mail your check payable to AbilityFirst, 1300 East Green Street, Pasadena, California 91106-2606. Donations by phone are also accepted by calling AbilityFirst at 626.396.1010.

Attend an Event

One of the best ways that you can support AbilityFirst is to get involved with one of the many events we organize. Whether it is joining in on the fun by attending, volunteering, or becoming an event sponsor, we appreciate your help! To see what we have planned in the coming months visit our website.

Planned Giving

Planned giving refers to a range of techniques that allow you to contribute financial support to AbilityFirst, while minimizing taxes – especially income and estate taxes.

It is not only very wealthy philanthropists who can employ planned giving strategies to support AbilityFirst's mission and work, now and after they pass away. Many planned gifts – ranging in value from hundreds of dollars to millions – are from ordinary folks whose children, siblings or other family members have been touched by our programs. Those who have made AbilityFirst the beneficiary of a will, trust, life insurance policy or other estate gift, are honored with membership in the prestigious AbilityFirst Legacy Society.

You can learn more about putting AbilityFirst in your will, using a charitable trust to make a gift to AbilityFirst, and our Annual Giving Societies, by visiting our website or calling our development department at 626.396.1010.

VOLUNTEER

Enthusiastic, dedicated volunteers are vital to AbilityFirst!

Volunteers work in our programs under the supervision of AbilityFirst staff. They may provide one-on-one assistance to children or adults, encouraging participation and keeping activities going. Volunteers are also essential to staging the many events and fundraising activities that take place at our centers. And, they help keep our facilities running smoothly by performing a variety of important office tasks.

Visit our website to find the AbilityFirst Community Center near you, along with programs offered there, volunteer application and additional information and instructions. For additional information call 626.396.1010.

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AbilityFirst Honorary Chairpersons (l-r) Jane Kaczmarek, Lee Meriwether and Jaclyn Smith attend the AbilityFirst *Expanding Possibilities* Awards Luncheon supporting our Employment Services program.

Southern California restaurants and wineries participate in the Annual AbilityFirst Gourmet Festival of Fall, a food and wine tasting event benefiting the Lawrence L. Frank Center and Pasadena Work Center.

Volunteers contribute their time, talents and treasures to AbilityFirst by working in our programs and assisting at many of our events including holiday parties at community and work centers.



ABILITYFIRST LOCATIONS

CAMP

CAMP PAIVIKA

PO Box 3367
Crestline CA 92325
location:
600 Playground Drive
Crestline CA 92325
909.338.1102

COMMUNITY CENTERS

ANAHEIM PROGRAM

2660 West Broadway
Anaheim CA 92804
714.821.7448

CLAREMONT CENTER

480 South Indian Hill Boulevard
Claremont CA 91711
909.621.4727

EAST LOS ANGELES CENTER

154 North Gage Avenue
Los Angeles CA 90063
323.268.8178

HARRY A. MIER CENTER

8090 Crenshaw Boulevard
Inglewood CA 90305
323.753.3101

LAWRENCE L. FRANK CENTER

201 South Kinneloa Avenue
Pasadena CA 91107
626.449.5661

LONG BEACH CENTER

3770 East Willow Street
Long Beach CA 90815
562.426.6161

NEWPORT-MESA CENTER

mail:
PMB 220
1175 Baker Street, Unit E-19
Costa Mesa CA 92627
location:
1060 Paularino Avenue
Suite A
Costa Mesa CA 92626
714.546.6727

PAUL WESTON CENTER

6530 Winnetka Avenue
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
818.884.6612

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

3447 Atlantic Avenue
3rd floor
Long Beach, CA 90807
562.570.3661

HOUSING

ABILITYFIRST APARTMENTS HEMET

1360 East Acacia Street
Hemet CA 92544
951.766.7089

ABILITYFIRST APARTMENTS IRVINE

14501 Harvard Avenue
Irvine, CA 92606
949.559.5902

CROWN HOUSE

3055 East Del Mar Boulevard
Pasadena CA 91107
626.440.9090

IVY GLEN APARTMENTS

133 North Cedar Street
Glendale CA 91206
818.241.3888

LAKELAND MANOR APARTMENTS

13331 Lakeland Road
Santa Fe Springs CA 90605
562.944.9650

MAPLE PARK APARTMENTS

711 East Maple Street
Glendale CA 91205
818.507.1969

MORENO VALLEY APARTMENTS

24545 Bay Avenue
Moreno Valley CA 92553
951.247.0230

PACIFIC RIM APARTMENTS

230 South Grevillea Avenue
Inglewood CA 90301
310.672.7221

RANCHO DEL VALLE APARTMENTS

6560 Winnetka Avenue
Woodland Hills CA 91367
818.347.1440

SEA BREEZE MANOR APARTMENTS

2067 Alamos Avenue
Signal Hill CA 90806
562.494.9086

SIERRA ROSE

3053 ½ East Del Mar Boulevard
Pasadena CA 91107
626.578.0118

VILLA MALAGA APARTMENTS

4704 East Dozier Street
Los Angeles CA 90022
323.980.8402

WORK CENTERS

L.L. FRANK WORK CENTER

3812 South Grand Avenue
Los Angeles CA 90037
213.748.7309

PASADENA WORK CENTER

2570 East Foothill Boulevard
Pasadena CA 91107
626.449.5662

PAUL WESTON WORK CENTER

6530 Winnetka Avenue
Woodland Hills CA 91367
818.884.5112



Partnership

AbilityFirst provides programs and services to help children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities realize their full potential throughout their lives.





1300 East Green Street
Pasadena, California 91106
626.396.1010
www.abilityfirst.org

