



Empowering Every Ability

Dear AbilityFirst Friends,

Since AbilityFirst's inception in 1926 to support children affected by polio, we continue to evolve to address the growing needs of individuals with disabilities across Southern California. Through our person-centered approach, we prioritize our participants while focusing on capabilities and expanding possibilities so that they can reach their full potential. It is with this spirit that I begin my tenure as AbilityFirst's new President and CEO and work to build upon our 98-year history and enduring impact as we move toward our bright future. We are committed to advancing our mission, vision, and legacy of fostering an inclusive community where all are valued.

The theme of this year's annual report is "Empowering Every Ability" as it highlights the incredible transformation that unfolds when an individual is empowered to discover and share their strengths with the world around them. In these pages, you will meet some of our inspiring participants: Chris Valle, who has become an incredible role model to his peers; Lance Gross, whose quiet, observant demeanor makes a big impact and models how to show up for others in life; longtime participant, Maria Warren, and 8-year-old Michael Barros, who have been supported to share their voices with others; Julianna Feser, who has participated in several Supported Employment program opportunities and brings joy to everyone she meets; and Deborah Estrada who consistently shows up to every virtual program offered at Camp Paivika @Home. The growth that each of our participants experience is a catalyst that furthers our commitment to empowering every ability, ensuring that each person can reach their goals and experience the life they envision for themselves.

We are not alone in our unwavering dedication to our mission. With support from our generous donors, foundations, corporate partners, volunteers, and passionate team members, we collectively uplift the voices and lives of the individuals and families we serve. We are grateful for your continued partnership, and we will continue to empower our participants to experience lives full of opportunities.

Sincerely,

Sergio Rizzo-Fontanesi, Ph.D., LCSW AbilityFirst President and CEO



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Kashif Khan Chief Financial Officer

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Mission

AbilityFirst[™] provides a variety of 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.

Vision

At AbilityFirst, our vision is a society that values each individual and provides the opportunity for all people to lead full and productive lives.

Values

Trust - Belonging - Personal Best

AbilityFirst stands for and alongside people with developmental disabilities and their families. We create a welcoming environment where everyone feels they belong and are valued. Our first consideration is always for the well-being of our participants and – through the mutual trust that we share – each person is supported to achieve his or her personal best.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy

AbilityFirst will ensure access to our programs by focusing on the needs of individuals who face barriers to service. In particular, we will assess the barriers to access for those who are low income, come from diverse cultures, and speak languages other than English and seek to provide solutions to address those barriers.



Administration

789 N. Fair Oaks Ave. Pasadena, CA 91103 Tel: 626-396-1010 Fax: 626-396-1021 info@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: Administration, PossAbility Adult Day Program, Supported Employment, Manufacturing

Claremont Center

480 S. Indian Hill Blvd. Claremont, CA 91711 Tel: 909-621-4727 Fax: 909-624-8388 afclaremont@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: After School Program, Employment Services, PossAbility Adult Community Integration Program

Facility License: #191501798

Camp Paivika

Mailing Address: PO Box 3367 Crestline, CA 92325



Camp Address:

600 Playground Dr. Crestline, CA 92322 Tel: 909-338-1102 Fax: 909-338-2502 camppaivika@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: Overnight Summer Camp, Overnight Winter/ Spring Camp Experiences, Mom's Retreat, Facility Rentals



East Los Angeles Center

I54 N. Gage Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90063 Tel: 323-268-8178 Fax: 323-268-2359 afeastla@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: ExploreAbility

Adult Day Program

Facility License: #198603651

Joan & Harry A. Mier Center

8090 Crenshaw Blvd. Inglewood, CA 90305 Tel: 323-753-3101

Fax: 323-753-5472

afinglewood@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: ExploreAbility Adult Day Program, Adult After Care Program, Community Aquatics

Facility License: #191601509

Lawrence L. Frank Center

201 S. Kinneloa Ave. Pasadena, CA 91107 Tel: 626-449-5661 Fax: 626-449-1519 afpasadena@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: ExploreAbility Adult Day Program, After School Program, College to Career

Program

Facility Licenses: #191223376,

#198602059

Employment Services Long Beach

3770 E. Willow St.
Long Beach, CA 90815
Tel: 562-426-6161
Fax: 562-426-6148
employmentservices@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: Employment

Services

Long Beach Center

Long Beach, CA 90815 Tel: 562-426-6161 Fax: 562-426-6148 aflongbeach@abilityfirst.org

On-site Services: ExploreAbility Adult Day Program, After School Program, Community Aquatics, Supported Employment

Facility Licenses: #191600097,

#191600444

PossAbility Adult Community Integration Program Office Los Angeles

375 I S. Hill St., Suite 217
Los Angeles, CA 90007
employmentservices@abilityfirst.org

Program Impact PAVISMATHEL A LINEAT EST Here For A Good Time SNYDER'S.

2023 Highlights



PROGRAMS: 1,465

ALL PROGRAMS: 2,161

Camp Paivika Summer

Campers attended:

261

Companions and friends attending with campers:

Hours of Service: 323,473



After School Program: 58,177

Adult Day and Community

Integration Services: 201,303

Job Coaching: 27,979

College to Career: 36,014

Volunteering

Volunteer Activities at Community Nonprofit Sites by Participants

Activity hours: 7,195

Locations: 47

Individual Volunteers: 212



Participant and Family Survey Results*



100%

100%

99%

97%

96%

of families stated their loved ones are supported in making choices.

of families stated they are satisfied with the services offered to their loved ones.

of participants stated they like coming to and have fun at the program.

adult participants stated they have opportunities to make choices about their day.

of participants have made a friend at AbilityFirst.

*142 survey respondents

Services and Programs

Social Recreation programs encompass a variety of interests while offering a fun atmosphere for adults. Activities include typical weekend activities such as parties and dances, going out to dinner and a show, gardening, swimming and the world-famous Club 626 at the Lawrence L. Frank Center in Pasadena.

ExploreAbility is an adult day and community integration program. The goals of ExploreAbility are to help adults explore and identify what is important to them, develop the skills necessary to achieve their goals, and be involved in their communities through volunteering and community activities.

PossAbility is intended for adults who want to enhance their skills and independence and be active members of their communities. Individuals in the program are empowered to set and pursue personal goals with an emphasis on employment readiness and increased community connections, including volunteering.

Employment Services offer a variety of approaches to provide adults with disabilities the level of support they need to find and retain employment in competitive job markets in their communities, including job placement and the job coaching, paid internships, and work experience programs for youth. By partnering with local businesses, we ensure that job development aligns with the



specific needs of employers while leveraging the strengths and interests of individuals. AbilityFirst is proud to also provide employment support to Project SEARCH interns. The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, job coaches, and employers. The cornerstone of Project SEARCH is a total workplace immersion with a host business and related agencies.

College to Career is a community-based program for students who want to go to college and gain the skills, training, and education to achieve their academic and career goals. The multi-year program begins with a self-discovery and community exploration component to help students identify and develop a plan to achieve goals. College to Career is a traditional community college education program that offers services and supports to

help students succeed. Upon completion of the academic component, as the final stage of the program individuals may transition to community jobs, internships, or volunteer programs as they launch their career paths.

After school and summer programs provide a nurturing environment for school-age youth. Our well-trained and caring staff provide opportunities for new experiences that encourage socialization, exploration, and choice. Participants enjoy an enriching program that also provides needed personal care (including feeding, changing, transferring, etc.) while supporting personal growth and discovery.



The Community **Aquatics** program offers warm water exercise classes that is ideal for promoting joint flexibility, range of motion, and muscle tone. Group and private swim lessons, as well as open swim times for the entire community, are also offered.



Located in the beautiful San Bernardino National Forest, AbilityFirst Camp Paivika offers overnight summer programs for children and adults with disabilities. These programs provide a traditional camp experience with a high level of support and an emphasis on personal discovery. One of the first fully accessible camps in the United States, Camp Paivika has helped thousands of children and adults with disabilities make friends, try new activities, and become more confident and independent. As campers enjoy their Camp Paivika experience, families and caregivers can take a break from the rigors and challenges of providing 24/7 care, knowing that their loved ones are safe, well-supported, and having fun.

To learn more about these programs and services, visit abilityfirst.org.





through Adult Day Programs

Chris Valle, 30, greets everyone in the morning as they walk into the Long Beach Center. Cheers and applause fill the room. A role model, Chris has demonstrated significant personal growth and has taken on various responsibilities around the center, such as taking roll of participants in attendance during the morning session. His dedication and initiative have made him an integral part of our community.

Along with other participants, Chris is empowered with support from staff at our ExploreAbility Adult Day Programs that help adults explore and identify what is important to them, develop the skills necessary to achieve their goals, and be involved in their communities through volunteering and community activities. Our enhanced programs are person-centered, flexible, and responsive to individual goals, needs, preferences, and interests.

"My best skill is karate," said Chris, who enjoys going to the gym to exercise regularly and maintain his personal fitness goals. With another goal of eating healthy, Chris has learned to cook nutritious food in the center's teaching kitchen.

Over the past year, Chris has been eager to increase his responsibilities. He now assists with multiple tasks, such as updating the program schedules when participants switch groups, cleaning up after snack time, sweeping floors, and cleaning tables, ensuring the smooth transition of daily activities. Additionally, Chris has embraced a leadership role by greeting family members and care providers. He announces their arrival over the walkie-talkie and enjoys communicating important program information with the staff.

Beyond these duties, Chris has become an ambassador for our center. He leads tours for potential staff, Regional Center service coordinators, board members, and prospective participants, showcasing our facility and the inclusive environment we foster. His enthusiasm and commitment have empowered other participants like Lance Gross to take on more active roles within the program.

Lance Gross, 34, has been involved with the Social Recreation program over the past year, leading to tremendous personal growth. Lance has become significantly more engaged, including learning new karate moves from Chris. Previously, Lance preferred to sit alone during lunch and other activities. Now, he actively seeks out areas where people are gathered to join in for meals and activities, enjoying the company and interactions.

A fan of the Los Angeles Angels, Lance's social skills have blossomed, and he can often be seen joking around with his friends in the program and enjoying their reactions. He has also increased his communication skills by answering questions directly rather than repeating them. Lance has even become more adventurous with food, trying new dishes, and expressing his preferences. His generosity has shone through on more than one occasion when he has offered to pay for a friend's purchase when they didn't have enough money. Having been a participant of our programs for 20 years, Lance models many ways to show up in life with and for others.

Serving as mentors to their peers, Chris and Lance's journeys exemplify the impact of our ExploreAbility Adult Day Programs by empowering every individual to achieve their fullest potential.

Empowering Personal Growth 10

in Children and Adults

Bright-eyed and composed, **Maria Warren**, 23, walks into the Long Beach Center, puts her personal items away, and grabs her morning snack before settling in at the welcome table. Having transitioned from the youth program to the ExploreAbility Adult Day Program, Maria has continued to experience growth.

Maria actively participates in activities, particularly enjoying making resin items. She takes the lead in preparing for these activities and assists with cleanup afterward. Maria is always ready to help other participants, including pushing their wheelchairs to the table, if needed. Additionally, Maria initiates roll call for her afternoon session, showing her leadership and communication skills. Over time, she has become more vocal, communicating with staff and other participants.

Through a variety of center-based activities and field trips, AbilityFirst helps participants achieve their personal best in several key areas, such as life skills, communication, socialization, and healthy living. Specifically, Maria said one of her goals is "to eat healthy food." She has made many personal steps towards this goal and even told staff, "I dream about the five food groups!"

Like Maria, **Michael Barros**, 8, has also experienced significant growth. In the short period since becoming a participant in our After School Program, Michael has boosted his confidence and now actively communicates and interacts with others in the

program. Amazed at the transformation they have seen, Michael's parents, Alex and Rocio Barros, shared how Michael is willing to take risks like when he volunteered to read in front of the class.

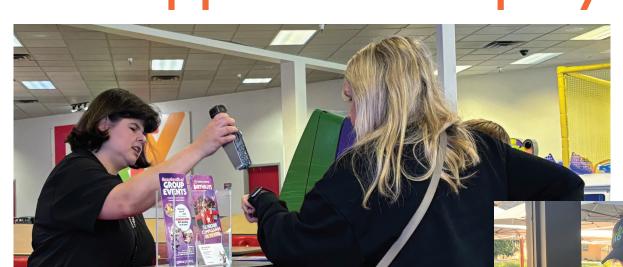
"Within a month, you can see changes in his behavior," said Alex. "He has emotional control and has reduced his self-inflicting behavior and is not as impulsive." Rocio also added that before attending AbilityFirst, Michael would stay in a corner while they would decorate for the holidays. "This past year, Michael, alongside his sister, was placing ornaments on the Christmas tree."

Amazement and relief are the emotions Alex and Rocio describe as they recall how they struggled to get Michael in the car for school. "We do everything now; we can go out. He opens the door and puts on his seatbelt." They attribute AbilityFirst with helping Michael learn this skill.

Today, Michael can regulate his emotions, listen to instructions, and explore interests like music. He is learning to play the flute and using his strong windpipes to use his voice. Staff say that his best ability is advocating for himself, what he needs, and expressing his feelings.

Maria and Michael are a testament to the personcentered approach we have in our programs and how true empowerment brings out the best in each person's life.

Empowering Individuals through Supported Employment



A participant in our Supported Employment program, 33-year-old **Julianna Feser**'s workforce journey highlights how empowering individuals to explore diverse work settings and gain workforce readiness skills helps them achieve greater independence and build confidence.

Julianna began her path to employment through our Project SEARCH internship at City of Hope. During her internship, she gained valuable experience working in various roles, including giving patients visitor tags, navigating the doctor's office, and performing tasks in the cafeteria such as wiping tables, cleaning floors, mopping, and ensuring chairs were properly arranged. These experiences not only equipped her with essential job skills but also boosted her confidence and independence.

Upon graduating from Project SEARCH, Julianna received continued support from AbilityFirst. In fact, the skills she learned at City of Hope helped her secure a job at Chuck E. Cheese. In her new role, she assists with greeting, stamping children's hands, maintaining the front desk, and ensuring a clean and welcoming environment by wiping down tables, benches, and sweeping floors.

"I'm so happy at Chuck E. Cheese. It's a happy place with a lot of children and families, and they're having

a good time, and it makes me happy," exclaimed Julianna, adding "I love it!"

Julianna's mother, Joan Feser, is steadfast about teaching her adult children, who have developmental disabilities, how to navigate life on their own. At home, she reinforces the skills her adult children have learned at AbilityFirst. One time she asked her nephew to be at home while she went away on a trip, the first time she ever left her adult children alone with another person. "I came home to an immaculate house. It was perfect, and they did all the laundry. They're just amazing," Joan said. "They're my shining stars, and I was really proud that they were able to do it."

With collaboration from our job developers and our job coaches, our programs tailor the workforce needs of our participants and demonstrate how individuals with disabilities can achieve meaningful and sustainable employment. Julianna's story is just one example of the many successes we celebrate in our mission to empower every ability.

Empowering

Campers' Abilities



In addition to being an author, **Deborah Estrada**, 35, has been a regular camper, attending AbilityFirst Camp Paivika since 2015, which gives her a sense of belonging and community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 in-person summer camp program was canceled for safety purposes. In response, we launched Camp Paivika @Home, an online program that allows campers to stay connected and engaged. This virtual program continues today and includes activities such as "Wheel of Fun," Just Dance, art, themed exercise days, and more.

Deborah, who has cerebral palsy, loves the Camp Paivika @Home experience and has attended every session, from reading books together to attending monthly movie nights and show-and-tell events. Camp staff realize that these experiences are really important to her and her family. The Camp Paivika @Home program has been an essential part of Deborah's life, providing her with the engagement and connection she gets during summer camp and in the offseason.





"I continue to participate in Camp Paivika because I absolutely love it," Deborah writes using her adaptive apparatus via a Zoom interview.

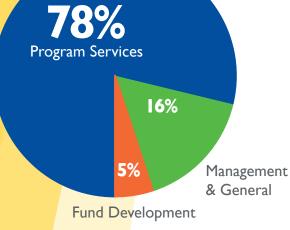
Not only does she love the camping program, but she also has a penchant for writing, having authored two children's books. She also prides herself in being the "best pet owner to my pets," and soon, she'll be gracing the commencement stage at Rio Hondo College, earning two Associate of Arts degrees in child development and early childhood education. Her participation in Camp Paivika gives her balance.

Like thousands of others who have made friends, tried new activities, and become more confident and independent throughout Camp Paivika's 76 years of service, Deborah exemplifies the impact camp and supportive staff make that extends far beyond a camper's time at Camp Paivika.

2023 Financials

January I - December 31





REVENUE AND SUPPORT

(\$ in thousands)

Pro	gram	Revenue
	gi wiii	Iterenae

Community Centers	\$ 7,196
Business Services	249
Housing Services	350
Camping Services	124
Supported Employment	1,766

Fund Development

General	1,803
Restricted Donations	157
Legacies, Bequests & Trusts	1,291

Other Revenue

Facility & Other Revenue	652
Manufacturing Sales	163
Investment Income/(Loss)	9,468
Change in Value - Trusts	323
Gain/(Loss) on Sale of Asset	31
Employee Retention Credit	3,105

TOTAL REVENUE/SUPPORT \$ 26,678

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services	\$ 15,278

Support Services

Management & General	\$ 3,278
Fund Development	1,023

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 19,57	9
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CHANGE IN NET ASSETS \$ 7,099

Events and Committees

In 2023, we hosted three events that brought our supporters together to celebrate our mission and raise awareness of the impact we make with participants, families, and our community. Attendees at the **Food & Wine Festival, Rainbows for AbilityFirst,** and **Stroll & Roll** were thrilled to see the tangible impact of their fundraising. The success of these three major events provided a collective sense of hope, reminding us of the power of coming together in person, rain or shine, to raise critical funds for AbilityFirst's programs and services.

















Thank you to all our Event Committee Members!

FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL

Anita Lawler, Chair

Devon Anderson Anita Besharat Steve Brockmeyer John Nilson Julietta Perez Mary Spellman Harlan Thompson Melissa Wu

STROLL & ROLL Willan Johnson, *Chair*

Joseph Brumfield Malcolm Coronel Ryan Fridborg Stephanie McElroy Elisabeth Seitz Tom Spinogatti

RAINBOWS FOR ABILITYFIRST

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Marie Cady-Drummond
Dorla Fair
Arlene Fillius
Caroline Hansen
Roxanne Korzeniowski
Pat Leue
Terri Nikoletich
Mary Pat Sabol
Linda Silver
Jean Stone





The Legacy Society recognizes those visionary and caring individuals who have included AbilityFirst in their estate plans. Their commitment and dedication are shining examples of generosity that will help AbilityFirst continue its efforts to help children and adults living with disabilities realize their full potential! By becoming a member of the AbilityFirst Legacy Society, you can celebrate today the transformations you will help to make possible in the future.

Joan and Tom Alderson Mary Alice and Bob Braly Raymond G. De Peters Joetta Di Bella Dr. David E. Billet Blanka and Jim Douglass Fariester Family Barbara Feiga Maria French, Ph.D. Lori Gangemi Gary and Jackey Gray James A. Hall Herbert L. Harger

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Empowering Abilities



in the Workplace

What may have seemed like any other firmwide volunteer event turned into an eye-opening experience into the impact of our work. Will Craig, a Partner at Capital Group, was introduced to AbilityFirst by John Kelly, our former Board of Directors Chair. Soon after, Will joined the board in 2018.

Will's involvement grew deeper as he learned that several employees in his office mailroom were participants in our Supported Employment program. Over time, Will witnessed firsthand how our person-centered coaching model provides individuals the opportunity to focus on their abilities and flourish. He often sees the pride and dependability embodied by our participants as they navigate their daily tasks. Will invites them to lunch every six months to learn what they enjoy about work and what they would like to change.



"I'm grateful to Capital Group for maintaining their employment... all of our employment," said Will, reflecting on the pandemic and our participants' contributions during this time. "They had the fortitude and patience to focus on what they can control, set up the processes and systems for the office to function and a thousand people to work collaboratively."

Our partnership with Capital Group exemplifies the powerful impact of our Supported Employment program, which supports our participants and brings inclusion to the workplace environment.

Underscoring the value of our partnership, Will said, "I admire the creativity in finding win-win-win solutions for AbilityFirst, Capital Group, and participants in a way that wasn't obvious to me until I saw it in action. I'm really proud to work at Capital Group and be involved in AbilityFirst, which helps many members of our society who have disabilities and bring their best selves to work as we all aspire to do."







2023 Donors

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\$250.000 and above

Estate of Selma E. Andrews David and Marlene Engberg

Partner \$50,000 - \$249,999

The Ahmanson Foundation Memorial Trust of Nancy Brower Estate of Cecile W. Lewis Myung Yang

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Kathryn Sanders Platnick and

Joseph Platnick

Kelly Privitt Fadi Rassam

NFP Retirement

Michael Riley

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Patsy Sampson Estate

Sanctuary Claremont

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Carol Tabor Len Tang

Temple Family Foundation

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Frank Yang

Zurich North America

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Wendy Alexander James Andrews Cynthia Austin Lynne Clarke

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Dolores Barrios Andrew Beauvais Leona Benko Craig Bergman Catherine Bierschbach

Gary Blasiar Joseph Brumfield

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