

## Gadsden County Has New High School/High Tech Program

The Able Trust awarded grant funding to Ability1st to expand the existing Leon County High School/ High Tech (HS/HT) program to a location in Gadsden County. The HS/HT location will provide for 20 Gadsden County students to participate in job shadowing, mentoring opportunities, and summer internships, among other work-based experiences. The program shows proven results for students with disabilities, with more than 90 percent of Florida HS/ HT graduates entering post-secondary education, vocational training or securing employment in 2005.

The Able Trust is the statewide sponsor of Florida HS/HT, which is a national initiative of the US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). Funding for the Ability1st HS/HT programs is made possible through collaboration between the Able Trust and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).



(Continued on page 2)

## Quote

*"I seldom think about my limitations, and they never make me sad, Perhaps there is just a touch of yearning at times; but it is vague, like a breeze among flowers."*

- Helen Keller

## Editors Corner:

If we think of our limitations as Helen Keller did, we would never feel sorry for ourselves; but rather we would have an attitude of a champion. Champions are winners who have pressed past their personal difficulties to achieve their goals. For the remainder of 2006, set your goals, develop a plan and become the champion you are!

---

## In This Issue

Gadsden County New High School/Tech Program - 1

Ability 1st Receives Americorps VISTA Grant - 2

Ability 1st Adopt-A-Ramp Program - 3

Transitional Housing Peer Support Group Off To a Great Start - 3

*Gadsden County Has New High School/High Tech Program  
(Continued from page 1)*

**Tonye Carlton** our newest employee has hit the ground running with the Gadsden High School/High Tech Program! After just a week on the job, Tonye had fifteen 15 students apply for services. To date the "Gadsden Connection" has a total of 20 students. Tonye has also met with a myriad of School officials and media representatives of Gadsden County. We are proud of Tonye's efforts. Keep up the great work as part of the High School/High Tech team.

### **Board of Directors**

**Alicia Crew, President; Alex Brown; Wheeler Clemons; Dr. Evelyn Dowery; Claire Evans; Marc Luna; Paul Martell; Carrie Sandahl; Carla Von Fossen; Chriss Walker; Elizabeth Winzig**

**Board meetings are regularly held on the 2nd Thursday of each month**

### **Ability1st Staff**

**Judith Barrett; Carol Cavallaro; Patricia Day; Janet Fitch; Henry Flores; Robert Glenn; Susan Henry; Dee Humose; Tonye Jack-Carlton; Lisa McKinnie; Dan Moore; Joan Reeves; Ryan Solberger; Tracy Towle; SiTerra Wallace; Bruce Weaver**

## **Ability1<sup>st</sup> Receives AmeriCorps VISTA Grant**

Ability1<sup>st</sup> has the distinct honor to have been awarded the AmeriCorps VISTA grant that is designed to build permanent infrastructure and capacities in nonprofit organizations and communities to help bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

We were awarded three VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) positions at Ability1<sup>st</sup>, and we are pleased that we have selected the candidates for each position.

SiTerra Wallace is the VISTA Community Resource Development Specialist who will support Ability1<sup>st</sup> by ex-

panding the awareness of resources available to people with disabilities in their community. This position will also increase awareness of community members about

people with disabilities and encourage them to get involved and become a part of the solution in an effort to decrease poverty.

VISTA member Verdell Lewis will coordinate the Rural Ramp program. This position will collaborate with agencies, faith based organizations, and community volunteers to develop a ramp-building program that will assist people with disabilities and seniors in Jefferson, Madison, Taylor, Gadsden, and Wakulla Counties. This is a grass-roots effort that will have a long-term effect on these communities.

The VISTA Youth in Transition Coordinator is Denyece Roberts. She will organize and facilitate training and awareness activities for high school age youth with disabilities in Jefferson, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla Counties. The goal is to enhance the quality of life for youth with disabilities in these rural counties.



## Ability1<sup>st</sup> Adopt-A-Ramp Program

Coming and going out of our homes is something we just take for granted. That was not the case for Mr. James Woodham. A year ago Mr. Woodham had surgery to amputate his leg above the knee as a result of diabetes. He couldn't leave unless his caregiver carried him out of his home. Imagine how that must have felt! Going to his doctors, and attending social events required great effort and planning. Another concern was the possibility of a house fire. Could he get out in time if he were alone? His safety was an issue. Now as a result of Ability1<sup>st</sup> Adopt-A-Ramp program, the ramp built by volunteers from Florida A&M University, Florida State University, and Tallahassee Community College eliminated these challenges.

Mr. Woodham is just one of more than 100 consumers who gained independence through the program in the last 3 ½ years. This program coordinates financial support, volunteers, and supplies to build the ramps. The Adopt-A-Ramp program, which is funded by the Community Human Service Partnership, (United Way and the City of Tallahassee), also depends on the generosity of corporations, organizations,



and individuals to provide monetary support for the purchase of materials. However, ramps cannot be built without the help of volunteers. So, your support of the Adopt-A-Ramp program through monetary donations or physical labor is always appreciated not only by Ability1<sup>st</sup> but by the consumers in need of the ramps.

## Transitional Housing Peer Support Group Off To A Great Start

Consumers that have transitioned out of homelessness into permanent housing are meeting together to offer support to one another. Some goals of the group include mentoring relationships, and providing both a social and therapeutic environment for the consumers to interrelate.

The support group "HOUSE" (Helping Others Using Shared Experiences), was spearheaded by Ability1st and our community partners serving persons experiencing homelessness. **Janet Fitch** and **Dee Humose** of Ability1st and other partnering agency representatives facilitate the Peer Support Group meeting.

The support group meets twice monthly on the first (1<sup>st</sup>) Tuesday 6 – 7 p.m. and the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Tuesday of the month 4-5 p.m. at Apalachee Home Free Drop in Center.



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.



For more information,  
Please contact us at:

***Ability1<sup>st</sup>***  
**850-575-9621 (voice) • 850-576-5245 (TDD) • 850-575-5740 (fax)**  
**[www.ability1st.info](http://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

Ability 1st receives support from the Florida Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation Services; U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration; Florida Department of Children and Families; Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health; United Way of the Big Bend; City of Tallahassee; The Able Trust; Office of the Attorney General, Victims of Crime Act Office of Justice Program; and United Way of Gadsden, Leon, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla Counties.

***Ability1<sup>st</sup>***

1823 Buford Court  
Tallahassee, FL 32308

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Tallahassee, FL  
Permit No. 504