

AbilityFirst Announces Capital Campaign to Enhance Programs

While there have been many challenges during the pandemic, AbilityFirst has galvanized its donors to support their "Building Independence Celebrating Community" capital campaign. To better meet the changing needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, the organization has planned renovations and program updates for its community centers in Pasadena and Long Beach that opened more than 50 years ago.

From 2016 to 2017, the number of children and adults with developmental disabilities needing services within the Pasadena and Long Beach communities increased by 1,000 people, or approximately 9%. Of these individuals, 66% are between the ages of 6 and 51 years, and able to be served by AbilityFirst, a non-profit with a mission to "look beyond disabilities, focus on capabilities and expand possibilities." Through these building improvements, enhancements, and program expansions from its capital campaign, AbilityFirst will better serve people with disabilities.

Under the leadership of AbilityFirst's capital campaign co-chairs, Richard R. Frank and Gloria Deukmejian, the capital campaign has raised 90% of its \$5.9 million goal.

Frank's family legacy at AbilityFirst has roots since its beginning. Frank's grandfather, Lawrence L. Frank, along with three other Los Angeles Rotary Club members, went to Chicago in 1925 for a Rotary International Conference and came back with

compassion, concern, and a commitment to help other children with polio in Southern California. The following year, they founded the Crippled Children's Society, which is now AbilityFirst and today focuses on the unique needs and desires of each individual through a person-centered approach.

"I believe passionately in the mission, and I also know that AbilityFirst is good at what they do," said Frank when he recalled his family's impact. His grandfather served as the organization's first volunteer executive director for more than 10 years, spending much of his time performing the day-to-day operations. Lawrence Frank also discovered the land in which AbilityFirst's Camp Pavioka sits today – a place where children, teens and adults with disabilities can have a traditional camp experience.

Frank's father also joined the board of directors and worked alongside his wife and the architect, applying their vision of mid-century modern architecture to the design of the Lawrence L. Frank Center in the 1960s.

When Lori Gangemi became the organization's chief executive officer in 2004, she had a conversation with Frank and sealed his destiny with AbilityFirst. He joined the board of directors, following in his family's footsteps. With limited experience and certain fears to overcome, Frank agreed to co-chair the capital campaign, in part because of his family's legacy.

"I'm a big fan of good architect-

ture and the [Lawrence L. Frank Center] building had been run down after more than 50 years of use. I have a visceral appreciation for my family's involvement when the building was built," said Frank. "When I was recently cleaning out my office, I discovered some Xerox copies of old ask letters my dad had written in the 1950s to fundraise for the first building. Seeing those letters, I thought, 'Well, if my father can do it, so can I.'"

Teaming up with Frank, Deukmejian doesn't have the family tie to AbilityFirst, but she does have the passion for helping people with disabilities. Her compassion and commitment to AbilityFirst's mission have spanned 30 years. She has provided committee support and has been an active member of the AbilityFirst Long Beach Center Guild.

"I could see the need for improved facilities for our AbilityFirst participants," said Deukmejian of why the capital campaign is needed and how it will change the participants' lives. "Because of the teaching kitchen, they can prepare meals in group settings, regardless of obstacles due to height, space, etc. They will feel empowered to perform similar tasks at home or in the community."

Since their openings more than 50 years ago, the Lawrence L. Frank Center and Long Beach Center have not changed, yet the board of directors has identified urgently needed improvements. The capital campaign funds will modernize the buildings while also enhance the organization's

programs to meet the changing needs of individuals with developmental disabilities in the communities.

"We help our participants achieve their personal best through basic life skills, communication, socialization, and healthy living," said Gangemi, who identified the following programs for expansion: Explore-Ability, PossAbility, After-School Program, College to Career, and Supported Employment. "After participant and family surveys, conducting our due diligence, and doing the research, we recognized the changing needs of our population have to be met with improved renovations and expansion of our programs."

With Frank and Deukmejian at the helm of the capital campaign, committee members have been armed with the leadership and commitment to best position

AbilityFirst to meet its capital campaign goal. Members include Joan Alderson, Bob and Mary Alice Braly, Caroline Hansen, Deloris Mayuga, Linda Silver, Julie and Henry Taboada, and Harlan Thompson. Honorary Committee members include Los Angeles County Board Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Janice Hahn, Terri Kohl, and former Pasadena Mayor Terry Tornek.

With the shift to remote working due to the pandemic, committee members overcame various challenges from meeting on Zoom and prospective donors reallocating their contributions, to ensuring those with businesses survived. Like others who came before them and overcame other challenges, this pandemic didn't stop Frank and Deukmejian from nearing the finish line.

To learn more about AbilityFirst, visit abilityfirst.org.

VINCE'S AUTO SERVICE



**COMPLETE
AUTO SERVICE REPAIR**

"Serving Pasadena Over 30 years!"

Specializing in Drivability • Check Engine Light Problems
O.B.D. I and O.B.D. II Diagnosis • Auto Engine Rebuilding • Auto Parts

(626) 792-5879 Toll Free (800) 300-2532

3230 E. Colorado Blvd. • Pasadena
Open Mon - Fri, 8am - 7pm • Sat, 8am - 6pm

NEW PRICE! NEW BLOOMS!

Spring is here and the magical gardens of El Arco Estate are in full bloom.

In addition, El Arco has a new price of **\$6,749,000**.

To celebrate the new listing price and the new garden blooms, El Arco will be open by appointment Thursday, May 13th from 1:00pm to 6:00pm for progressive private tours.

Admission is by appointment only.

Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to tour one of Pasadena's most treasured estates.

** All showings are by appointment only. Agents, please call Sheri Curtis at 310.770.1349 for an appointment time. If you are a prospective buyer you may contact Kevin Bourland or your own real estate professional to schedule an appointment. Current Covid showing regulations will be observed and enforced. Agents, please send a PEAD form in advance of your scheduled appointment time.



KevinBourland.com

Kevin Bourland

Executive Director, Estates Division
213.407.4754

Kevin@KevinBourland.com
DRE 01486389

COMPASS

Compass is a real estate broker licensed by the State of California and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws. License Number 01991628. All material presented herein is intended for informational purposes only and is compiled from sources deemed reliable but has not been verified. Changes in price, condition, sale or withdrawal may be made without notice. No statement is made as to accuracy of any description. All measurements and square footages are approximate.