



NEWS RELEASE

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Able Trust Grant Will Fund Pilot Program at Stand Among Friends to Improve Employment Opportunities for Persons With Disabilities

Career-Ability to help college graduates with disabilities enter the workforce

BOCA RATON, FL – In today’s difficult economy, college graduates are having a tough time finding employment in their chosen career field. A grant presented in Boca Raton today will give a much-needed boost to graduates who have already proven their ability to overcome barriers in their path to independence.

Stand Among Friends is the recipient of one of two large grant awards to implement a model program helping new graduates with disabilities enter the workforce. The Boca Raton-based non-profit will utilize the three-year grant from The Able Trust to assess, prepare and place college graduates with disabilities in professional positions in their field of study.

“Our primary mission at The Able Trust is to help create employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Florida,” said Dr. Susanne Homant, President and CEO of The Able Trust. “The grant we are providing to Stand Among Friends for this model program was a natural fit for The Able Trust. They have been enormously successful in helping to prepare persons with disabilities to live a life without limits and experience the highest degree of independence—which includes reintegrating them into the workforce.”

The Career-Ability program will use a three-phase approach for transitioning college graduates with disabilities into the workforce: vocational rehabilitation registration; soft skills assessment and training; and career assessment and development. Additionally, program staff will provide communication and professional skills training, identify employment opportunities, conduct onsite job coaching and provide disability training for prospective employers. The \$200,000 grant from The Able Trust will fund services for 60 recent graduates who will be referred to the program by the student disability offices at their universities. The program will leverage existing employer relationships to introduce program candidates for employment with a goal of placing at least half of the graduates in professional positions commensurate to their education and experience.

“We are extremely grateful for this grant from the Able Trust,” said Shawn Friedkin, Executive Director of Stand Among Friends. “It will enable us to really help persons with disabilities complete the process of learning to live independently. Preparing them with the proper training and skills is one thing; ensuring that they actually get hired is another. And that’s what we plan on doing with this program.”

Employment for persons with disabilities is much lower than for persons without disabilities. A 2010 Harris Interactive survey titled “The ADA, 20 Years Later,” the Kessler Foundation and the National Organization on Disability (NOD) found that only 21% of persons with disabilities aged 18–64 are employed full- or part-time, far below the 59% reported for persons without disabilities. The model program will help open doors and improve job opportunities for people with disabilities who have armed themselves with the education and skills required to succeed as professionals. Ensuring that the underrepresented disability community can find employment appropriate to their background and skills is a top priority of the Able Trust.

About The Able Trust:

The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501c(3) public-private partnership foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities successful opportunities for employment. Since its establishment, The Able Trust has awarded over \$28 million to individuals with disabilities and nonprofit agencies throughout Florida for employment-related purposes, enabling thousands of Florida’s citizens with disabilities to enter the workforce each year. The Able Trust’s grant program 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 other programs leading to employment. For more information about The Able Trust, visit www.abletrust.org or call 850-224-4493.

About Stand Among Friends:

SAF was founded in 1997 to enhance the lives of people with disabilities by promoting opportunities for them to live without limits and experience the highest degree of independence and success in their communities. SAF helps people realize and achieve their career aspirations and widen their social opportunities so they may experience a meaningful life, both personally and professionally. Current SAF programs include Employment for People with Disabilities, Disability Sensitivity, Assistive Technology Center & Off-site Demonstrations, Vocational Evaluation and American Sign Language. Through the Employment for People with Disabilities program, SAF provides a full complement of employment and career services for students and adults with disabilities. The organization delivers direct services to more than 600 people annually, and in recent years has placed more than 500 people into productive employment commensurate with their education and experience. For more information www.standamongfriends.org