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**ABILITYFIRST AND THE LANGHAM HUNTINGTON HOTEL FIND SUCCESS IN PARTNERSHIP
Local hotel partners with organization to hire individuals with developmental disabilities**

PASADENA, CA - Thanks to the efforts of AbilityFirst staff members—and two hard-working adult participants, Andrew Godoy and Johann Gonzalez—AbilityFirst and The Langham Huntington Hotel have begun working together through the organization's DiscoverAbility program. A service offered whereby individuals in the program are empowered to set and pursue personal goals with an emphasis in employment readiness and increased community connections.

Andrew Godoy had been participating in the work program at AbilityFirst's Pasadena Work Center in Pasadena, since May 2017. Though he loved the work and fun activities at the center, in early 2018, he began to feel he was ready to pursue work opportunities out in the community.

Before Andrew was ready to get a job in the community, The AbilityFirst team helped him to understand how to behave in a work environment and speak to his co-workers. Andrew has a great sense of humor, but was encouraged by the team to be mindful of how his humor could hurt people's feelings. The team got to work coaching him on suitable conversations he could have with co-workers and offered to help him with socialization skills.

Once the challenges of socialization were overcome, together with his team, Andrew started to explore open positions at local businesses. In addition, they set up mock interviews with staff and held training exercises in professionalism. Armed with new knowledge and confidence, Andrew was ready for employment.

At the same time, AbilityFirst was working on establishing a connection with The Langham Huntington Hotel in Pasadena, hoping to give participants who were interested in working in a hotel environment the opportunities they were looking for. After The Langham agreed to collaborate with AbilityFirst, Andrew was the first to volunteer when asked if anyone was interested in working in the kitchen as a dishwasher - and was immediately hired!

Despite initially being intimidated by the pots and pans, Andrew didn't shy away from the work placed in front of him. In just a few minutes the first day, he adjusted to the setting and implemented his skills in his new position. When he's not washing dishes, he helps his coworkers stock the kitchen shelves with plates, bowls, and serving utensils. Andrew gives updates to AbilityFirst staff often, expressing his gratitude and shares his progress. He says he's busy and making lots of new friends—and confirms that he loves his new job.

Another DiscoverAbility participant, Johann is also benefitting from this new partnership. Under the guidance of his AbilityFirst Case Manager, Johann was able to overcome his anxiety from a previous negative employment experience. Johann was picky about finding a job that was the right fit for him, so going through the DiscoverAbility program helped him to flush out the types of jobs he did and did not like. Plus, Johann gained confidence through the assessment and working with his case manager. He too, went through mock interviews and professionalism training until he felt confident enough to begin seeking new employment opportunities.

When Robin Gamino, HR Director from The Langham, reached out to AbilityFirst seeking clients for their Stewarding department, Danyelle Diaz, Job Developer for AbilityFirst Supported Employment, met with her to discuss what positions they needed filled. Based on assessments of the hotel's needs, they came up with a file/scanning clerk position in the hotel's HR office to assist with their campaign to become paperless.

After the initial meeting, Danyelle worked with Johann to prepare him for the interview. Over the course of the next few months, Johann trained for specific job responsibilities and, finally, passed the interview with flying colors. He accepted the position as a clerk in the HR department at The Langham and is finding his new work incredibly satisfying, expressing that he loves going to work and is successfully completing his tasks. The Langham is pleased as well! Robin Gamino states, "Johanna is doing a wonderful job, and the staff enjoys working with him in the office".

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The AbilityFirst DiscoverAbility Program assists adults who want to acquire the skills and independence to access and use their community in work, daily living, and leisure. Individuals in the program are empowered to set and pursue personal goals with an emphasis in employment readiness and increased community connections. Interested in teaming up with us to provide employment opportunities? Email Rebecca Hausling rhausling@abilityfirst.org or call 626-639-1745.

AbilityFirst pioneered some of the first community services in California for children with disabilities. Highlights from our 92 year history include: setting a model standard in accessibility with the design and construction of one of the first fully accessible camps in the nation; opening one of the first vocational training programs in the country for adults with disabilities; being a forerunner in supported employment, helping adults with developmental disabilities succeed in competitive community jobs; and leading a statewide effort to sponsor and secure passage of Senate Bill 309 which ensures that young adults with developmental disabilities can attend after school programs throughout high school. At AbilityFirst, we look beyond disabilities, focus on capabilities and expand possibilities. For more information, visit us online at www.AbilityFirst.org.

For interviews and press inquiries please contact Rebecca Hausling at rhausling@abilityfirst.org or 626.639.1745.