Dear Friends of ACT,

“Paul’s son, Andrew, passed away shortly after midnight. I will keep you posted on services as I know more.”

Those were the words of a text message I received one recent Saturday—tough words to read. Andrew was just 10 years old.

Paul, a supervisor in our recycling program at ACT knew his son was sick. He’d told us Andrew was in hospice care. This was not unexpected.

But that doesn’t diminish the blow, especially for Paul and his family.

The Heywood family on the day Andrew was adopted.

Paul and his wife Karen have eight other kids. Two are biological. The rest came to the family first as foster children. They adopted many of the kids they welcomed into their home. Some have disabilities, pretty significant ones, many with complex medical issues.

When Andrew joined their family he was 18 months old. He wasn’t supposed to live very long. In the loving care of Paul and Karen, Andrew lived to be ten.

Tara Shade, who manages In-Home services at ACT, has known Paul and his family for a while and has provided services to some of their kids. Tara said Paul and Andrew had a tremendous bond. She said, “I’ve never known a father’s love to be greater, stronger, or more unconditional than the love that was present between Paul and Andrew.”

Paul lives the creed of service to others. He is an ordinary person doing extraordinary things. He is a real hero.

He would disagree with me. He’d say he was just giving back to his community, just being a dad to his kids. “Nothing special.”

Many here at ACT don’t know about Paul and his family, because Paul doesn’t toot his own horn. I’ve never known him to be anything but absolutely selfless.

There are genuine heroes among us. Too often, we fail to recognize them. Paul is a hero.

“True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.”  

- Arthur Ashe

Thank you, Paul. You and your family are inspirations. We are honored to recognize you as a hero.

Until next month,

Mark
ACT Helping Mother Earth One Plastic at a Time

Earth Day is right around the corner and that got ACT Recycling Services thinking: we do our part. There is less plastic in landfills across the United States because of the work we do here.

But how much of a difference are we making?

We did the math.

In just two months, January 2015 to March 2015, here are our stats of recycling services purchased directly through ACT:

- 1,983 – pounds of media materials we have received
- 23 – number of states from which we have received media materials
- Washington D.C. and a Military Base in the Pacific – coast to coast places who have purchased our recycling services
- 10 orders – Wisconsin holds this number for most media materials from a single state we have received
- In 3 months time!

We are proud of the work we do in ACT Recycling Services. We recycle plastics and help cut down on waste.

Individuals with disabilities do the work. Enabling them to gain the skills needed to succeed in a job in the community.

So, it’s a win-win. For Mother Earth and for the individuals ACT Recycles serves.

Five Individuals Get Great New Homes in the Community Living Program

We’ve all heard about spring cleaning. But what about spring moving?

Five individuals in ACT’s Community Living (CL) program have moved into new homes in just one month.

Self-proclaimed sisters Jodie, Brandi, and Jesica moved across town into a quaint subdivision that came with a big plus. It allowed them to have a dog.

Jesica, a huge dog lover who often volunteers at the Humane Society, has wanted a dog for a long time. Their previous residence didn’t allow pets.

Brandi is enjoying the neighborhood, too. “It is a quiet area and the neighbors are great. I’m loving it!” she exclaims.

The women, along with CI Supervisor Brenda Wilson, looked for several months for a nice affordable place to live.

Wilson approached her longtime landlord after seeing a neighbor move out of her subdivision. The owner immediately jumped at the opportunity to get great tenants.

During a mid-February snowstorm, the three women packed up their belongings. Luckily, they had Gaines to load and deliver their heavy stuff to their new digs.

It really is new, too! Prior to moving in, the landlord upgraded the duplex with new carpet and kitchen tile, and a fresh coat of paint.

Lindsey and Tammy are also enjoying a house that is a better fit for them.

They were living in a house with an extra (empty) room that they were paying for. It made great financial sense for them to look for a smaller place.

Now, they have one less room and some extra money to save, or spend.

The women were excited about the moving process. Tammy could hardly contain herself. She was declaring the house hers before she had even seen the inside.

“It’s a great new house!” CI Supervisor Samantha Kathke states.

The home has a jetted tub, marble counter tops, and a huge back yard—all luxuries they did not have before.

All involved in these recent moves are ecstatic that everyone was able to find the perfect home. This is no easy task.

It is no secret in this field that finding high quality, affordable housing is a challenge in the Columbia area.
Housing costs are on the rise, especially since being a college town drives up demand and the price tag. But funding for the individual's we serve is not going up.

Also, those who are employed often work for minimum wage. And all are working part-time. It all adds up to a perfect storm that makes finding homes nearly impossible.

ACT would like your help to meet this need. If you have a solution, please contact Community Living Director Don Lafferty. And please share this story with others.

Employees Placed by ACS are MU Sports Park Standouts

What does Mike Lindsay like about the five employees he hired through ACT’s Community Employment Services (CES)? “I am getting 100% out of them,” he says.

Lindsay is lead custodian and hiring manager for the cleaning crew at the University of Missouri’s Sports Park. That includes the Hearnes Center, Mizzou Arena, Memorial Stadium, Mizzou Athletic Training Complex, Divine Pavilion, Taylor Stadium, University Field, Mizzou Tennis Complex, and the Audrey J. Walton Track/Soccer Field/Stadium.

All of these Sports Park sites must be cleaned and stocked around the clock, every day of the year. They’ve got to be ready for the next event. Events come continuously, with no breaks, from graduation to Tigers games, Show-Me State Games and camps to concerts. They happen on weekends, nights, mornings, and afternoons, and they never stop.

It’s no easy job. It is physically demanding and labor intensive. And the hours are far from those of the proverbial banker.

Lindsay says, “I look for hard-working people who can work at all times. CES has filled our need for stable, high-quality employees.” Until now this was a huge struggle for the manager.

Finding positive, dependable people who can work alongside one another has not been easy for Lindsay. Then he met Barb Wright and Dustin Murray, Employment Training Specialists with CES. “This has definitely been a mutually beneficial relationship,” says Lindsay.

His team consists of six full-time and 53 part-time staff. To minimize the impacts of high turnover, Lindsay is looking to increase the number of full-time positions.

The people vying for those prime positions will be those who have proven themselves by outstanding performance.

“The Athletic Department is all about helping people. If you are good to us, we are good to you,” Lindsay says. The work schedule and work demands may not be ideal. But great employees will win out in the end.

Lindsay continues, “This is a great family environment, working among world-class athletes.”

The individuals served by CESS, by Lindsay’s standards, have made the cut. We are thrilled!

Bench Dedicated in Memory of Tanner McDannold

Friday, March 13th was a special day at ACT as we remembered and honored our friend, Tanner McDannold.

Close friends and family gathered on ACT’s front lawn. Community Integration Director Cindy Burlison unveiled a memorial bench with an engraving of Tanner on it. It was a touching moment for everyone.

Kind words and memories were shared. Then we released balloons as a final goodbye. Many looked to the sky until nothing remained to be seen. There weren’t many dry eyes that day.

McDannold passed away a little more than one year ago. He had attended the ACT Community Integration program since graduating from high school in 2008. Many people at ACT called Tanner their friend.

The bench was the final purchase made with memorial donations received by ACT after Tanner’s passing. Thank you to the McDannold family for attending the memorial and for helping make the bench a reality. We value the friendship we had with Tanner. Now we have a special spot where we can sit and reflect on our time with him.
Tip from Tara: Make Them Hear You

Individuals receiving services in our various programs all have an individual file that is typically full of information – an annual Individual Plan (IP), various assessments, initial reports from when they first received their medical diagnosis, and Individual Education Plans (IEP's) from school.

There are times when I read an individual’s file and I draw conclusions of my own about what the person might be like, what their strengths are, and what skills or situations might be difficult for them.

After reading the file, I typically meet the person for the first time. There are times when the person is similar to the person I imagined and there are a lot of times the person is nothing at all like what I thought they would be.

In previous newsletters, I’ve discussed that I am a parent of a child who is on the autism spectrum. My son, like many, has a file too. A file that discusses things that are hard for him, his IQ score, and many other numbers that are a part of different evaluations and tests that he has been given through the years.

His file, like many, also points out his many strengths.

Like many parents, if I were to read my son’s file, not knowing whom it was about, I’m not sure that I would see the person I know he is because I’ve been a part of every milestone. Every celebration. Every good day and every day that is hard.

Tonight was my son’s spring music concert at his school. I’ve watched him participate in events like this through the years but tonight as I watched him stand on the stage with all of the other children from his school I cried tears of joy as he sang and participated with his peers.

The performance was a medley of Broadway hits. I watched and listened as a stage full of 4th and 5th graders sang and performed “Make Them Hear You” from the musical Ragtime.

Go out and tell our story.

Let it echo far and wide.

Make them hear you,

Make them hear you.

And as my son with the other children raised his hand into the air imitating the rising of a sword like I have seen him do a million times while playing, I heard all the kids sing another verse together,

And I could not put down my sword

When justice was my right.

Make them hear you.

Go out and tell our story.

There he was, my boy, not at all looking like what one might expect if you only read his file.

Parents and advocates go out and tell your stories.

Teach your children to tell their stories, because most of the time the real story is way more amazing than you could have ever imagined.

Make them hear you.

Make them hear you.

– book by Terrence McNally
– lyrics by Lynn Ahrens
– music by Stephen Flaherty

Upcoming Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 30th</td>
<td></td>
<td>Legacy Tour bus in Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 31st</td>
<td></td>
<td>Legacy Tour bus in Jefferson City</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td></td>
<td>Autism Awareness Month</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2nd</td>
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<td>Light It Up Blue at MU’s Student Center</td>
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<td>April 22nd</td>
<td>11:00 AM – 1:00 PM</td>
<td>ACT Job Fair @ 2111 Burlington Street Columbia, MO</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 28th</td>
<td>12:00 PM – 1:00 PM</td>
<td>Lunch &amp; Learn: Transition - Youth Focused @ Columbia Public Schools</td>
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ADA Celebrates 25 Years

The Americans with Disabilities ACT celebrates its 25th anniversary this year!

Area agencies have come together for this important milestone to provide informative and fun events throughout the year.

Don’t miss the ADA Legacy Bus Tour coming to Columbia on Monday, March 30th and Jefferson City Tuesday, March 31st.

Happy Birthday ACT

ACT turns 40 in September this year! We are excited and already planning the festivities. Stay connected with ACT to be a part of the celebration, see fun throwback photos, and more! We will use the hashtag #ACTTurns40.

Support ACT by shopping AmazonSmile

You can now donate to ACT by shopping on AmazonSmile. Simply pick ACT as your charitable contribution and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. Happy shopping!

Support ACT by shopping Gerbes and Schnucks

You can now donate to ACT by shopping at Gerbes and Schnucks! Simply apply for their community/rewards program, pick ACT as your designated charity, and shop away!

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”

— Christopher Reeve

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

— Helen Keller

“Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”

— Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed by former President George H. W. Bush
GET CONNECTED

Come follow us on social media:

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- fb.com/ACTofCoMo
- @ACTofCoMo

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