

Eric Taylor Adult Leader of the Year

The Eric Taylor Award is awarded to individuals with disabilities who exhibit community leadership, are employed full time or part time and/or serves in a volunteer leadership position with a local organization. The award is named for last year's recipient, Eric Taylor, who passed away only a month after receiving this award. Eric was employed with Workforce Alliance where he guided and mentored social security recipients through the transition to work. He was an inspirational advocate for professionals and job seekers. He is missed.

Elan Gelan

Elan began volunteers at the local JCC to assist with the summer camps, Jewish Family Services, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Elan is also a member of the City of Boca Raton Fire Rescue CERT (community emergency response team). Not one to be all work and no play, Elan is involved with the Special Olympics competing in softball (winning at the national level) and basketball (winning gold at the state games). He became a coach of a Special Olympics bowling team and was chosen to represent Palm Beach County at a statewide event to honor sponsors. He has also taken a leadership role in forming a new social program in his community for adults with special needs who are employed in the community. He helps to develop and promote social events and recruit new members. In two years of residency in South Florida, Elan has achieved more than most do in a lifetime, and he is not slowing down!

Faith Jones

Faith started Miss Special America, 9 years ago when she learned she couldn't be in the Miss America Pageant. She contacted the Miss America Organization and their Director of Public Relations emailed her the information to start the pageant. She has been changing the lives of women with Developmental Disabilities since then. This year the program will include a section for young men who will act as escorts. Both men and women participate in a six month self-determination and self-esteem program. Although Faith has support from others with this project, this is her vision and dream and she is living it while making a difference in her community and overcoming the effects of her Autism.

Honored Elected Officials

Educational Advocate of the Year

Karen Brill, Palm Beach County School Board

Karen Brill was nominated for Educational Advocate of the year not only for her service as a member of the PBC School District but for years of advocacy on behalf of students with disabilities as a member and past chair of the ESE advisory Board.

County Commissioner of the Year

Shelley Vana

Shelley Vana was nominated as a result for her work with the County Commissioner office as well as her years of service as a Florida Representative and a teacher with the Palm Beach County School Board. She has been an advocate for equal access, voters rights and inclusive parks and schools.

Florida Representative of the Year

Mark Pafford

Through his years of public and non-profit experience, Mark Pafford, has repeatedly advocated for the special needs of his constituents including, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and voters rights groups. He has been asked here today as an advocate for a diverse, inclusive workforce in Palm Beach County.

Florida Senator of the Year

Maria Sachs

As the daughter of a military family, Maria Sachs has a special attachment to our veterans, both retired and those newly returning from tour of duty. She also understands the need for Florida's students to compete in a global economy and has encouraged the business community to find a highly-skilled labor force right here in our state.

For more information on the Business Leadership Awards:

Palm Beach County Business Leadership Network

6800 Forest Hill Blvd, West Palm Beach, FL 33413

<http://www.cilo.org/business-leadership-network>

(561) 966-4288 x109

Business Leader of the Year

This award recognizes a business with an exceptional record of disability friendly practices, including hiring persons with disabilities, on the job training programs, making reasonable accommodations and demonstrating efforts beyond simple compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Bethesda Healthcare

Bethesda Healthcare has provided on-the-job training for Gulfstream Goodwill's Program Reach for a number of years, resulting in at least 203 students being hired for competitive employment. Additionally Bethesda actively works with employees who become disabled during their employment. The hospital provides ongoing social support and medical care through stroke support services, caregiver support programs and other follow-up community services. They seek creative employment solutions through accommodations, job carving, and part time employment which has enabled employees facing significant medical issues to return to work.

On the Job Training Site of the Year Awards

This award recognizes a business which successfully partners with community service agencies or educational institutions to provide effective on the job training opportunities for people with disabilities. This year's award was divided into 3 categories: Small Business, Large Business, and Expansion Award.

On the Job Training Site of the Year- Large Business Simon Property Group- Boynton Beach Mall

Pamela Kluge-Rada, Director of Mall and Business Development for Simon Property Group was instrumental in the success of PROJECT A.C.C.E.S.S. of the School District of Palm Beach County. Pam coordinated and assisted the transition instructor and his students to participate in work experience at the Boynton Beach Mall. She stayed in contact and provided assistance to the instructor when needed. Darren Shepherd, General Manager for Simon Property Group has also been a key component in the success of PROJECT A.C.C.E.S.S. Darren has been very supportive of the five students who participated in work experience at the Boynton Beach Mall. The students work in the administrative offices, maintenance and housekeeping. Darren took time with the students and instructor numerous times. He would encourage the students and shared in the student's successes. He displayed a positive role model that the students could emulate. Three of the students due to this work experience are now competitively employed.

On the Job Training Site of the Year Awards continued

On the Job Training Site of the Year- Small Business Life Time Athletic Club

Bryan Sussman, manager of Life Time Athletic Club has provided volunteer and employment opportunities over the course of the 2010/2011 school year for the students with disabilities who attend the ACCESS program at Lynn University. In September of 2010, Bryan agreed to train 2 students in the program and started them out folding towels and working on the floor. Within 2 months, he had promoted them to other jobs including working with the chef in the restaurant (food prep., busing tables, clean up) and at the front desk (answering phones, scanning cards, assisting clients). Bryan instructed his staff to treat the students as equals, and the students are considered part of the team. Bryan hired one of the students to work part time, and he is still successfully employed at the club. Bryan also allows the students to have full use of the facility when they are not working, even in the summer. Next year, Brian is expanding the opportunities for the Lynn students in the area of child care. Life Time Athletic Club continues to be one of the best work sites the ACCESS program has, providing opportunities to learn skills essential to securing employment in the competitive work force.

Expansion Award

Norman Murphy, Macy's

Normal Murphy is Macy's Director of Operations for Ft. Lauderdale/Palm Beach. Over two years ago, the School District of Palm Beach approached Mr. Murphy about the possibility of having Macy's as a job training sites for students with disabilities. He was eager to help us implement the job training in Palm Beach County as he had seen a similar program in Hillsborough. Mr. Murphy was the catalyst to having the program approved by Macy's upper management and the store's general management team. Students in Project ACCESS: Lynn University participated in job-training at the Boca Towne Center store this past year. With this year's success, Mr. Murphy has expanded the job-training opportunities for students at three additional stores.