

Dear Friends of ACT,

I want to say thank you and give special recognition to ACT's Board of Directors.

We don't say it enough. The work they do matters. Believe me, they are not a rubber stamp Board that blesses every idea I come up with.

They are engaged in the hard work of guiding and directing this company called ACT. And they are digging in to solve problems in our community, our organization, and in the lives of people with disabilities.

Thank you, Chuck Collins, Aron Cowsert, Don Howser, Rez Farid, Darren Hellwege, Myles Hinkel, Susan Goldammer, Lyle Johnson, Bob Schaal, Lisa Tye, and Trish Wallace.

As I look back on the past year, I am aware that these leaders in our community have stepped up in a new way and taken on emerging challenges that we simply didn't face several years ago. They've had to work harder and offer more of their time as we've faced new roadblocks and opportunities:

- *Medicaid Waiver definition changes*
- *Transition from ACT Works to Job Preparation services*
- *Ending recycling operations and efforts to sell that business*
- *Our 40th anniversary events*
- *New fundraising efforts through CoMoGives.com, and, of course*
- *Rebasing*

The investment these folks have made on the rebasing issue alone is truly remarkable.

Please accept our gratitude and acknowledgement of your service and contribution.

Until next month,

Mark



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ACT's Accessibility Committee is EAGER TO ADDRESS BARRIERS

In January we talked about accessibility and how it impacts peoples' lives, allowing for inclusion and integration. But how?

Accessibility allows people to have an appropriate level of access to their communities.

ACT's Accessibility Committee has been revamped and is eager to address barriers here at ACT.

The committee urges ACT employees and individuals served to contact a Manager or Supervisor to discuss barriers that affect the ability of an individual to obtain full access. These barriers can then be reported to the committee where they will be categorized into the following – architectural, environmental, attitudes, financial, communication, transportation, and community integration.

They will then develop a resolution plan, give it a priority rating, estimate a cost to completion and funding source, give it a completion date, and assign a point person to the task.

Among other barriers, the committee is currently working to resolve some physical accessibility issues that were reported in a house in the Community Living program and educating new staff about the importance of accessibility.



Mark Hassemer
Executive Director

ACT'S ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE IS EAGER TO ADDRESS BARRIERS

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This group is anxious to celebrate success stories. As the committee works on publicizing their presence, they want to illustrate how barriers were limited or removed at ACT to allow inclusion and access.

Chair of the committee and Manager of Community Employment Fontella Jackmon-Jones says, "We have addressed some barriers successfully but would love more feedback from ACT employees and individuals served. We are working on promoting the committee so everyone at ACT understands what all accessibility encompasses and what the committee is for."

They also want to serve as a resource for the community. Accessibility should not only exist within the walls of ACT.

"The ACT newsletter is a great way to provide information and educate our stakeholders about the importance and supports in the area of accessibility," Jackmon-Jones says. •

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EARTH DAY

April 22nd

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI'S *Office of Asian Affairs*

Offers Cultural Education to Day Program

Once each semester, students from the University of Missouri's (MU) Office of Asian Affairs visit ACT's Day Program.

The Office of Asian Affairs offers programs of varying lengths for Asian college students. They take classes in business, leadership and English. All of the programs are taught by Office of Asian Affairs staff.

Students are immersed in American culture while they are here. They travel to area cities such as Jefferson City and Saint Louis and act as ambassadors for their countries. They share their cultural traditions at elementary schools, assisted living facilities, and ACT.

Asian Affairs Instructor Melody Kleinsorge, who lived in Japan for two years, says, "The students really enjoy coming to ACT. Many of them mention their experience here in their graduation speeches."

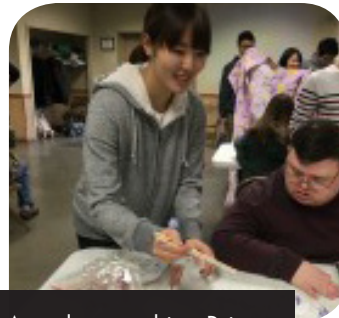
In March, participants in the Day Program enjoyed learning about the Japanese language, using chopsticks, fashion, and the art of origami from a group of Japanese students that came to share cultural information about their homeland.

Day Program Activities Coordinator Kristin Cummins expands on the learning experience by doing activities during the week that are related to the MU students' country of origin.

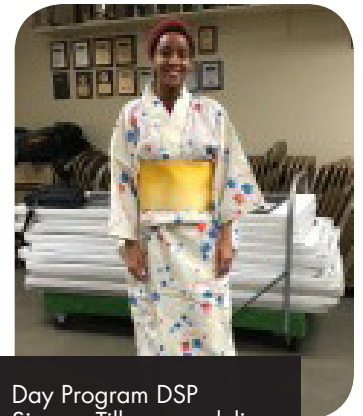
The week's activities also provides information that allows Day Program participants to dig deeper into the culture and history of the featured country.

While learning about Asian countries, individuals have practiced weaving (Philippines). When the focus was on Bhutan, they learned about archery (using paperclips and rubber bands) and a game called Degor (similar to horseshoes). Day Program participants decorated a rickshaw when they are talked about Bangladesh.

"This relationship between ACT and MU is wonderful and mutually beneficial," says Day Program Director, Cindy Burlison. "It is a valuable learning experience for individuals in the Day Program. An added benefit is the Asian Affairs students learn about disability services in the U.S., which are often non-existent in their own country" •



A student teaching Brian how to use chopsticks.



Day Program DSP Simone Tillman modeling a kimono.

Brianne

is Gaining Valuable Professional Experience Working as a Direct Support Professional at ACT

Brienne Bond is sure she's got an advantage over fellow college students studying in her field, thanks to her time working for the In-Home Services program for the past three years here at ACT.

"I've learned so much, and have been so fortunate for the opportunity here. A lot of college students my age haven't had this kind of real-life experience working with people with disabilities."

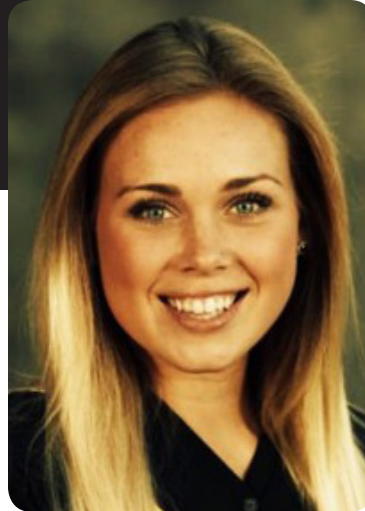
In-Home Services staff here at ACT assist both children and adults at home and in the community on gaining independence, developing essential life skills, and providing opportunities to practice social skills while accessing activities such as volunteering and desired recreational programs. Most In-Home Services staff typically work with one or two individuals on a one-on-one basis for 8-12 hours a week.

Brienne began working at ACT three years ago while home in Columbia for summer and winter breaks from college. Brienne

completed her undergraduate degree in Communication Sciences at Wichita State University last spring and, much to Program Manager Tara Shade's delight, Brienne began full-time work as a Team Support Specialist (TSS) last summer.

Brienne has primarily provided ABA services to children receiving In-Home Services. She has worked collaboratively with both the Thompson Center for Autism and Easter Seals in various community settings. Beginning in June, Brienne will decrease her hours at ACT to part-time while she concentrates on pursuing her master's degree in speech and language pathology at the University of Missouri.

"The relationships I've developed with individuals and their families have been my favorite part about working at ACT." Brienne says, "I am sad to go down to part-time. I really do love what I do but I'm also extremely excited to fulfill my dream of becoming a speech pathologist." •



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Abilities for Business

Great Resource for the Business Community

In September we told you about www.abilitiesforbusiness.com, a website that matches job candidates with businesses.

"Abilities for Business is designed to bridge the gap between business owners and Human Resource professionals by providing a diverse portfolio of candidates with different abilities to fill their teams' vacancies via one web portal," says Kat Cunningham, Abilities for Business contributor and President of Moresource, Inc.

This site is up and running and becoming well known in professional circles in Columbia for promoting and encouraging inclusive hiring practices by Boone County businesses.

In March, representatives of Abilities for Business exhibited at the Columbia Chamber of Commerce Business Showcase. The Showcase gives Columbia and Mid-Missouri businesses the opportunity to feature

their products and services. Thousands attend the Showcase every year. This year was no different. It provided a great opportunity to gain exposure for the website and inclusive hiring.

Also in March, the group began its quarterly Dine and Development Series. These are trainings for the business community scheduled around breakfast or lunch.

The next Dine and Development sessions will be June 15th, 8:00 am-9:00 am and September 20th, 12:00 pm-1:00 pm at the Country Club of Missouri. The topics: Reaching Qualified Applicants with Disabilities and Enhancing Employee Performance through Reasonable Accommodations.


Jessica Mahon, Abilities for Business contributor and Director of ACT's Career Services, said, "The Topics were selected based on feedback from the business community. So it is definitely of value for them to attend." •




"...Bridge the gap between business owners and Human Resource professionals..."

KAT CUNNINGHAM
President of Moresource, Inc.
& Abilities for Business contributor

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