



Miracles happen **every day**

Achieving personal best



ANNUAL REPORT 2011 – 2012

DONOR LIST AND FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Looking Beyond Disabilities



Focusing on Capabilities



Expanding Possibilities



A Letter from our Chair and CEO

As we reflect on another year of triumphs and challenges at AbilityFirst, we think of the individuals in our programs who triumph over their own personal challenges every day to achieve their personal best.

Thanks to your generous support, nearly 2,000 children, teens and adults with physical and developmental disabilities participated in AbilityFirst programs last year. In total, more than 100,000 people have benefitted since our beginnings as the Crippled Children's Society of Southern California in 1926.

AbilityFirst programs create an environment where everyone belongs and is valued. With the support of our staff and volunteers, the children and teens in our After School Programs and adults in our Adult Day Programs made progress this year toward their individual goals. Each person became more independent and learned more effective ways to communicate his or her wants and needs and interact with others.

Because of the same mutual trust between participants, staff and volunteers, the adults in our Work Centers and Supported Employment Program gained job skills and earned on average 11% more wages than the prior year. And, twenty-three new individuals were hired by local employers with the help of AbilityFirst job developers and job coaches.

At AbilityFirst Camp Paivika, as at all our centers and group homes, our first consideration is always for the well-being of our participants. Children, teens and adults with mild to severe physical and developmental disabilities came to Camp Paivika for horseback riding, swimming, adaptive sports, campfires and cookouts, arts and crafts, performing arts and other enjoyable, enriched activities. Families enjoyed a break from the

rigors and challenges of caring for their loved ones, while campers thrived as they explored new activities that promote health, fitness and independence in a nurturing atmosphere of friendship and possibility.

Residents of our two group homes, Crown House and Sierra Rose, participated in a variety of monthly community outings, and welcomed family members and friends for holiday dinners. Many of them also spent a week at Camp Paivika.

Thank you for being part of AbilityFirst! Together we stand for, and alongside, people with disabilities and their families. Your contributions are vital to our success in fulfilling our mission and helping AbilityFirst to achieve its personal best.

Sincerely,

Richard R. Frank
Board Chair



Lori E. Gangemi
President and CEO



The Confident King



Andy Lam

During an AbilityFirst fundraiser at El Torito restaurant in Pasadena last year, Andy Lam grabbed a microphone and started singing karaoke, much to the surprise of some family and friends.

It was hard for them to believe that the same young man, who was shy, withdrawn and sullen when he came to the Lawrence L. Frank Center eight years ago, was up on stage belting out lyrics.

“It was nothing for him to get up in front of an audience and sing that night,” said Michael Barkyoumb, center director. “He gained that self-confidence at AbilityFirst.”



There was a time when Andy had difficulty communicating. He was frequently frustrated and had trouble controlling his anger. The center staff worked with him to learn how to handle his emotions and express his feelings. The young staff members serve as mentors and Andy

is able to confide in them and learn from their guidance and leadership. “Andy was in a shell,” Michael said. “Now, he’s a social butterfly. There’s a smile on his face all the time. He’s laughing, talking and very light hearted.” He has even been elected prom king.

Andy participates in all the center’s social, athletic and adventure programs. The activities build his self-confidence and help develop his fine and gross motor skills. He has been zip-lining, kayaking and rock climbing with AbilityFirst. He was a star player on the Lawrence L. Frank Center basketball team and earned the admiration of his team members. Andy’s favorite activity is dancing with his friends at the monthly, theme-based Friday night socials. He also participates in the annual holiday pageants where he dances and lip syncs under the lights in musicals like “West Side Story.”

Andy’s mother, Evelyn Lam, said she appreciates all that AbilityFirst has done for her son. “The staff teach my son the appropriate way to interact in social settings. They know how to make him calm,” she said. “They are all very patient.”

Now that Andy is 21, he is preparing to transition out of the after school program. He has been learning basic living skills like washing clothes, cooking and doing the dishes through Pasadena City College’s “It’s Your Future” program at AbilityFirst.

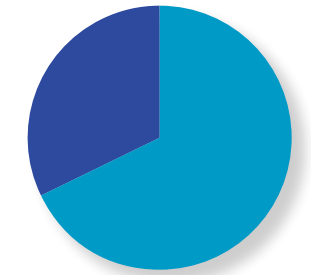
“I know he has a great time at the center and he feels comfortable and safe there. AbilityFirst has done an amazing job helping Andy and we are so thankful for that,” Evelyn said.

2012 Financials Audited Statement of Activities (\$ in thousands)

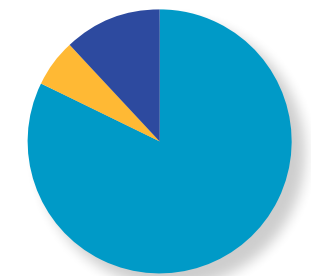
Revenue and Support	Amount	Percent
Program Revenue:		
Community Centers	\$3,036	26%
Business Services	2,422	20%
Housing Services	924	8%
Camping Services	381	3%
Supported Employment	1,305	11%
Fund Development		
General	1,269	11%
Restricted Donations	303	3%
Legacies and Bequests	2,176	18%
Other Revenue		
Facility Revenue	407	3%
Investment Income	(275)	-2%
Change in Value — Trusts	(145)	-1%
Total Revenue/Support	\$11,803	100%

Expenses	Amount	Percent
Program Services	\$11,600	82%
Support Services		
Management & General	1,740	12%
Fund Development	827	6%
Total Expenses	\$14,167	100%
Change in Net Assets	\$(2,364)	

Operating Support and Revenue



■ Program Revenue 68%
■ Fund Development 32%



■ Program Services 82%
■ Management & General 12%
■ Fund Development 6%



Thank you to all of our donors!

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AbilityFirst acknowledges with gratitude all of the contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, organizations, estates and trusts during the fiscal year ended June 30, 2012. This listing recognizes donors whose gifts totaled \$100 or more during the fiscal year. In spite of extensive efforts to avoid errors and omissions, mistakes can occur. If your name was omitted, listed incorrectly or misspelled, please notify us. Gifts received after June 30, 2012, will be included in next year's annual report. Thank you for your support!

AbilityFirst Giving Society

The AbilityFirst Giving Society honors individuals who contribute \$1,000 or more annually. The 2011 – 2012 members of the Giving Society are listed below.

AbilityFirst Capital Campaign for the Joan and Harry A. Mier Center

The Capital Campaign to rebuild our program center in Inglewood is nearing its fundraising goal! The following list includes donors to the AbilityFirst Capital Campaign for the Joan and Harry A. Mier Center during fiscal year 2011 – 2012. Their names are marked with an asterisk (*). Donors to both the AbilityFirst general fundraising campaign and the capital campaign are marked with two asterisks (**).

Building Friendships and the Future of AbilityFirst

Molly Isenberg

Molly Isenberg discovered fun, friendship and therapy in the indoor pool at the AbilityFirst Long Beach Center. Molly, who just turned 86 and has osteoarthritis, first heard about the pool twelve years ago from a friend who was participating in the water exercise program.

Molly started coming to the center three days a week and found the achiness she experienced disappeared when she got into the warm water. "Then, one day while in the doctor's office before knee replacement surgery, I was reading a magazine article that recommended you make yourself as strong as possible before surgery so I started coming every day," said Molly.

A year later, she had to take some time off after she fell in front of her home and broke her femur. "How wonderful it was when I could get back to the pool," Molly said. "I consider it my therapy and I am grateful for how it has improved my recoveries. And, of course, my doctors all agree this is a wonderful activity for me to be participating in."

A deep friendship has developed over the years among the regulars at the 9 o'clock water exercise class, or "pool buddies" as they are known to each other. They go to lunch together, exchange phone numbers and check up on each other. Many of them come watch Molly when she and the Prime Time Players of Long Beach perform one of their comedy skits at the center. "My pool buddies are like an extended family," Molly said. "We really are all good friends to one another and that's good social interaction besides the therapy of the warm water and the exercise."



Her favorite water exercise is the 15 minutes they spend riding plastic noodles and singing songs like "A Bicycle Built for Two." "It's not only the warmth that makes all our bodies feel good but the spirit of singing that goes along with it," Molly said.

Molly is so appreciative of AbilityFirst that she has arranged a bequest in her will. "I wish I were wealthy enough to give it now and not wait until my passing but at least, hurray, it will be there," said Molly, who is married and has four children and seven grandchildren.

Her bequest qualifies her to be a member of the AbilityFirst Legacy Society, which was created to recognize, during their lifetimes, individuals like Molly who have included AbilityFirst in their estate plans.

"Molly is very outgoing, positive and vibrant," Aquatics Director Oscar Franco said. "She loves this place. This is what keeps her going."

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Blooming at AbilityFirst Cyntrea Andrews

Anna Andrews never expected her daughter, Cyntrea, would have one job, much less two.

But, Cyntrea, who has autism and is non-verbal, now works as a movie theater greeter and folding boxes at a local pizzeria. "I'm just so proud of her that she can go out into the community and do this," Anna said. "And she really enjoys it."

Cyntrea, 22, has been coming to the AbilityFirst Harry A. Mier Center in Inglewood since 1999, after she and her mother relocated to Los Angeles. Monique Watts, director of the Harry A. Mier Center, said when Cyntrea first started coming, she was not able to communicate her needs and grew frustrated because she was unable to express herself.

Monique said Cyntrea initially received great support from Hattie Bell, the center's after school program supervisor. "Miss Bell gave Cyntrea the foundation and empowered her to use her hands and words to express what she needed versus

negative actions she used before," Monique said. Cyntrea now uses sign language signals to communicate and will use words when prompted. Monique and the other staff have noticed tremendous improvements in her behavior and in her ability to let them know what she needs or how she is feeling.

Now that Cyntrea is in the adult program, Monique said the staff still tries to work with her one-on-one as much as possible to reinforce the lessons that Miss Bell instilled in her. Even though her verbal skills are limited, Cyntrea loves to show off her dance skills and to play hand games with her peers. She enjoys playing outdoors and doing any kind of physical activity including volleyball, karate and soccer. She's also quite talented at drawing and painting. "The staff has learned that if she gets a little overstimulated to get her involved in art and it refocuses her," Monique said.

Anna said AbilityFirst has been a safe haven for her daughter Cyntrea where she has been treated like family. "AbilityFirst is a wonderful organization and I'm blessed to have it as part of Cyntrea's life," she said.



Feeling of Belonging Dylan Venanzi

For 8-year-old Dylan Venanzi, success and personal best come in different forms.

Dylan, who has autism, came to AbilityFirst almost three years ago. "In the beginning his attention span was very short, needing a different activity every minute or he would get frustrated," said Joy Thomas, Center Director. He required extreme structure to function and mainly stayed indoors.

"At first, we were really focused on customizing program activities to accommodate Dylan," Joy said. Today, he is able to work within small groups, work up to 10 minutes on tasks and go on field trips. His socialization skills have increased along with his communication and coping skills. There is a level of trust the center has earned from Dylan and it has truly shown by his involvement in activities.

Recently, Dylan started attending the AbilityFirst monthly Friday Night Social and Saturday Program designed to give families a much-needed break and their family member additional time to socialize in different settings. The staff was initially concerned Dylan would not be able to participate successfully on the outings but he surprised them fairly quickly during a trip to the bowling alley. Initially, he refused to join his peers but with the encouragement of staff, he joined in the fun. Once he tried it, he enjoyed bowling so much he didn't want to put the ball down even when it wasn't his turn. Joy said this was a real turning point for Dylan. "Outings are important for children like Dylan because it pushes them out of their comfort zone and helps them learn to socialize and function in different environments."

Dylan's father, Jeff Venanzi, appreciates the level of care Dylan receives and the education Jeff and his wife have received from AbilityFirst about Dylan and other children with autism. Dylan is more enjoyable, understands more things, is more involved with the programs and feels like he belongs, according to his father. "Dylan has definitely progressed with AbilityFirst," he said.

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98% of camper families rated their camper's overall experience as good or excellent.

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Achieving Personal Best

Dominic Hernandez



"Get to work 15 minutes early" is just one of the important lessons about being successful in a job that Dominic Hernandez says he gleaned from the AbilityFirst Staff.

March 2012, Dominic submitted his application, interviewed, and was hired as a bus boy at Eden Garden Bar and Grill in Pasadena for the weekend shift.

Less than a year later, Dominic applied for a second job with the help of AbilityFirst staff. He was hired for a packer position at Quetico LLC, a warehouse and distribution company in Chino, which hires employees through AbilityFirst Supported Employment program. Dominic works Monday through Friday six hours a day packaging items for Costco Warehouse. Daisy Grimes, his on-site job coach, said Dominic was a perfect candidate to work at Quetico because "Dominic follows instructions very well and he's able to do all job duties required of him."

Dominic enjoys working side-by-side with Daisy at Quetico as she coaches Dominic on his job duties. Daisy says while she does coach on the accuracy of the work, she feels the most important thing AbilityFirst staff does for their participants is "we help them develop the confidence they need to do any job they set their mind to do." Dominic is a good example of where good job coaching and confidence can lead. We only wonder where his next job will be.

In addition to learning the importance of being responsible and following directions, Dominic was taught how to write a resume, interview for a job and how to dress properly. Dominic even gained the important skill of tying his tie at AbilityFirst.

Dominic came to the AbilityFirst Pasadena Work Center in November 2011 for job placement assistance after being referred by the local regional center. Because he had no work experience, it was recommended that he first spend some time at the work center to gain a job history and skills to enhance his resume. After several months, he and his job developer, John Lee, focused their attention on his primary goal of finding a job in the community. Working together, they searched for the right opportunity and in

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HONORARY CHAIRPERSONS
 Jane Kaczmarek
 Lee Meriwether
 Jaclyn Smith

HOUSING GOVERNANCE BOARD
 Jose Marquez, Chair
 John Elizalde, Vice Chair
 Darrin Lyons, Treasurer
 David Oesterreich, Secretary

MEMBERS
 Barbara Feiga
 Estabrook "Skip" Glosser
 Carol Llewellyn
 Michael Prabhu
 Herbert H. Simmons
 Mark Trabing
 Betty R. Wilson

CORPORATE OFFICERS
 Lori E. Gangemi, President and CEO
 Steven Schultz, Chief Financial Officer
 Keri Castañeda, Chief Program Officer

HEADQUARTERS

1300 East Green Street
 Pasadena, CA 91106
 Tel: 626.396.1010

CAMP

Camp Paivika
Mailing Address:
 PO Box 3367
 Crestline, CA 92325
Camp Address:
 600 Playground Dr.
 Crestline, CA 92322
 Tel: 909.338.1102

ABILITYFIRST EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

C/O Career Transition Center
 3447 Atlantic Avenue 3rd Floor
 Long Beach, CA 90807
 Tel: 562.570.3667

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Anaheim Program
 2660 West Broadway
 Anaheim, CA 92804
 Tel: 714.821.7448

Claremont Center
 480 South Indian Hill
 Claremont, CA 91711
 Tel: 909.621.4727

East Los Angeles Center
 154 North Gage Avenue
 Los Angeles, CA 90063
 Tel: 323.268.8178

Harry A. Mier Center
 8090 Crenshaw Boulevard
 Inglewood, CA 90305
 Tel: 323.753.3101

Lawrence L. Frank Center
 201 South Kinneloa Avenue
 Pasadena, CA 91107
 Tel: 626.449.5661

Long Beach Center
 3770 East Willow Street
 Long Beach, CA 90815
 Tel: 562.426.6161

Newport-Mesa Center
Mailing Address:
 P. O. Box 3985
 Costa Mesa, CA 92628
Program Address:
 1060 Paularino, Avenue Room A
 Costa Mesa, CA 92626
 Tel: 714.546.6727



WORK CENTERS

L.L. Frank Work Center
 3812 South Grand Avenue
 Los Angeles, CA 90037
 Tel: 213.748.7309

Pasadena Work Center
 2570 East Foothill Boulevard
 Pasadena, CA 91107
 Tel: 626.449.5662

Paul Weston Work Center
 6530 Winnetka Avenue
 Woodland Hills, CA 91367
 Tel: 818.884.5112

RESIDENT HOUSING

AbilityFirst Apartments Hemet
 1360 East Acacia Street
 Hemet, CA 92544
 Tel: 951.766.7089

AbilityFirst Apartments Irvine
 14501 Harvard Avenue
 Irvine, CA 92606
 Tel: 949.559.5902

Crown House
 3055 East Del Mar Boulevard
 Pasadena, CA 91107
 Tel: 626.440.9090

Ivy Glen Apartments
 113 North Cedar Street
 Glendale, CA 91206
 Tel: 818.241.3888

Lakeland Manor Apartments

13331 Lakeland Road
 Santa Fe Springs, CA 90605
 Tel: 562.944.9650

Maple Park Apartments
 711 East Maple Street
 Glendale, CA 91205
 Tel: 818.507.1969

Moreno Valley Apartments
 24545 Bay Avenue
 Moreno Valley, CA 92553
 Tel: 951.247.0230

Pacific Rim Apartments
 230 South Grevillea Avenue
 Inglewood, CA 90301
 Tel: 310.672.7221

Rancho Del Valle Apartments
 6560 Winnetka Avenue
 Woodland Hills, CA 91367
 Tel: 818.347.1440

Sea Breeze Manor Apartments
 2067 Alamos Avenue
 Signal Hill, CA 90755
 Tel: 562.494.9086

Sierra Rose
 3053 1/2 East Del Mar Boulevard
 Pasadena, CA 91107
 Tel: 626.578.0120

Villa Malaga Apartments
 4704 East Dozier Street
 Los Angeles, CA 90022
 Tel: 323.980.8402



147,650 hours of service were provided to children in the After School Program



1300 East Green Street
Pasadena, CA 91106
626.396.1010
www.abilityfirst.org