



Immediate Release

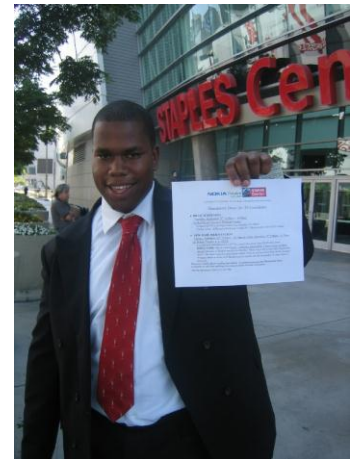
CONTACT INFORMATION:

Esmeralda Ramirez (626) 403-3200 ext. 216
esmeralda@vpepr.com

**AbilityFirst Celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month
by Making Dream Jobs Come True**

PASADENA CA (October 9, 2012) - Celebrated every October since 1945, National Disability Employment Awareness Month is a national effort to raise awareness about the current status and need to increase the employment of people with disabilities. AbilityFirst, one of Southern California's leading organizations offering programs and employment training for people with disabilities, understands the intangible benefits that come with hiring a person with developmental disabilities.

Louis Jones, a security officer at Los Angeles' Staples Center, proudly walks with a grin of pride and satisfaction on his face. "Working as a Security Officer is my dream come true," said Jones with a charmed look. "I'm blessed to be where I am because of AbilityFirst."



It's not always easy for people with developmental disabilities to find gainful employment, which is why AbilityFirst Work Centers provide training, guidance, and encouragement for them to pursue their dreams of joining the business world. The job placement staff carefully evaluates both the prospective employees and the job at hand to ensure that each person's abilities and skills are matched to specific employer needs.

According to the US Department of Labor, the labor force participation percentage for people with disabilities was 20.7% compared to 70.0% of people without disabilities as of July 2012.

"My whole life, I have always wanted to be a security officer. I had a tough time growing up, and I wanted to help other people to not go through what I went through," said Jones.

In 2009, AbilityFirst met with Jones and helped him complete applications, write his resume, and prepared him for interviews. An interview at AEG was arranged which led to his current job at the Staples Center. "Now I work Lakers, Clippers, and Kings games as well as concerts. My job duties are working the front security gates, using the metal detectors, patrolling the grounds, and reporting any disturbance," said Jones with a huge smile on his face. "Because of AbilityFirst, I have reached my dream job of being a security officer."

Lori Gangemi, President and CEO of AbilityFirst, says her staff works tirelessly to provide the support an individual with a developmental disability needs in order to find a job that commensurate with their skills and abilities. "To ensure a smooth transition, we provide pre-employment training to help equip adults with important job and workplace skills. Our job placement staff carefully evaluates both the prospective employee and the job at-hand to ensure that each person's abilities and skills are matched to specific employer needs. Jones' job coach at AbilityFirst helps and trains him on his duties and periodically monitors his performance to ensure that AEG is completely satisfied with his work."

During the month of October AbilityFirst celebrates the ability for every person in the workforce to be recognized for his or her abilities rather than be limited by their disabilities.

For over 85 years, AbilityFirst has provided programs and services to help children and adults with disabilities reach their full potential. Through 24 locations across Southern California, AbilityFirst offers a broad range of employment, recreational and socialization programs and operates 12 accessible residential housing complexes. For more information visit <http://www.abilityfirst.org>

###