New Ability Online Program Helps Disabled Youth Prepare for the Workplace

Job Readiness program provides participants with access to Human Resources professionals and experienced mentors in a protected, welcoming environment

TORONTO, ON – September 18, 2006 – Ability Online, a free online friendship and skill development network for children and young adults with disabilities and chronic illness, is launching a new Job Readiness program to help members prepare for the workplace. The program is designed to guide participants through the job-search process step by step – from analyzing skills and work interests, to building a resume and approaching prospective employers.

Ability Online is an Internet community where young people with disabilities and illnesses, and their parents and caregivers, can meet others like them to share hopes, fears, dreams and experiences. It offers a place where people can be themselves, without fear of being judged or bullied.

Begun in 1991 as a small online bulletin board, today Ability Online is a vibrant Web-based network with members from around the world. The Job Readiness program is a new initiative that expands the services Ability Online offers its members.

"Everyone wants the opportunity to use their skills to make a difference – no matter what their ability," said Michelle McClure, Director of Program Development and Member Services for Ability Online. "Our goal with the Job Readiness program is to provide the coaching and support our members need to find meaningful work in a welcoming environment that is geared to their needs."

The Job Readiness program on the recently revamped Ability Online web site will be the home base for the program. Members, their parents and caregivers will have online access to Human Resources specialists and other experienced mentors, who will guide them in finding work opportunities and presenting their skills to prospective employers.

"Companies across Canada are seeking bright, committed employees, and many of our Abilities Online members have skill sets that are in-demand. Often the only thing holding them back from mainstream employment is fear of acceptance," said Pat Bibb, a Human Resources consultant with Hay Group and an Ability Online volunteer. "The job readiness program will help them put their best foot forward, and will also match up job seekers with companies that are open to employees with special needs."

The Job Readiness program and all other Ability Online programs are available free of charge to site members who register at www.abilityonline.org.

About Ability Online

Ability Online is a registered charity that provides a national online friendship network with global reach for children and youth with disabilities or illness, as well as their friends and family, caregivers, and related health professionals. The program provides 24/7 access to a secure, monitored and bully-free online environment that promotes the well-being of its members. In addition to online support, we also

provide opportunities for information sharing, skill development and peer mentorship. Membership is open to anyone, and is free of charge. Ability Online currently has 3,300 active members sharing experiences and finding support through the power of the keyboard. For more information, please visit www.abilityonline.org.

Media contact:
Michelle McClure, Director of Program Development and Member Services
Phone: (416) 650-6207
Mobile: (416) 464-7170
Email: michelle.mcclure@ablelink.org