

PLANNING FOR TOMORROW: PEACE OF MIND TODAY

As difficult a subject as it might be, all parents have a responsibility to make sure their dependent children are cared for no matter what the future brings. However, careful estate planning is even more crucial when the child has a disability. In these circumstances, a Special Needs Trust can serve as an effective tool to allow a parent, grandparent or guardian to provide for a child with a disability, both today and long into the future, while preserving the child's eligibility for federal, state and charitable aid programs. Establishing a Special Needs Trust is a simple process, one that can bring great peace of mind.

For example, Margaret is a widow and parent of Elizabeth, who was born with special needs. Elizabeth, now 40, has been a participant in AbilityFirst programs for almost 25 years. Margaret set up a Special Needs Trust for her daughter many years ago. Her well-designed estate plan was put together by thoughtful, qualified people who helped Margaret make educated decisions in the best interests of both her daughter and herself. When Margaret and Elizabeth are both gone, Margaret has designated that half of the remaining funds in the Trust be transferred to her nephew and the balance be donated to AbilityFirst as a charitable contribution in memory of Elizabeth. Until that time comes, Margaret has the peace of mind of knowing that her daughter's financial interests will always be taken care of. The Special Needs Trust will provide for Elizabeth's specialized needs beyond those covered by government and private



Elizabeth Holland separates items to be shredded at AbilityFirst's Pasadena Work Center while mom looks on.

benefit programs, such as medical expenses, adaptive equipment, education, housing, in-home care and therapy. Margaret feels so blessed to have Elizabeth as her daughter. We at AbilityFirst are grateful to have Elizabeth and Margaret as part of our extended family. We thank Margaret for sharing with us this information about her estate plan and hope it is of value to people interested in learning more about planning for the future of their special needs child.

AbilityFirst recommends consulting your financial planner regarding Special Needs Trusts and other estate planning questions. For more information about including AbilityFirst in your will, please call Mary Beth Perrine, VP of Development at 626.639.1743.

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ABILITYFIRST EMPLOYEE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF SERVICE



Irene Hayden began working at AbilityFirst in 1956. To honor her dedicated service, AbilityFirst designated the entrance lobby of its Pasadena headquarters as the "Irene Hayden Reception Area." Shown above: Pasadena Mayor Bill Bogaard honors Irene with a proclamation from the City.



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INSIDE ANAHEIM CENTER EAST LOS ANGELES GIDDY UP RODEO WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

SPRING 2006

ESTABLISHED IN 1926 AS THE CRIPPLED CHILDREN'S SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



People with disabilities often face significant obstacles to finding success in the competitive employment market. For most, unemployment is the result of misperceptions and stereotypes of individuals with disabilities commonly held by potential employers.

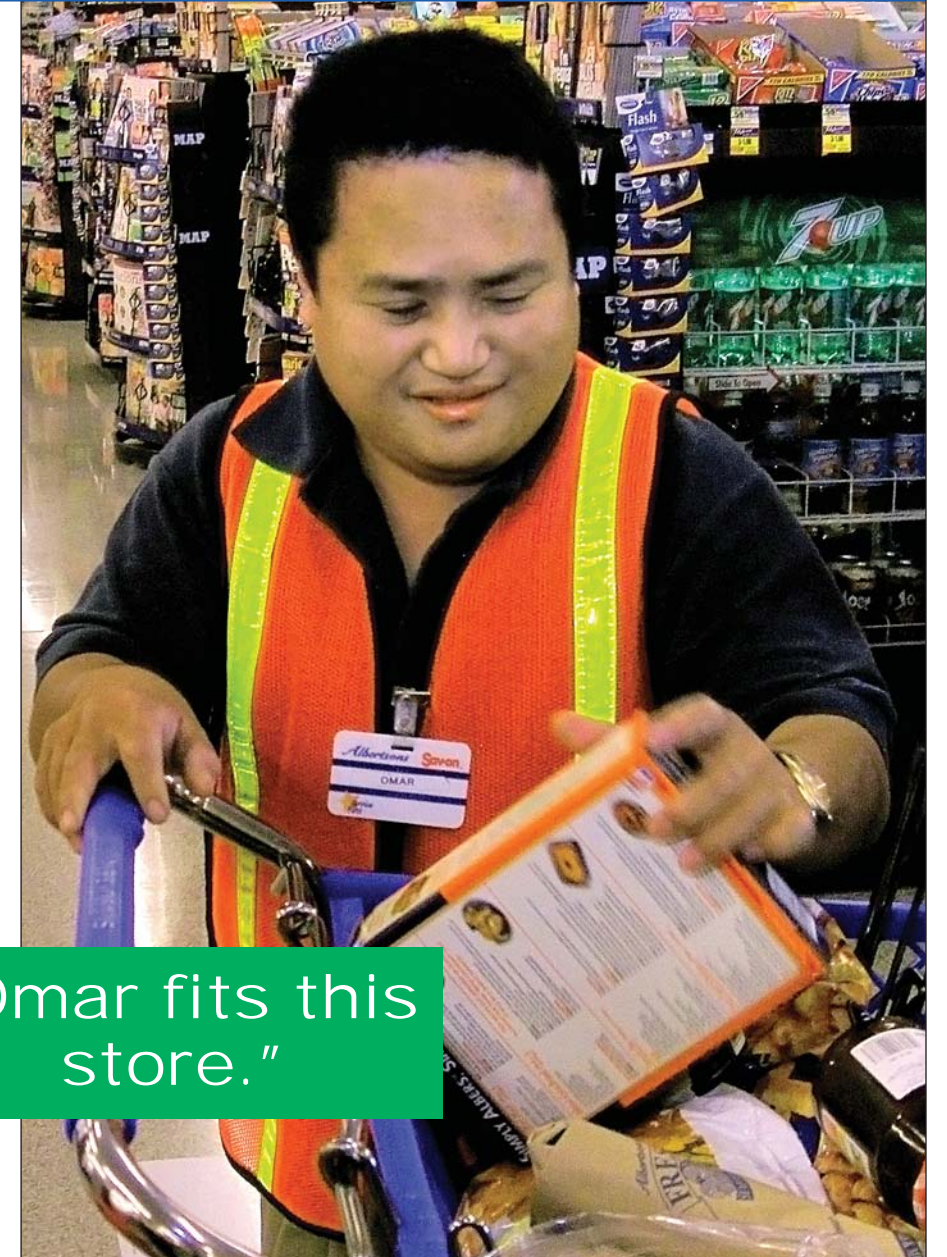
The goal of AbilityFirst's Supported Employment Staffing Services is to assist adults with developmental disabilities find and retain jobs commensurate with their abilities and skills with local businesses.

This service informs employers about the abilities of prospective workers as well as the benefits of employing this under utilized workforce. Job seekers are thus assisted to reach their fullest potential in the job market through the provision of job placement assistance, coaching and training coupled with community outreach and education.

Omar Brieva is a highly successful employee who has worked as an Associate at Albertson's grocery store in Long Beach since the fall of 2005. Omar initially began working at an AbilityFirst work center in January of 2002 where supervisors taught him how to collate, pack, assemble and count items and how to operate some machinery. Omar made terrific progress and AbilityFirst's Job Coach Rosetta Evans and Coordinator Sheran Jones, recognized that Omar would be an excellent candidate for employment in the community.

When AbilityFirst Job Developer Richard Levin first went into the Albertson's Long Beach store and introduced the Supported Employment Staffing Services, Store Director Randy Brooks had typical questions and concerns about hiring someone with a disability. However, Randy kept an open mind and agreed to meet with AbilityFirst job applicants, a decision encouraged by Albertson's corporate policy endorsing the hiring of people with disabilities.

When Randy interviewed Omar, he was looking for the same qualities he would want in any employee: a customer-friendly attitude



"Omar fits this store."

and a cheerful, outgoing personality. Since Omar offered all these traits and much more, Randy was happy to hire Omar and has been very pleased with the outcome.

"Omar fits this store," says Randy, who has since hired another successful employee through the AbilityFirst Supported Employment Staffing Services.

Randy states, "It's been my experience that people with disabilities like Omar have positive views, upbeat outlooks, reliability, a willingness to do anything and excellent attendance. The customers love Omar and his bubbly personality. Omar has displayed a desire to succeed, do well and please us as employers. I recommend hiring people with disabilities if it is a good fit for the business."

Dear Friends,

I had the pleasure of visiting AbilityFirst's after-school program in Anaheim the day after the annual ski trip to Big Bear Mountain. The children were very excited to talk about their wonderful day on the slopes and the bus ride along with children from the AbilityFirst Long Beach and Newport Mesa Centers.



PROVIDING ENCOURAGEMENT AND CHOICE

Our Anaheim Center serves a wide array of youth with varying degrees of disabilities. Some participants are fairly independent while others are assisted with personal care and feeding. All have achieved remarkable growth in their abilities and skills, in part through the efforts and talents of AbilityFirst's trained staff.



SERVING A WIDE ARRAY OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

One of the key components of the AbilityFirst Strategic Plan 2005-2010 is to offer program participants increased opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers. Our Anaheim site which is located in the Anaheim Parks and Recreation Department's Therapeutic Center, achieves interaction through integrated recreational activities made possible by the adapted equipment provided by the City.

My sincere thanks goes to our donors for supporting AbilityFirst's efforts to foster independence and choice for those we serve at the Anaheim Center and our 21 other locations in the Southland. Our vision remains *looking beyond disabilities, focusing on capabilities, expanding possibilities.*

Sincerely yours,

President

Eight-year-old Oscar Morales has attended the AbilityFirst program in East Los Angeles since May 2003. He participates after school five days a week during the school year and full time during summers.

Oscar's mother, Maria Morales, first heard about AbilityFirst from a parent whose child attends elementary school with Oscar at the Perez Special Education Center, one of the special education schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Though Oscar has limited speaking skills, Maria says she knows Oscar is happy at AbilityFirst because he moves excitedly and laughs gleefully whenever it's time to go to the Center.

Maria explains that Oscar was quite shy when he first entered the program, interacting comfortably only with his peers. Through cognitive and behavioral development activities, the AbilityFirst staff has worked



with Oscar on his social skills. After several years, he is now at ease communicating with anyone who comes into the Center whether it be AbilityFirst staff, volunteers or visitors. In fact, according to his mother, Oscar seems more outgoing with people in general.

Maria also believes AbilityFirst has been a significant contributor to the development of Oscar's physical abilities. She has seen improvements in Oscar's manual dexterity since he began participating in the program. He even learned to hold a golf club and hit a golf ball from his wheelchair at a recent AbilityFirst Golf Tournament. Doctors predicted Oscar would always rely on a wheelchair to get around but if you come to the Center today, you'll see Oscar walking using his walker!

Most of all, Maria appreciates seeing how much Oscar enjoys going to the East Los Angeles Center to learn and be with his friends. She says she looks for opportunities to tell other parents of children with special needs about AbilityFirst's wonderful services and how they have become such a valuable part of Oscar's life.



The San Bernardino Valley Riders and the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department hosted a rodeo for AbilityFirst program participants and local residents. Some participants enjoyed hay rides while others climbed up into the saddle and were escorted by rodeo volunteers. Shown above: Christina Zelaya from the Lawrence L. Frank Center.

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL HOSTED BY ABILITYFIRST, LAKERS AND HEALTH NET



Oscar Sepulveda, Fast Breakin' Lakers team representative (r), coaches a student in dribbling a basketball and moving his wheelchair at the same time.

AbilityFirst partnered with the Los Angeles Lakers and Health Net to hold the first in a series of Wheelchair Basketball Clinics in the City of Maywood. Children and teens who use wheelchairs spent an afternoon being coached on dribbling, passing and shooting skills by members of AbilityFirst's Fast Breakin' Lakers wheelchair basketball team. Participants also learned wheelchair basketball rules and had the opportunity to sit and play in wheelchairs custom designed for the sport.

The clinic concluded with the youngsters scrimmaging against the Fast Breakin' Lakers. Both teams won!

"It took years to get my daughter Christina into one of those small inflatable wading pools, and actually watch her stand in it once for about five minutes. But look what Chrissy accomplished this past summer in the AbilityFirst pool. She floats! She kicks! She sticks her head underwater and I'm sure by the end of next summer AbilityFirst will have her swimming!

Over the past year I have spoken with quite a few parents of the other children in your program and we all have the same opinion that the staff at AbilityFirst is the best thing that has happened to our kids!"

Henry Kim,
father of Christina Kim,
Lawrence L. Frank Center,
Pasadena

"After she attended camp for a week Katie would open up. She was more sure of herself, had definite confidence and less fear of being around people. When we returned to camp for a family respite weekend, Katie was happy to return and see everyone. Camp really helped her grow and mature. Katie was more independent, trusting of people and not as reliant on others."

Judy Wolf,
mother of camper
Katie Wolf

"AbilityFirst helped Omar (see cover story) to develop his ability and skills. AbilityFirst showed interest in making sure Omar succeeded in his work program in Long Beach by providing Omar with a lot of support and hope for a better future. Thank you very much, AbilityFirst, for giving Omar a brighter outlook in life."

Ruth B. Brieva,
mother of Omar Brieva