



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AbilityFirst Chief Executive Officer Lori Gangemi Nominated as Nonprofit Executive of the Year by Los Angeles Business Journal

Monday April 25, 2023 (Pasadena, Ca) - AbilityFirst CEO Lori Gangemi has been nominated for the Los Angeles Business Journal's 2023 Nonprofit and Corporate Citizen Awards, *Nonprofit Executive of the Year*, which recognizes nonprofit executives and organizations that work to improve the communities they serve.

The L.A. Business Journal highlighted Gangemi's accomplishments including spearheading its growth since 2004 from a \$12M to \$20M organization and leading a staff of 270 employees across LA County who provide a variety of services designed to help nearly 2,000 children and adults with developmental disabilities achieve their personal best.

"AbilityFirst person-centered programs are grounded in individual choice, autonomy and community participation," shares Gangemi. "They empower individuals with autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other intellectual/developmental disabilities to discover what is important to them in their lives and to develop the skills that are important for them to achieve their goals. At AbilityFirst, we value – trust, belonging and personal best."

For more than 97 years, AbilityFirst has been a leader in creating a welcoming environment where everyone feels they belong and are valued, by creating targeted programs to help individuals with disabilities successfully transition from childhood to adult life. This includes after-school enrichment, community-based volunteering, college and supported employment programs.

Read Gangemi's full profile in the [L.A. Business Journal here](#).

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Lori Gangemi: A Profile in Nonprofit Leadership Excellence

AbilityFirst stands for, and alongside, people with developmental disabilities and their families. The organization creates a welcoming environment where everyone feels they belong and are valued. AbilityFirst's first consideration is always for the well-being of its participants, and — through the mutual trust that is shared — each person is supported to achieve his or her personal best. At AbilityFirst the team looks beyond disabilities, focuses on capabilities and expands possibilities.

Lori Gangemi has been CEO of AbilityFirst since 2004 and has spearheaded its growth from a \$12 million to \$20 million organization. She leads a staff of 270 employees across LA County who provide a variety of programs designed to help more than 1700 children and adults with developmental disabilities achieve their personal best.

In 2020, AbilityFirst merged with FVO Solutions resulting in expanded programs. The organization also launched three new community-based programs between 2017 and 2020: College to Career: ExploreAbility; and PossAbility.

Gangemi earned her bachelor's degree in

Communications from Washington State University and has a 35-year track record of success in the nonprofit arena. She previously held executive leadership positions at the March of Dimes (including executive director for the Southern California Chapter) and the American Heart Association.

For more than a decade, Gangemi has been active in Vistage, a CEO peer advisory group. She is also a longtime member of the Organiza-

tion of Women Executives (OWE) and the Los Angeles Coalition of Service Providers, a collaboration among organizations serving individuals with disabilities in Los Angeles County.

She is a graduate of Leadership Southern California and was an active member of the Los Angeles Rotary Club (LA5) from 2004 until 2019.

Gangemi shared, "AbilityFirst person-centered programs are grounded in individual

choice, autonomy and community participation. They empower individuals with autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other intellectual/developmental disabilities to discover what is important to them in their lives and to develop the skills that are important for them to achieve their goals. At AbilityFirst, we value — trust, belonging and personal best."

AbilityFirst recently resumed in-person programming that was suspended during the pandemic, while retaining the most popular and needed aspects of its virtual and small group "alternative location" activities implemented during the shutdown. This has had the effect of making its programs even more person-centered and varied, providing each person with more opportunities and choices of program options.

AbilityFirst has a variety of online programming that inspires socialization and fun. Not only are the programs fun for participants, they help them overcome some of the isolation and feelings of anxiety that can result from the disruption of their daily routines.

Learn more at abilityfirst.org.

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A small act of kindness can create a ripple effect that positively impacts the lives of many. Withum is proud to support the Los Angeles Business Journal's Nonprofit & Corporate Citizenship Awards for celebrating the tireless efforts of such nonprofit leaders, teams, and programs, as well as the contributions of individuals and companies who believe in creating a better tomorrow for the communities they serve.

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