

## Disability Mentoring Day

Ability1st participated in Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) October 18, 2006 in Tallahassee, an annual event which promotes career development for students with disabilities. Ability1st and other agencies paired students with employer mentors for the day, matching the mentee's career interests with a volunteer in that career. Within Leon County, over 70 students were matched and placed with Mentors including such well known individuals such as Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings and State Representative Lorraine Ausley.



DMD is sponsored nationally by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and implemented in Florida by The Able Trust and local partners. The local DMD Committee consisted of community partners such as Leon County Schools, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), TCC, FAMU, FSU, Blind Services and Workforce Plus.

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## Quote

*“People with a disability simply want to be treated like nothing was wrong with them. They don't want to be pitied or be anyone's hero. Nothing more. Nothing less.”*

**Alex Brown,**  
Ability 1<sup>st</sup> Board Member

## Editors Corner:

In our daily interactions let us look for opportunities to treat people who are different than us, as we would want to be treated. Be sensitive today.

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Our thanks go out to our Premier sponsors, the City of Tallahassee and Leon County Government for their financial contributions and support. We would also like to share our appreciation with our local sponsors including VR, Accessibility Solutions, PBJ&S and Advanced Driving. Additionally, our special thanks go out to JR Harding for his enthusiastic fundraising to support our local event.



Lynn Manning, award-winning playwright, poet, and actor of Los Angeles, California has offered to become involved as an E-Mentor with one of our local High School/High Tech students (HS/HT). E- Mentoring is a Mentorship program website for students with disabilities which is facilitated and monitored by the Able Trust. Mr. Manning and his student have both applied to participate in the program and are awaiting the completion of the application process to begin their E-mail dialog. For more information about E-Mentoring you may contact the Ability1st Youth Transition Coordinator Tracy Towle at 575-9621 ext. 107

## **Community Tae kwon do Class Has Disabled Consumers**

Rachel Gerlach, an FSU student is pictured training in her Tae kwon do class with her fellow student Ryan Orlando. Rachel has searched all over for a class that taught people with disabilities. Instructor 5<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belt, Gerald Murphy states that as a former teacher, he worked with youth in the Special Olympics and enjoyed it immensely. "I get pleasure from their drive" stated by Gerald Murphy. Gerald also indicates that he has love as well as patience for people he works with. "Most importantly I have a knack for making everyone feel comfortable; able-bodied and people with disabilities working side by side". For more information about joining the

class please contact Gerald Murphy at (850) 443-6502.



## Hope, Mobility, and Freedom Take Shape in Wheelchairs

The Wheelchair Foundation is a nonprofit organization leading an international effort to create awareness of the needs and abilities of people with physical disabilities. Their goal is to promote the joy of giving, create global friendship, and to deliver a wheelchair to every child, teen and adult in the world that needs one, but cannot afford one. For these people, the Wheelchair Foundation delivers Hope, Mobility and Freedom. Resources are developed from various trusts, corporations, individuals, and church groups to obtain wheelchairs for the Foundation. A grant from Publix Foundation provided funding for wheelchairs to the Centers for Independent Living in Florida. Additionally, Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation has joined forces funding the Wheelchair Foundation's efforts for the Centers for Independent Living in Florida in 2006. Since the Wheelchair Foundations inception in the year 2000, over 500,000 wheelchairs have been distributed in more than 143 countries. For more information you may contact them at [www.wheelchairfoundation.org](http://www.wheelchairfoundation.org)

## Video Phone Assist the Deaf Community

Valeria Bradley, Deaf Services Specialist demonstrates the new videophone to Tia Lurry, member of the Deaf community. "The videophone is the latest device for communications in the Deaf and/or hard of hearing community. The videophone is more convenient for the individual versus the

TTY/TDD. There is greater visual interaction; because a deaf person can actually see the operator and who then relays a message to another person," Valeria explained.

Have you heard about Deafcesus? Deafcensus is a website with a wide range of services that cater to the Deaf

and/or hard of hearing community. Deafcensus has compiled data on over 7,400 organizations, service agencies, and community resources via available public information and web sites. Their website is [www.deafcensus.org](http://www.deafcensus.org)

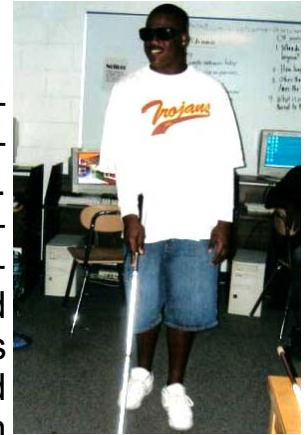


## Disability Awareness Training at Wakulla High School

Ability 1<sup>st</sup> staff Susan Henry and Denyce Roberts held a workshop on understanding various types of disabilities for the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students at Wakulla High School. Several stations were set up so that each student could experience the challenge of diverse disabilities. Talking with marshmallows in their mouths, and writing with their least dominant hand was a great challenge for many of the youth. The student's shared their compassion for people that have had strokes and other debilitating illnesses.



Wakulla High School, Dean of students Mike Smith stated, "I had difficulty getting through a simulated door in a wheelchair". Many of the students experienced the visual impairment station and the learning disability brain box. Finally, the student's hands were taped and they experienced getting dressed for school unbuttoning shirts and zippering pants simulating paralysis or stroke symptoms. "Simple tasks were difficult," explained several students. Another student said "I would never wear clothes with buttons again if I had a handicap like this." The Disability Awareness training was a success for the Wakulla students and faculty alike.



## Funding for Accessibility Home Modifications Received from City of Tallahassee

The State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP), funded through the City of Tallahassee, is an emergency home repair program for low-income homeowners. The disability modifications that are allowed under the SHIP program include: wheel chair ramps, handrails, grab bars, kitchen adaptations, bathroom modifications, and doorway widening. To qualify for this funding, a homeowner must live inside the city limits and meet certain income requirements. The program is not available for rental property or mobile homes. For information on how to apply, please contact Pat Spears at (850) 575-9621, ext. 122.

## 19 Combined Years Experience of Ability1st Volunteers

What do Jay Thompson, Ralph Hook, and Terry Nelson have in common? They are all Ability 1<sup>st</sup> volunteers who design ramps and supervise the construction of ramps. Jay a volunteer for 9 years, is a retired Civil Engineer whose first volunteer opportunity was with his church building a ramp for an outreach project for Ability 1<sup>st</sup>. Ralph Hook jokingly says his "claim to fame" is he is a homeowner who does his own work.



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Jay recruited Ralph and he has been volunteering for 6 years. Terry Nelson on the other hand answered an ad in the newspaper 4 years ago and has supervised the construction of over 40 ramps since that time. The three men have a great camaraderie, and eagerly share their wisdom with the scores of volunteers that they work with. When asked what was one of the most memorable ramps built, Jay mentioned a recent ramp that had gone up in Gadsden County. The ramp stood out because Jay and Accessibility Coordinator Pat Day drove to 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church of Quincy to do a meet and

greet with the office staff on a Monday afternoon. While there, they shared the story of a 5-year-old who was born with cerebral palsy and was being carried in and out of his home daily. Tuesday, Pat received a phone call indicating they had a group available to build the ramp the following Saturday. Jay delivered the designs on Thursday, the church purchased the materials and the volunteers were on site Saturday. This was so unique because the process usually takes several months to complete. This was the fastest donated ramp to ever go up! **We are very thankful to our volunteers!!!**

## Successful Fundraiser Event Raises Awareness in Community

Lynn Manning's autobiographical one-man show "Weights, One Blind Man's Journey" illustrated the story of Manning's struggle to adapt to blindness. Over 300 attendees helped raise \$10,000.00 for Ability 1<sup>st</sup>. The second night of the event included wine and hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction and reception with Mr. Manning. American Sign Language interpreting, assistive listening devices, real-time captioning, and wheelchair seating were made

available to those attending the performance. Ability1st looks forward to bringing another special artist to Tallahassee for the 2007 Fundraiser! See you there!



### Board of Directors

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This newsletter is a quarterly publication produced by *Ability1st*. Articles or topics are welcome. The editor reserves the right to edit and place any entries. Articles must be less than 2,000 words. Authors are encouraged to forward text on disk.

This newsletter is available in alternative format upon request.

*Ability1st* is a United Way agency.



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**www.ability1st.info**

Services are available to all persons with disabilities and their families. *Ability 1st* serves Leon, Gadsden, Wakulla, Taylor, Madison and Jefferson Counties

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