Dear Friends of ACT,

Recently we started a strategic planning process at ACT. In this endeavor, we are working with some very talented people from the Missouri Training Institute (MTI), located at the Trulaske College of Business at the University of Missouri. The director at MTI, Alan St. John, has taken the lead in this process.

From the beginning we’ve made it clear that we want to keep our approach simple, yet have value. Many of our stakeholders will be contacted to provide important information to us. We intend to listen closely and then craft a plan for the future that is responsive to what they tell us. We will be asking for input from persons who receive services from us, their families or guardians, staff, funding agencies, and others.

When the key issues are identified, they will be presented to ACT’s Board of Directors for review and approval. The plan will discuss specific strategies identified to accomplish goals. While the plan is an important roadmap, it cannot identify all of the opportunities that will be present in our future. However, it does put us on a course, or a direction that will be carefully crafted. It will be based on our mission and vision statements, and responsive to our core value statements.

As that great philosopher/baseball player Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up someplace else.” I hope we don’t fall in that category! If you are contacted in the coming days regarding this process, we hope you provide feedback to us. It’s important, and will be very much appreciated.

Until next month,

Mark Hassemer
Executive Director, ACT
Plastics Granulator Means Jobs and Less Waste in the Environment, Thanks to ACT Works

Two hundred forty-six tons.
Since June 2008 that’s how much recycled plastic material individuals in the ACT Works program have processed and sold thanks to “the Grinder,” and to donations of plastic media given by businesses, organizations and individuals.

The Grinder, as it is known at ACT, is more properly called the granulator. It does more than shred CD covers and VHS cases into a valuable product. The grinder makes jobs possible for eight consumers (at this time) and two ACT staff.

Operating the Grinder, which was acquired through a grant from the Missouri Environmental Improvement and Energy Resources Authority (EIERA), is one of the most highly sought after jobs at ACT. Consumers get extensive training, including workplace safety instruction and practices for avoiding contamination of the plastic stream, before they set to work on the Grinder.

Grinder operator Brett Froeschner says he loves everything about his job. The plastic material generated is sold through brokers to companies that use it to produce car parts, drinking cups, jewel cases (for CDs and DVDs) and other recycled plastic products.

The ACT Works program is open and operating from 8 am to 8 pm every work day. Since most of the individuals we support work part time, two shifts are in effect. The Grinder is up and running nearly every single work day.

Running the Grinder is just one part of the plastics recycling process. Before VHS tape cases can be granulated, a very labor-intensive process of disassembling the tapes and sorting the components must be completed by other employees in ACT Works.

At this time, the dismantling step is the limiting factor that caps production at its current rate.

Fortunately, ACT has recently acquired a second piece of equipment, a disassembler, through the same grant that made the Grinder a reality. Supervisors say that ACT has just brought this piece of equipment on line. This will help ACT clear the backlog of donated media that are in storage and move ACT Works toward its goal of generating and selling 40 tons of plastic per month. More plastic means more jobs.

The persons we support want to work. They want to earn money and make a contribution. So these jobs are very important.

Would you like to help? ACT Works takes all contributions of CDs/DVDs, CV/DVD cases, and VHS tapes. (But we can’t accept cassette tapes or any plastic food containers.) If you have questions about items you would like to donate, please contact ACT.
Behavior Development Services, Increasing Quality of Life and Development of New Skills

Behavior:

1. The way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others,
2. The way in which a person acts in response to a particular situation or stimulus. - Oxford Dictionaries

Challenging behaviors are sometimes a reality for individuals supported by our agency.

These behaviors can be a barrier to inclusion, and can often negatively impact the quality of life for the individuals we support.

Behavior Development Services is a growing program within the Community Living Program that currently has two full-time Behavior Consultants who work with families and individuals in Boone County providing in-home services. Our Consultants work with families on increasing quality of life and inclusion, while decreasing challenging behaviors.

Behavior Development Services provides services to a wide variety of consumers. Behavior Consultants work with children as young as 3-years-old to adults. Typically services are provided for 90 minutes each week for three to six months.

We utilize person-centered strategies designed for specific needs. We create and develop a variety of tools such as social stories, visual supports, various incentive programs, and token economy systems.

Our Behavior Consultants provide assistance with crisis intervention, one-on-one therapy, and targeted strategy development.

By utilizing positive behavior support, we see an increase in the quality of life for all Consumers as well as the continued development of more appropriate social behaviors.

Social Development Group Kicks Off Effort to Provide Training on Social Skills

Last month, as a part of ACT’s Community Integration Program, we initiated the Social Development Group.

The group, which meets weekly, began its first meeting with a meet and greet (to get to know the participants), team building exercises, and an introduction to what participants can expect over the course of the program as they work to develop what author Michelle Garcia Winner calls “social thinking.”

Led by Tara Shade (along with Ashley Streiker and Meredith McCoy, two volunteers with University of Missouri Service Learning Students), the group follows a curriculum developed by Ms. Garcia Winner.

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“I’ve been wanting to do this for a while. So it’s exciting to finally get started. Many of the challenging behaviors we see grow out of frustrations with social situations. Now consumers can more directly access the tools and skills needed to successfully approach social situations,” said Shade.

Our goal for this group is to teach the people we support to be more independent in social situations. Specifically, we want to get away from using canned scripts and start using our eyes, ears, brains and hearts to become a “social detective.”

A social detective is someone who expects the unexpected and uses his or her senses to assess each social situation and read the behaviors of people nearby. Then, consumers interact based on what they’ve learned from observing, not from a memorized script that might not work in an unanticipated situation.

This 8-week course currently serves 8 selected consumers.

Staff are employing a “token economy” (consisting of SuperTickets that can be exchanged for prizes) to reinforce progress in using positive social skills such as establishing eye contact before talking.

Games, like “caught red-handed” are also used to practice and reinforce the principles.

Like all of our Community Integration services, our highest goal is to increase inclusion and independence for the people we support.

― Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Job Opportunities

ACT is seeking positive and enthusiastic employees to provide assistance and instruction to individuals with disabilities.

If you are interested in a career supporting individuals with disabilities, join us and help make a difference in someone’s life. You must be willing to embrace challenges and accept great rewards. We invite you to consider ACT when seeking employment and/or work experience in the human services field.

ACT is an equal opportunity employer.

Visit actservices.org/jobs to view a list of job opportunities.
Bowling, the Community Advantage Way, Makes a Difference for Older Adults

Sometimes bowling is much more than just bowling, especially when you do it the Community Advantage way.

Community Advantage, a part of our Community Integration Program, is ACT’s way of living out our commitment to provide older adults who have developmental disabilities with opportunities to be active and involved in their community.

Our group of consumers really had a blast at AMF Town and Country Lanes last week. But that’s not uncommon. They bowl every Monday and Friday—because they LOVE to bowl.

“At the bowling alley, individuals cheer each other on and really get excited when their turn to bowl comes. They get so excited when another person gets a strike or spare. They really celebrate each person’s accomplishments,” said Kalynn Ramsey, ACT Activities Coordinator.

Bowling is just one of the physical activities that Community Advantage participants enjoy. They’re also involved in swimming, stretching classes, walking and low-impact aerobics. Mall walking is a popular activity, as well.

These activities are designed to promote physical well-being and prevent the onset of chronic illness.

Community Advantage isn’t limited to physical exercise. Individuals engage in a variety of social, intellectual, cultural and intergenerational activities, too.

If you’d like to know more about Community Advantage, visit the Community Advantage web page at www.actservices.com/ca
Spotlight on ACT Career Services Partner: University Hospital

Among the range of support provided by ACT Career Services, helping consumers identify and obtain jobs is a top priority.

ACT is fortunate to have excellent relationships with partners in the community who want to recruit and retain hard-working, qualified employees.

What makes a partner great? Information. The more our Career Specialists know about an employer and specific job needs, the better they are able to make the perfect match with ACT job seekers.

Here in Columbia, the University of Missouri Health System is just such a partner.

“The Health Care Recruiters at MU Hospital have always been willing to sit down with us and really educate us on every aspect of the hospital’s needs. They’ve helped us learn what they need and identify what qualities they’re looking for in a successful employee.

Very specific details about the work place and the job are extremely helpful,” said John Savage, ACT’s Director of Employment Services.

Over time, ACT Career Services staff get to know the ins and outs of a business. Does the employee need to be able to adapt swiftly to a changing environment? Is the work place a formal one, or less formal? Is the work pace steady or rapid? Do the employees work independently or are they part of a team? Each of these factors, and more, go into finding the perfect employee-employer match.

Having these strong partnerships benefits the employer, too.

“Working with ACT [Career Services] has always been a pleasant experience. ACT has taken the time to truly get to know our business needs and always strives to bring exceptional people into our organization. Communication with the Career Specialists is always open and friendly. This year we will be celebrating the 2 year anniversary of one of our tremendous hires. I look forward to working with ACT for many years to come,” says J.T. Garrett, Health Care Recruiter, University of Missouri Health System.

Thanks to MU Hospital, and other community partners, ACT job seekers are meeting their personal employment goals, reaping financial rewards and obtaining the satisfaction of a job well done.
Tara Shade Named Program Manager for ACT Community Living Program

We are pleased to announce that Tara Shade has accepted an offer to fill the newly-created Program Manager position in ACT’s Community Living Program.

“She’s going to do a great job for us,” said Don Lafferty, Director of ACT Community Living. “I look forward to seeing what Tara will do.

She’s energetic, dynamic, forward-thinking, and a strong advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She’s already well respected here in Columbia as well as across the central part of the state.”

Tara has served as a Behavior Consultant for ACT for the past five years. In her new role, Tara will be managing a full-time Behavior Consultant and a part-time Behavior Consultant who has not yet been hired.

Tara will also manage Personal Assistant Services. The Personal Assistant Services supervisor, Kathryn Gunn, will report to Tara. Personal Assistant Service has received eighty-one referrals over the past six months and has now hired thirty-five new staff, along with utilizing some residential staff to provide services every day of the week.

Personal Assistant Services continues to grow and add new hires.

“We’ve experienced such tremendous growth in the Personal Assistant Service department. Behavior Development Services has been growing continuously, as well. So the timing has worked out perfectly for a restructuring,” said Lafferty.

Congratulations, Tara!

43,000 Pounds of Recycled Plastics, A Drop in the Bucket and the Promise of Jobs

ACT Works just sold and delivered a 43,000-pound semi trailer load of shredded polycarbonate, polypropylene and polystyrene plastic recovered from our plastics recycling operation. Our employees recycle VHS tapes, CDs, DVDs and their cases every day. A major portion of this delivery consisted of plastics recovered from VHS tapes.

Recycled plastics represent jobs and paychecks. Everyone here enjoys it when the people we serve pick up their paychecks on payday.

This 43,000-pound shipment is just a drop in the bucket compared to our potential to produce recycled plastics. A review and consultation by the Missouri Division of Labor Standards is now all that stands between us and a major overhaul in the way we do business.

ACT is the sole owner of a custom-built disassembly machine that efficiently punches out the five screws that hold together every single VHS cassette. We have approximately one million VHS tapes in storage ready to be processed to recover their plastic. The stream of unused VHS tapes is virtually limitless.

Once this disassembly machine comes on line, we will create jobs and opportunities for training. We’ll put more of the people we serve to work in mid-Missouri.

Removing VHS tape screws by hand is tedious and laborious. It must be done to separate the incompatible plastic varieties in each VHS tape. But it has been a bottleneck in the process that will soon be eliminated.

Unlike many automation opportunities, this one will create more jobs, rather than eliminate them.

We’re excited about the work that is done by our employees at ACT.
Choosey Consumers Choose ACT’s Community Integration Day Program

It seems like a simple idea, but we know of no other agency in the U.S. that provides the people they serve what ACT gives its individuals: choices, lots of choices.

We’re trailblazers. Truly.

It doesn’t happen by accident. It happens by design.

Choice matters. It signals human autonomy.

Too often individuals with intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities are overlooked when it comes to independence and choice, as expressed through personal preference and the right to select what makes them happy and fulfilled.

Not at ACT. We know it’s important. We write it down. We talk about it. We plan for it. We put systems in place to ensure it. We create an environment that nurtures it. We want to know what consumers want. Then we do it. We also evaluate satisfaction on a regular basis to make sure we are delivering services the way persons want us to.

Sound familiar? Our historical leaders saw clearly the unalienable rights all of us have as a birthright, including liberty (freedom to choose) and the pursuit of happiness. So they wrote it down in the Constitution. They adopted it. They set up systems that would ensure these choices and freedoms were protected.

It may sound lofty and ideal. But it’s really rather practical. It’s a matter of every day living out our intentions.

Our Community Integration Program... continued on page 9
is designed to involve consumers in the community. Through activities that emphasize communication, recreation, self-help, volunteerism, personal hygiene and community participation, persons work on the goals they choose to accomplish.

Over 100 persons participate in activities each week. On any given day individuals can choose from as many as 16 different activities.

They express their choices by suggesting a menu of activities at monthly team meetings. Then, they select any particular daily activity through the ACT website.

An example from a schedule one day this month included these activity options: grocery shopping, visiting Runge Nature Center, book club, coffee shop, fitness club, computer lab, planetarium, visiting the pet store, bowling, cleaning the van, volunteering at Red Cross, writing thank you cards, watching sports movies and making fruit smoothies.

Last week 20 people went to the zoo and a dozen went swimming. We’ve gone to the Lake of the Ozarks and Mark Twain Lake. We go fishing and putt-putt golfing. When we stay in-house we do activities like make Easter crafts, play with the Wii, work puzzles, and make Mexican lasagna.

We have the transportation (vans), the staff, and the funds for these activities because we value choice and we plan in advance to make choices available to the people we support.

And it works. We see the successes as Community Integration consumers meet their goals.

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.”

— Helen Keller

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 28 - Ella’s Walk
May 1 - Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Refresher at the Training Center.
May 2 - CPR Refresher at the Training Center.
May 2 - First Aid Refresher at the Training Center.
May 7 - Annual Safety Training at the Training Center.
May 7 - Positive Behavior Support at the Training Center.
May 7 - Abuse/Neglect Prevention at the Training Center.
May 19 - TouchPoint Bowling for Autism Fundraiser at Town and Country Lanes.

Find out about more events at

www.actrecycling.org