



bread financial®

Insider Perspective: 2 Non-Profits Making a Difference for Independent Living

May 6, 2015

By [Garrett Shipman](#), Community Relations Specialist, Alliance Data

Approximately 650,000 adults with cognitive disabilities live in North Texas, where Alliance Data is headquartered. Independence is a state of being that most of us take for granted on a daily basis, but for those affected by a cognitive disability, the need for resources in education and career stability become particularly crucial once they age out of the school system.

Alliance Data's community involvement is focused around education, children's advocacy and independent living. These focus areas were mostly determined by our associate population, who told us these areas are where they most want to see active change in the communities where they live and work. Independent living is our most complex focus area, because it includes hunger, homelessness, and education and job training for adults with special needs. Our associates are proud to support two North-Texas based organizations that are helping ensure adults with special needs are given the tools needed for an independent life.

For more than a decade, Alliance Data has been a proud supporter of [LaunchAbility](#), a Plano-based nonprofit that provides services to help adults with special needs reach their maximum potential through an exciting array of new programs and post-secondary jobs and training. For each person placed in a full-time job through programs such as LaunchAbility's, approximately \$47,000 in social services costs are saved annually that otherwise would have to be paid by tax payers.

At Alliance Data, we currently employ three LaunchAbility clients at our corporate office, as well as provide ongoing financial contributions (including as the title sponsor of the annual "A Special Evening" concert benefitting LaunchAbility), commitment to active board participation, and employee volunteer support. All of this has enabled Alliance Data to develop a multidimensional—and mutually beneficial—relationship with LaunchAbility over the last 12 years.

While Alliance Data has the pleasure of employing three smart and motivated LaunchAbility clients, the needs are far more reaching and we couldn't be prouder to be contributing support towards such a great cause. Our associates love working with them, and our LaunchAbility clients are always happy to participate in all the office festivities.

Alliance Data is also a supporter of [My Possibilities](#), a Plano-based nonprofit center dedicated to empowering adults with special needs through vocational instruction and independent living skills training. Alliance Data supports My Possibilities [financially](#), including serving as the title sponsor of the organization's annual Community Ball.

Even more importantly, we have become involved in key events, like the '2014 Alliance Data versus Possibilitarians Water War,' which happened to be my own personal introduction to My Possibilities.

Alliance Data brought its group of 16 corporate summer interns for a battle that we could not have prepared ourselves for. The HIPsters (Hugely Important People) were armed with Super Soaker water guns and water balloon launchers, and the excitement in their eyes is something I'll always remember. The HIPsters fought their hardest with delight to conquer our intern group, but at the end of the day it was unmistakable that all involved were winners.

Having the opportunity to introduce our group of interns to My Possibilities was an opportunity to show that service in our community isn't just something we talk about at Alliance Data, it's a real part of what we live and breathe. For some interns, it was their first interaction with people with special needs. The water war gave those interns an opportunity to see how people with special needs enjoy the same opportunities and fun times that we all take for granted. By the end of the afternoon, the HIPsters were having the best time, and you could visibly see the passion in the interns. They were humbled and you could feel the impact of the experience was something they would take away with them.

If there is one thing that is evident through seeing all of these individuals learn, serve and grow it is that no human being is more deserving than another of a happy, content and independent life. And that's why Alliance Data is proud to support organizations that align with our associates' desire to impact the special needs population and their opportunity for a more independent life.
