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I-CASH Bright Start 529 IL ABLE

Treasurer's Note

July 16, 2025

Invest in Yourself and Your Financial Decisions

When opportunity knocks, it's probably a good idea to at least listen. You never know where it might take you.

During fall 2002, I was serving on the Champaign County Board. So, I was not surprised when County Auditor Gerrie Parr asked to meet. I was surprised with what she wanted to talk about: She was looking to retire and wanted me to take over for her.

"I don't know if you know this, but I'm not an accountant," I responded.

"Not a problem," she told me.

"That's funny, because it seems like one to me," I replied.

She said she had a very good chief deputy who was a CPA, and the office had other accountants who did the lion's share of the accounting work. She was looking for someone who could manage people and communicate with the County Board and the media. She also wanted someone who understood the ins and outs of county government. And she told me that I checked all those boxes.

After a few weeks of reflection, I decided to take on this new challenge.

I also decided there was another box I needed to check, and I threw myself into learning about government finance. I joined the Government Finance Officers Association. I went to conferences and signed up for seminars. I read voraciously, checking out books from the library and buying books I couldn't find there.

Over the next couple years, I passed the five required tests to receive the designation of [Certified Public Finance Officer](#). I believe I was the first elected county auditor in the state to achieve this designation. It wasn't a requirement for the job, but I figured if I was going to run the office, I needed to understand it better.



I enjoy talking with children about financial education. If your child hasn't been able to attend one of my library visits, you can find educational resources for children at our [Financial Wellness Hub](#).

I also think that if families are to achieve their financial goals and have greater economic security, then they probably ought to invest a little time in their own personal financial education.

Families don't have to spend the hundreds of hours that I did to make better decisions, but they should invest some time. And finding quality education can sometimes be difficult today.

There is a lot of differing information online and bad advice out there on social media. We in the Illinois State Treasurer's Office wanted to consolidate quality financial education on one site. We wanted it to be useful to people at many different stages of life. And we wanted it to be available in the format in which they learn best.

That's why we created the [Illinois Financial Wellness Hub](#). There are lessons suitable for young children, classes for young adults, information for growing families, and people considering retirement. We have reading materials, videos, audio lessons, and live advisors to help with your questions. We [try to have something](#) for all learning styles and all stages of life.

I listened to opportunity knocking and ended up going down my own path to get a deeper financial education. Without it, I might not be writing these notes to you today. My hope is that if you spend some time at our [Financial Wellness Hub](#), you will be able to tell someone down the road that you are in a more secure place because of the time you invested.

Sincerely,
Michael

Chicago is Right for Tech Growth



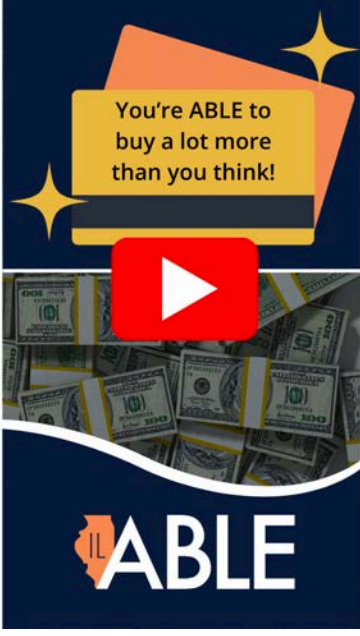
Watch the above [video](#) to learn more about one venture capital firm helping to fuel Chicago's growing tech community.

Is Chicago America's next tech hub? Corazon Capital thinks so. This venture capital firm was founded in 2013 by Sam Yagan, the mind behind brands like SparkNotes and OkCupid. Yagan started Corazon Capital to mentor entrepreneurs and give back to Illinois, the state that gave him a world-class education. Since its founding, it has helped develop companies like Spot Hero, Bonobos, Pretty Litter, and more.

Corazon Capital is one of several Illinois venture capital firms to benefit from our Illinois Growth and Innovation Fund (ILGIF). This \$1.5 billion fund seeks to attract, retain, and grow tech-enabled businesses within the state. Learn more at: <https://www.ilgif.com/>

[Find Out about Businesses to Watch](#)

Happy Birthday, ADA!



Watch the [video](#) above to find out how IL ABLE has helped Bradley live more independently.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark civil rights law that transformed civil rights protections for Americans with disabilities and addressed longstanding barriers in education, public life and employment, and public life for individuals with disabilities. The ADA affirmed the right to full societal participation in society with dignity and independence.

Building on that legacy, the Illinois State Treasurer's [IL ABLE](#) program empowers individuals with disabilities to save and invest for their futures without jeopardizing access to vital public benefits such as SSI and Medicaid. These tax-advantaged IL ABLE accounts help support financial independence and long-term planning.

IL ABLE accounts can be used for a wide range of disability-related expenses, including job training, housing, health care, transportation, and assistive technology. The program helps remove financial restrictions and fosters economic inclusion and autonomy.

To see this impact in action, we invite you to watch [Bradley's story](#), where he shares how his IL ABLE account supports his journey.

As we honor this milestone anniversary of the ADA, [IL ABLE](#) continues to reflect the promise of achieving a better life experience for account holders.



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You can read important disclosures, including information about investments, fees, and risks related to IL ABLE [here](#).

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