



For Immediate Release

Friday, September 24, 2018

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The Able Trust Launches Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities in Orlando

*2018 Ability Award Recipients Announced; Senate President-designate Galvano Named
2018 'Legislator of the Year'*

Orlando, Fla. – The Able Trust today launched Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) activities in Orlando and announced the recipients of its 2018 Ability Awards. The Ability Awards honor select individuals from throughout the state for their contributions to the mission of The Able Trust. The Able Trust and its partners have helped put thousands of people with disabilities to work throughout Florida, and this annual celebration allows The Able Trust to thank some of the very important colleagues who work with The Able Trust in achieving this critical mission.



2018 Ability Award Winners

The 2018 Ability Awards winners are as follows:

Legislator of the Year: Senate President-designate Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton), District 21

Dr. George Spelios Leadership Award: Karenne Levy, President/CEO, MacDonald Training Center, Tampa

Beverly Chapman Employment Placement Program of the Year: Best Buddies, Orlando

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Public Employee of the Year: Lucy Mohs, Public Affairs Director, The Florida Department of Education, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Tallahassee

Young Adult Leader of the Year: R.J. Curtis, Student, Land O'Lakes

Adult Leader of the Year: Justin Shea, Gulfport

Employer of the Year: Caribe Royale Resort, Orlando

Employer of the Year: Pitney Bowes, Jacksonville

Employer of the Year: Tavistock Development Company, Orlando

High School High Tech Site of the Year: Madison County, Madison

Media Representative of the Year: Tim Croft, Editor, The Star, Port St. Joe

Volunteer of the Year: Richard E. Herring, Attorney, Tallahassee

“The Able Trust is honored to have worked with these individuals and organizations on the mission of employment for people with disabilities,” said Dr. Susanne Homant, president and CEO of The Able Trust. “Along with our Board and staff, they work very hard to make sure that a job, and for many a career, are viable options for Floridians with disabilities. We are proud to call them partners in this mission.”



Senate President-designate Galvano Receiving 2018 'Legislator of the Year' Award

“This year, we are pleased to recognize Senate President-designate Galvano as our ‘Legislator of the Year,’” said Dr. Homant. “He has been a good friend to The Able Trust over the years, and his stance on school safety during the 2018 Legislative Session, of which he was a leader, affects all students, including those with disabilities, and we applaud him for his tireless work.”

“Thank you to The Able Trust for naming me their ‘Senator of the Year,’” said President-designate Galvano. “The Able Trust’s work connecting job seekers with businesses through community

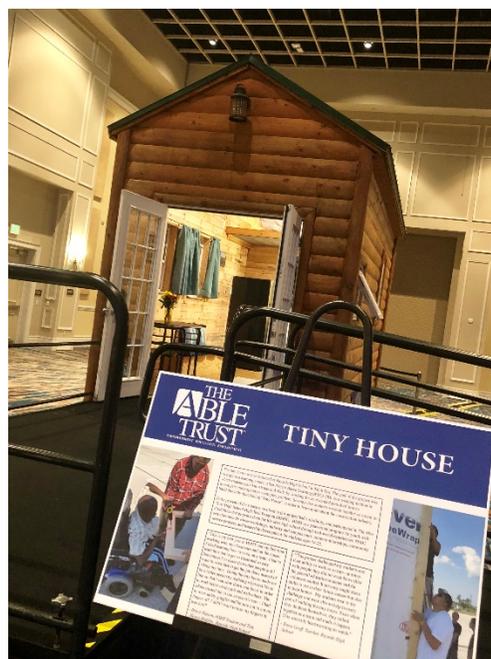
organizations has resulted in the employment of thousands of people with disabilities. I have known The Able Trust for many years and have long supported its successful efforts to make sure people with disabilities are a part of Florida's workforce. The Able Trust is an organization that I am proud to support."

DEAM activities are part of statewide and national programs designed to place job seekers with disabilities in business settings for mentoring, job shadowing and internships. These programs advance The Able Trust's goal of increasing employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities.

Florida's DEAM program is organized by The Able Trust and statewide partners that provide support to local community liaisons who coordinate the matchmaking experience between businesses and participants. The Able Trust receives tremendous support from local disability agencies and the business community in order to provide this exciting and meaningful experience.

"DEAM enables businesses to learn more about working with people with disabilities and the talent, skills and benefits they bring to the workplace," said Dr. Homant. "Only 31 percent of Floridians with disabilities are working, which means there is a large pool of untapped talent that is ready, capable and excited to work."

"Thousands of Floridians with disabilities want to work and are looking for the opportunity to showcase their skills and talents to potential employers," said Melisa Lewis, registered nurse, High School High Tech (HSHT) alumnus and keynote speaker at the 2018 Ability Awards. "The DEAM program gives them an opportunity they might not otherwise get. I know my internships were invaluable in helping me achieve my career goals, and I thank The Able Trust for all that they did to help me succeed."



Tiny House Project on Display

In addition to the DEAM launch and announcing the recipients of the 2018 Ability Awards, The Able Trust displayed its Tiny House Project, which was constructed at Bayside High School in Palm Bay by

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students with disabilities. The goal of the project was to explore a learning model called Project Based Learning, a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex problem. Seventy-five students, 40 percent of whom were students with disabilities, worked together as a team to build this fully functioning “Tiny House” in order to learn more about the construction industry.

The Able Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1990 by the Florida Legislature, and is funded through a combination of public and private dollars. Its mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. The Able Trust supports numerous diverse projects, including the HSHT program, youth leadership training, work experience training and technical assistance, transportation assistance, career development training, employment and career path direction and assistance to businesses as they seek the employment of people with disabilities. Since its beginnings, The Able Trust has worked with community organizations in every county in Florida to put thousands of people with disabilities to work. To learn more about The Able Trust, please visit AbleTrust.org and follow [@AbleTrust](https://www.instagram.com/AbleTrust).

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