



For Immediate Release

Monday, September 25, 2017

Contact

Sarah Bascom, sarah@bascomllc.com, 850.294.6636

Kelsey Swithers, kelsey@bascomllc.com, 941.400.8183

**The Able Trust Releases Annual Impact of
Florida High School High Tech Program**

Tallahassee, Fla. – Following its Ability Awards Ceremony & Disability Employment Awareness Month Launch at the Rosen Shingle Creek on Friday in Orlando, [The Able Trust](#) today released the annual impact of its Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) program for the 2016-2017 school year, which was presented at its board meeting. The Florida HSHT program provides high school students with various types of disabilities the opportunity to explore jobs or postsecondary education leading to successful careers.

Specifically, the program is designed to 1) improve participation in education, vocational and employment-related activities for youth with disabilities; 2) increase their enrollment in postsecondary education and training; and 3) increase their high school graduation rate. During the 2016-2017 school year, the Florida HSHT program served 1,550 students with disabilities in 41 Florida counties.

“The Able Trust is proud to release the 2016-2017 school year data on our Florida HSHT program,” said Susanne Homant, president & CEO of The Able Trust. “With 99 percent graduation of HSHT seniors and 85 percent of participants then going on to enter postsecondary education or employment, saying this program is a success is an understatement. Through empowering, educating and employing our youth with disabilities, we are able to contribute to the economy, but most importantly, we are able to help Floridians with disabilities realize their true potential.”

The Florida HSHT Program Impact:

- 373 Florida HSHT students graduated in 2017, achieving a graduation rate of greater than 99 percent of all participating seniors.
- 77 percent of Florida HSHT graduates received a standard diploma compared to 64 percent of other graduates with disabilities in Florida.
- 85 percent of Florida HSHT graduates entered postsecondary education or employment compared to 43 percent of other graduates with disabilities in Florida.
- Services were provided in 151 high schools and alternative education settings, including Department of Juvenile Justice facilities, at 43 sites in 41 Florida counties.

(MORE)

- 459 students participated in work experiences paid through a stipend by the employer, the Florida HSHT program site, the local Career Source, Vocational Rehabilitation or community grant provider.
- Disability diversity of enrolled students included 12 percent autism spectrum disorder, 15 percent cognitive impairment, 2 percent deaf or deaf/blind, 3 percent emotional disturbance, 1 percent hearing impairment, 1 percent multiple disabilities, 13 percent other health impairment, 5 percent orthopedic impairment, 37 percent specific learning disability, 5 percent speech or language impairment, 1 percent traumatic brain injury and 3 percent visual impairment/blindness.

“Orange County Public Schools is a strong advocate for this program – so much so, we instituted the HSHT program countywide, in all 19 of our high schools,” said Cannon Cameron, program specialist of ESE transition services for Orange County Public Schools. “When we’re able to help youth with disabilities find their path toward success, whether it’s exploring postsecondary education or entering the workforce, we are bettering our local community and the State of Florida.”

“The Able Trust is supported one-third by an annual appropriation by the Florida Legislature. These numbers are something that all lawmakers should be proud of, as they have made a significant contribution toward improving the lives of Floridians with disabilities,” concluded Homant. “As you can clearly see, when we support students with disabilities they are able to find jobs and support themselves, thus giving back to their community and our state economy.”

Created by the Florida Legislature in 1990 (FS 413.615), the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public/private partnership, and The Able Trust is a dba of the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation. Its mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. Vocational rehabilitation is the focus of The Able Trust's programs and grants. Making funds available to persons with disabilities helps not only them, but also local and state economies.

The Able Trust supports a diversity of projects, including on-the-job coaching, supported employment, job skills-training, job development, employer outreach, ADA facility compliance, skills evaluation and programs leading to employment. The positive impact of The Able Trust's grant awards has been felt by non-profit agencies serving people with various disabilities, community colleges and individuals with documented disabilities across the State of Florida.

To learn more about The Able Trust, please visit AbleTrust.org and follow [@AbleTrust](https://twitter.com/AbleTrust).

###