Belonging
STARTS WITH US

LOOKING beyond disabilities
FOCUSING on capabilities
EXPANDING possibilities

2022
ANNUAL REPORT
Mission
AbilityFirst provides programs and services to help children and adults with disabilities realize their full potential throughout their lives.

Values
Trust - Belonging - Personal Best
AbilityFirst stands for and alongside people with developmental disabilities and their families. We create a welcoming environment where everyone feels they belong and are valued. Our first consideration is always for the well-being of our participants and – through the mutual trust that we share – each person is supported to achieve his or her personal best.

Vision
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.
Organizational Strategy

AbilityFirst will ensure access to our programs by focusing on the needs of individuals who face barriers to service. In particular, we will assess the barriers for those who are low income, come from diverse cultures, and speak languages other than English and seek to provide solutions to those barriers.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

WE the team at AbilityFirst, will continue to support a person-centered approach, that showcases and values diversity, equity, and inclusion and creates a true sense of acceptance.

What does this mean?
Devote our resources to providing the best services to those who are referred to us and will actively seek out those who have experienced barriers to receiving our services.

Why is this important?
We care deeply about doing the right thing and we believe that our mission will be better served with new and different ways of thinking and that our programs will reach more under-served communities.

How do we approach this?
We embrace and lead change that breaks down barriers to accessing resources at AbilityFirst and in the broader community.
Through the generous support of individual donors, volunteers and community leaders, our ongoing fundraising efforts have made it possible for AbilityFirst to touch the lives of approximately 1,700 individuals and their families each year. This generosity has been the foundation by which AbilityFirst has made a positive impact on so many people with disabilities in the greater Los Angeles area.

DONATE ONLINE
YOU can help make a difference by making your tax deductible donation today to AbilityFirst. Donate at www.abilityfirst.org/donate

DONATE A GIFT OF STOCK
We accept gifts of stock and appreciated securities.

MATCHING GIFT
Many employers sponsor generous matching gift programs that match your charitable contribution! Find out if your employer has a matching gift program at www.abilityfirst.org/donate

PLANNED GIVING
All donors who make a planned gift to AbilityFirst will be immediately recognized by our Legacy Society.

GIFTS IN TRIBUTE OR MEMORIAL
Acknowledge a special occasion or honor a loved one with a gift to AbilityFirst, and we will send a note to the person being honored or his or her family.

DONATE A VEHICLE
AbilityFirst partners with CARS to help you turn a vehicle you no longer need into a gift to support our mission. Learn more by visiting: www.careasy.org/nonprofit/abilityfirst

MAKE A GIFT BY MAIL
Please make checks payable to AbilityFirst and mail to: AbilityFirst, 789 North Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena, CA 91103

For more information on how you can support the programs and services of AbilityFirst, please contact: Development Department at 626-396-1010 or development@abilityfirst.org

PossAbility Pasadena participants taking the metro.
Dear AbilityFirst friends,

Since 1926, AbilityFirst has provided a community of belonging for children and adults with developmental disabilities. In 2022, the board of directors adopted an organizational strategy that reaffirmed our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Our focus on belonging has impacted every aspect of our organization, including participants and families, community members, donors, volunteers, vendors, the board of directors, and our staff.

We are grateful for the incredible support we receive from each of you! Because of your generosity, we achieved many goals in 2022.

Our support group for Spanish-speaking parents adopted the name Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas (Parents Opening Doors) (Pg 7). This group has transitioned from a staff-led to a peer-directed group that advocates on behalf of their family members and others who experience barriers to service. Family members have received culturally and linguistically responsive technology training, leadership development, and more.

The new AbilityFirst participant advisory council of representatives of our adult programs adopted the name Social Advocates for Change (pg 6.) This group provides a collective voice on what is important to and important for individuals receiving services from AbilityFirst and offers guidance to the board of directors about their needs.

We made significant progress in our initiative to make programs accessible to individuals in under-served communities and to promote inclusion and community participation. The College to Career program (Pg 11) has expanded to eight colleges throughout Los Angeles County to help students gain the skills and education they need to achieve their academic and vocational goals. Camp Paivika, (Pg 14) our fully accessible camp in the San Bernardino mountains, celebrated its 75th birthday and implemented a new “Family and Friends” program model, that allows campers to enjoy traditional summer activities with their caregivers, families, and friends.

The renovations at the AbilityFirst Long Beach Center were completed, including additional space for Supported Employment and College to Career staff onsite (pg 8). In May, our administrative offices relocated to our Fair Oaks facility in Pasadena, joining our Manufacturing, Supported Employment, and PossAbility programs.

I feel a profound sense of appreciation for all that we have accomplished and you are a vital part of that effort.

With gratitude,

Lori Gangemi
Chief Executive Officer

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At AbilityFirst, involving participants in opportunities to shape, influence and contribute to their program experience is encouraged. Maintaining and growing the person-centered programs tailored to the individual interests and needs requires every voice to speak up.

Enter Social Advocates for Change, a Participant Advisory Council created for and by AbilityFirst adult participants and dedicated to empowering individuals to self-advocate and elevate their own voices.

Advocates meets twice a month, every 2nd and 4th Thursday to discuss topics that are important to them and for them, with a focus on developing leadership skills to represent their voice and the voices of their peers, learning how to work and collaborate as a team and how to share with programs on changes and improvements needed.

The benefits of Social Advocates for Change are already proving to be enormously impactful. In addition to helping to grow together as a community, these adult participants are learning to become active decision makers in their own lives, in programs, and their communities. Another big step closer to realizing their goals of social and career independence and reaching their full potential.
Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas are passionate and engaging parents of AbilityFirst Participants and was created at the end of 2020. Its name translates to “Parent Support Group that Opens Doors,” to do just that – open doors - for parents who express a need for support within the Hispanic/ Latinx community.

AbilityFirst Diversity Equity and Inclusion Programs Manager, Araceli González listened to the parents’ concerns about barriers to service for Spanish speaking families and with the support of a passionate parent they co-founded the parent-led support group as a next important step to engage, reduce a sense of isolation, and provide a safe place for parents to share and grow from their challenges in a culturally meaningful way.

Parent, Angeles Lopez shares “The pandemic exposed us to a valuable reminder that communities thrive when we can meet them where they are. Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas was created to Inform, Empower, and Connect. The community partners who support this group affirm our belief that even when there seems there is no way in, this group will create a door.”

As a result, of Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas’ has received culturally and linguistically responsive technology training, leadership development, have had guest speakers with a variety of expertise, and more!

Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas has not only been opening doors for AbilityFirst parents but are ensuring access to AbilityFirst programs by focusing on the needs of individuals who face barriers to service and acting to reduce those barriers. For more information email Araceli.Gonzalez@abilityfirst.org
In 2022, the 50-year-old AbilityFirst Long Beach Center underwent an exciting and extensive renovation that included upgrades to the kitchen, outdoor area and pool. These changes had an enormous, positive impact on the lives of participants and staff at the center.

The new teaching kitchen allows plenty of space for individuals and small groups to prepare healthy snacks and meals. New accessible appliances and counters make it easier for them to gain important life skills, including food handling and preparation techniques and using appliances and utensils safely to help them be more independent and confident at home.

“I love to cook in our new, bigger kitchen with my friends!” says Sharon A., a participant in the Long Beach Adult Day Program. Sharon has been part of the Long Beach Center since 2006, and appreciates the big difference between the older, smaller cramped kitchen, and the new more modern one!

Renovations to the pool area included a new roof and heating system, plus updates to the women’s locker room, a newly painted deck installation of accessible showers in both locker rooms, a heated changing area, and a new unisex changing room. The domed roof was removed and replaced with a fixed roof to accommodate the upgraded HVAC system so that swimmers can remain warm when they get out of the 88- to 90-degree water.

Stefanie D. is especially excited about the renovations to the pool. The Hoyer lift lets her enter and exit the pool safely. Stefanie has been active with the center since 2011 and says, “I love to exercise in the pool, and it helps me with my walking!”

In so many ways, the Long Beach Center renovations have helped participants like Sharon and Stefanie discover and explore even more possibilities to reach their full potential.
### Program Impact

#### 2022 Highlights

#### 2022 Participant Demographics

- **Gender**
  - 63% Male
  - 37% Female

- **Disabilities**
  - Autism: 35%
  - Intellectual Disability: 32%
  - Down Syndrome: 13%
  - Other: 12%
  - Cerebral Palsy: 8%

- **Ethnicity**
  - Caucasian/White: 34%
  - Hispanic/Latinx: 26%
  - Black/African American: 14%
  - Asian: 9%
  - Two or More Races: 8%
  - Unspecified: 6%
  - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 1%

#### 2022 Program Accomplishments

- Total Served in Core Programs: 1,206
- Total Served in All Programs: 2,170
- Received Job Readiness, Training, and Placement Services: 296
- Individuals Received Job Coaching: 156
- Individuals Found Jobs: 68
- Hours of Support to College Students: 30,109
- Volunteer Hours at 25 Community Non-Profit Sites by Possibility Participants: 4,859

#### Hours of Service: 273,086

- After School Program: 4,859
- Community Based Programs: 66,090
- Job Coaching: 21,541
- Adult Center Based Programs: 112,260

#### Camp Pairika Summer Family and Friends 2022

- 301 Family & Friends Who Attended with Camper
- 109 Campers
When Luna started with the AbilityFirst Afterschool program at the Lawrence L. Frank Center in September of 2022, a whole new world opened up for Luna and her family. Afterschool and summer programs provide a nurturing environment for school-age youth. The program is also offered in the communities of Claremont, and Long Beach. Before they found AbilityFirst, Luna’s parents were often challenged by negative assumptions and stereotypes about the abilities and gifts of children with disabilities. Those feelings were relieved when Luna started in the Afterschool program last fall. With support from the caring and supportive staff at AbilityFirst, Luna’s language and personal care skills have grown. She is now able to express some of her wants and needs in words.

In fact, one day during program, Luna loudly declared, “NO!” over and over again – and now she uses the word often. “No” is a good thing! She can express herself when she doesn’t want something – a sure sign of personal growth and discovery. “We have seen such an improvement over the last year,” one of Luna’s activity leaders says, “and it’s been wonderful to see her progress.”

“Luna has matured right before our eyes with the assistance of AbilityFirst and the loving, kind, gentle exposure to life’s beautiful chaos!” shares Luna’s mother Dawn.

Luna’s family also appreciates AbilityFirst and the opportunities it has opened up for Luna. And the best part is that she has made new friends in her community! Indeed, it is new world for Luna!
When obstacles stand in our way, most of us try to tackle them without feeling overwhelmed, and AbilityFirst College to Career student David, was no exception! When David was faced with the challenge of assembling the documents he needed to use the Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) at Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC) he looked no further than the support of one of his Educational Coaches. DSPS enables students with disabilities to have equal access to all LATTC educational programs, services, and events by providing appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

Paperwork can oftentimes be complex, and David knew he couldn’t do it himself. So David enlisted his coach, who explained the process thoroughly, which helped David understand everything better. As a result, he received the financial aid he needed so he could have the meaningful college experience he dreamed of. (The College to Career program helps students like David to utilize existing campus services like DSPS, without duplicating or trying to replace those resources.)

David hails the program for allowing him to receive in-person coaching. He shares, “The AbilityFirst coaches have been supportive to me in reaching my goals and helping me with my paperwork!”

David is well on his way to reaching his full potential. He is now an active, determined, self-advocating participant in the College to Career program. When he completes his academic curriculum at LATTC, he can transition to a job, internship, or volunteer program, and launch his career.
Carson
PossAbility

“I’m happy in the kitchen!”
Carson says, “Helping the staff, Marcus, Lawrence and Chef Marissa. I enjoy prepping vegetables, assembling plates, and washing the dishes.”

When Carson started with AbilityFirst in 2011, he sometimes needed help with communicating effectively and paying close attention to detailed tasks. With support from the AbilityFirst staff, he was able to thrive and make friends. Today, Carson volunteers at not one, but three organizations assisting with kitchen duties, including making packaged meals to feed people experiencing homelessness.

In 2019, Carson joined the AbilityFirst PossAbility program in Pasadena. He continued to practice expanding his ability to stay focused on a task or activity. Carson learned to successfully communicate with his teams by practicing with AbilityFirst staff members and actively working to ask for help when he was unsure of tasks given to him.

Carson was able to grow in these areas by dedicating time to work with his support group where he showed dedication, determination and a greater commitment level to achieve his personal goals!

Carson volunteers at the Union Station Homeless Services kitchen team, and has been personally asked by the renowned Chef Marissa, to come in and volunteer a few extra days with her team. Putting together meals for those in need while developing skills in the kitchen allows Carson to achieve his best, all with a smile!

Brandon
ExploreAbility

“I want to learn!” Brandon happily shares.

Brandon started his journey at AbilityFirst in the Adult Day program in 2015, and in 2018 joined the ExploreAbility program, an adult community integration program that empowers participants to explore their communities, identify what is important to them, develop skills to achieve their goals, and become an active part of their community.

Brandon has had difficulty communicating his needs and would sometimes avoid participating in activities with staff and fellow participants. Dedicated AbilityFirst staff continued to support Brandon and offer him options to explore his community, participate in recreational and leisure activities, and develop social skills. With creativity and encouragement, Brandon is thriving!

Today, Brandon confidently advocates for himself with his program staff and peers. Brandon has enjoyed putting together a large-scale 3-D puzzle, learning how to cook meals, and building a wooden bench with his hands. Brandon is excited to participate in group activities and loves learning new things.
AbilityFirst Supported Employment is a job placement approach that bridges the gap between employers who are looking for reliable, productive workers, and people with barriers to employment who are eager to work. Our Job Developer’s work with an individual on a one-on-one basis, and will assist with developing a job based on the client’s needs and desires. Once the job is secured, ongoing job support is provided as support is needed.

Jared joined our Supported Employment program in August of 2022, just before the football season kicked off at the University of La Verne. As the assistant football coach, Jared’s responsibilities include set up and breakdown before and after the games and supporting the players however he can during the games. Jared shares, “I love working the games because I get to watch from the sidelines!”

Jared gained support to take the initiative while working on the field, and building social skills for when he works closely with the other coaches and players on the team. Jared’s job coach Martin has been encouraging him to take initiative, ask lots of questions, and keep busy!

Jared says about his job coach Martin, “He helps me be responsible, like getting to work on time, and whenever I need it.”
“Paivika,” the Cahuilla Native American word for “dawn,” is the manifestation of the faith and vision of many individuals and groups, primarily that of Lucia Laufeld who in the early 1940s dreamt of a special place in the mountains for special children. Her dream was shared by Lawrence L. Frank, a member of Los Angeles Rotary Club 5 (LA5) and one of the founders of what is now known as AbilityFirst.

The first campers arrived at Camp Paivika on July 1st, 1947, as the first summer camp in the United States built exclusively for people with disabilities started to take shape. The camp was designed to accommodate the individual needs of children affected by polio, or cerebral palsy, who used wheelchairs, crutches or canes, as well as people with other disabilities, long before anyone had ever heard of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

75 years later, Camp Paivika remains a much beloved place for hundreds of “Paivikans” – campers and former employees – who visit camp whenever they can and like to refer to the camp as their second home.

The past 75 years have not been without challenges as Camp Paivika has survived more than one major forest fire, a pandemic, historic snowstorms, and an ever-changing world. Along the way we have learned that Camp Paivika is not so much a place (although it is a most awesome place!) as it is a feeling and a spirit of acceptance, independence, and joy that envelopes all who spend time here. So even when the forces of nature don’t allow us to be together at camp, we can always create “Paivika” wherever we are for our campers and for ourselves.

Today, our program has expanded to include a variety of camp options to meet the various needs of our campers and their families. In addition to the traditional summer program, we offer a Ski Trip, a Mom’s Getaway, Friends & Family programming, and our virtual “Camp Paivika @ Home” program. Through these new and innovative programs, we are able to share the magic of Camp Paivika with campers as well as the people in their lives who support them, funding fun and engaging ways to stay connected with our campers year-round.

Camp Paivika provides camp adventures for children and adults with developmental and physical disabilities such as autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy, epilepsy and Down syndrome. At Camp Paivika, individual needs such as medical, dietary, feeding and personal hygiene care, are met by our caring camp staff; providing our campers the opportunity to participate in a fully-accessible camp regulated by morning-to-night activities that promote health, fitness, independence and nurturing atmosphere of friendship and possibility.
Event Committees

Stroll & Roll and Food & Wine Festival is back in person!

In 2022, we joyfully welcomed back AbilityFirst fundraising events in person. After a period of virtual events and gatherings, the return to physical events brought a renewed sense of connection and unity for participants and their families, supporters and friends!

Attendees at the Food & Wine Festival and the Stroll & Roll had lots of smiles, and were thrilled to see the tangible impact of their fundraising. The success of these two major events provided a long overdue, collective sense of hope, reminding us of the power of coming together in person to raise critical funds for AbilityFirst programs and services for people with disabilities.

Thank you to all our Event Committee members!

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The Legacy Society recognizes those **visionary** and caring individuals who have included AbilityFirst in their estate plans. Their **commitment** and **dedication** are shining examples of **generosity** that will help AbilityFirst continue its efforts to help children and adults with developmental disabilities realize their full potential! By becoming a member of the AbilityFirst Legacy Society, you can **celebrate today** the **transformations** you will help to make possible in the **future**.

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For more information on Planned Giving or how to become a member of the Legacy Society, please contact **Courtney Jurado**, Chief Development Officer at **cjurado@abilityfirst.org** or **626-243-4844**.
Bank of America proudly embraces the **diversity** and **inclusion** of both its employees and the communities they serve. Bank of America began supporting AbilityFirst over 20 years ago, forming a **partnership** with AbilityFirst in 2001.

Through their Disability Advocacy Network (DAN), Bank of America began providing opportunities for their employees to volunteer at AbilityFirst programs and events, becoming even more actively engaged about five or six years ago, when their teammates began volunteering at AbilityFirst programs and events including volunteering at the Joan and Harry A. Mier Center in Inglewood, the AbilityFirst Food & Wine Festival, and Stroll & Roll. In 2019, hundreds of Bank of America associates participated in the Stroll & Roll walk and volunteered again in 2022 when the event returned in person.

Bank of America Managing Director/Senior Portfolio Manager Harlan Thompson has been serving on the AbilityFirst board of directors for many years. We are grateful for the longstanding support and commitment of Bank of America and our other corporate partners.

**BANK OF AMERICA**

“As a longtime member of the Board of Directors, I firmly believe in our corporate responsibility to support and uplift our communities. Together, we can provide a bright future and positively impact AbilityFirst programs empowering individuals with disabilities.”

– **Harlan Thompson**  
  Managing Director, Senior Portfolio Manager,  
  Bank of America
Our donors’ support and generosity helps to sustain and ensure the future of AbilityFirst. Donations from individuals and foundations listed here help AbilityFirst participants to look beyond disabilities, focus on capabilities and expand possibilities!

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Mayra Alcala
Robert and Alicia Aldridge
Amerittrade
Joan L. Anderson
James Andrews
Aon Foundation
Philip T Attalla
The Emanuel Bachmann Foundation
Hamlet Baghousian
Michael and Aileen Barkyaumb
Dolores Barrios
Mark Bennett
Pierre Bergougnan
Robert Bingham
Anita Boorman
Desiree Bowie
R. and Linda Bridge
Robert Brunswick
California Community Foundation
Tak Chan
Chubb Charitable Foundation
Charlotte and James Cordes
Kevin and Susan Crook
John and Stacey Crouch
Carl Davidson
Benjamin Davies
Brent Diehl
This annual report covers the fiscal year January 2022 to December 2022. Gifts received after December 31, 2022 will be acknowledged in the next annual report. We have made every effort to ensure that the information included is accurate. If an error has been made please accept our apology and contact: Courtney Jurado, Chief Development Officer at cjurado@abilityfirst.org or 626-243-4844.
WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

Programs and Services for Children and Adults 78%

Management and General 16%

Fundraising 6%

REVENUE AND SUPPORT  Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2022

Program Revenue
  Community Centers/Community Programs  $ 6,970
  Business and Employment Services  258
  Housing Services  642
  Camping Services  88
  Supported Employment  1,528

Fund Development
  General  1,028
  Restricted Donations  235
  Legacies and Bequests  1,333

Other Revenue
  Facility & Other Revenue  675
  Manufacturing Sales  175
  Investment Income (Loss)  (13,049)
  Change in Value - Trusts  (906)
  Gain/(Loss) on Sale of Asset  (601)

TOTAL REVENUE/SUPPORT  $ (1,624)

EXPENSES  Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2022

Program Services  $ 14,331  78%

Support Services
  Management & General  3,038  16%
  Fund Development  1,026  6%

TOTAL EXPENSES  $ 18,395  100%

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS  $(20,019)
ABILITYFIRST

COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Manufacturing
789 North Fair Oaks Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91103
Tel: 626-396-1010

PossAbility Pasadena
789 North Fair Oaks Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91103
Tel 626-396-1010

PossAbility Los Angeles
3756 Santa Rosalia Dr, Suite 601
Los Angeles, CA 90008
Tel: 213-748-7309

COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

AFTER SCHOOL/ADULT DAY PROGRAMS

Claremont Center
480 S. Indian Hill
Claremont, CA 91711
Tel: 909.621.4727 / Fax: 909.624.8388
afclaremont@abilityfirst.org
On-site Services: Afterschool Program, Aquatics

East Los Angeles Center
154 N. Gage Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90063
Tel: 323.268.8178 / Fax: 323.268.2359
afeastla@abilityfirst.org
On-site Services: ExploreAbility

Joan & Harry A. Mier Center
8090 Crenshaw Blvd.
Inglewood, CA 90305
Tel: 323.753.3101 / Fax: 323.753.5472
afinglewood@abilityfirst.org
On-site Services: Adult Day Program
ExploreAbility, Aquatics

Lawrence L. Frank Center
201 S. Kinneloa Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91107
Tel: 626.449.5661 / Fax: 626.449.1519
afpasadena@abilityfirst.org
On-site Services: College to Career,
Afterschool Program, ExploreAbility

Long Beach Center
3770 E. Willow St.
Long Beach, CA 90815
Tel: 562.426.6161 / Fax: 562.426.6148
aflongbeach@abilityfirst.org
On-site Services: Adult Day Program,
Afterschool Program, Aquatics, Supported Employment

ADMINISTRATION
789 North Fair Oaks Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91103
Tel: 626.396.1010 / Fax: 626.396.1021
info@abilityfirst.org

CAMP PAIVIKA
Mailing Address:
PO Box 3367 Crestline, CA 92325
Camp Address:
600 Playground Dr.
Crestline, CA 92322
Tel: 909.338.1102 / Fax: 909.338.2502
camppaivika@abilityfirst.org
On-site Services: Overnight Summer Camp, Overnight Winter/Spring Camp Experiences, Mom’s Retreat, Facility Rentals

AFTER SCHOOL/ADULT DAY PROGRAMS

Claremont Center
480 S. Indian Hill
Claremont, CA 91711
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ABILITYFIRST (established in 1926 as the Crippled Children’s Society) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit (Federal Tax ID #95-1690983) that provides programs and services to help children and adults with disabilities reach their full potential. To learn more, visit www.abilityfirst.org
Thank You
FOR YOUR SUPPORT!