



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:**

Rebecca Haussling  
Senior Director, Communications, AbilityFirst  
[RHaussling@abilityfirst.org](mailto:RHaussling@abilityfirst.org)  
626-639-1745

**AbilityFirst Long Beach Center Highlights National Water Safety Month  
with grant from The Coca-Cola Foundation**

**LONG BEACH, CA – May 18, 2017** - - According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, every day, drowning ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury death in the United States with about ten people losing their lives from unintentional drowning. Of these, two are children ages 14 or younger.

Children with disabilities are at an even higher risk than average for drowning. To raise awareness that water safety is critical for everyone, including people with disabilities, AbilityFirst hosted an event with regional leaders on May 17, in celebration of National Water Safety Month.

An area of focus for the nonprofit, AbilityFirst clients receive water safety instruction as part of their Long Beach Aquatics after-school program.

Participants, ranging from 7 to 22 years old, are taught safe pool behavior, including how to use a life jacket, looking before entering the water, as well as recognizing an emergency and calling for help.

These helpful tips can be life-saving and are particularly important in Southern California where swimming pools, spas and water recreation is plentiful.

At the May 17 reception, AbilityFirst President and CEO, Lori Gangemi, delivered welcome remarks and introduced Long Beach Vice Mayor Rex Richardson and representatives from the offices of Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, Senator Ricardo Lara, Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell, Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn, and Long Beach Councilmember Stacy Mungo. Long Beach Center Guild members, participants and their families were also in attendance.

The event included remarks by Coca-Cola Director of Public Affairs and Communications, Carlos Illingworth along with a \$25,000 check presentation from The Coca-Cola Foundation in support of the AbilityFirst Long Beach Center aquatics program.

For more information, please contact Rebecca Haussling, Senior Director of Communications at (626)639-1745 or [rhaussling@abilityfirst.org](mailto:rhaussling@abilityfirst.org)

### **About AbilityFirst**

AbilityFirst provides programs designed to help people with disabilities achieve their personal best throughout their lives. We do this by: creating targeted programming to help an individual successfully transition from childhood to adult life; providing employment preparation, training, and experience; building social connections and independence; and, offering both our participants and their caregivers an opportunity to refresh and recharge through our recreational activities. [www.abilityfirst.org](http://www.abilityfirst.org)