Dear Friends of ACT,

The Columbia Daily Tribune just published an article reporting that Nordstrom, the successful Seattle-based retailer, has featured professional models with disabilities in its ads and catalogs since 1997. (You can read it here: http://www.columbiatribune.com/arts_life/pulse/nordstrom-ads-feature-models-with-disabilities/article_0e5fd413-e0e8-5d60-99a4-5392f62cd80e.html)

Meg O’Connell calls Nordstrom “a long-standing supporter of disability inclusion not only in their advertising but also in employment and accessibility in their stores.”

When you ask Nordstrom what they’re up to, they simply acknowledge that the models they use look like their customers, and “they look good.”

There’s also an amazing YouTube video that’s been shared seemingly endlessly via social media. You’ve probably seen it. (You can view it here: http://www.ask.com/youtube?q=tims+place&v=y6He0FWofj0&qs ribs=472 )

It features a young man named Tim who is so thrilled to go to work, he dances his way across the parking lot every morning before he opens the door to the restaurant.

If you watch the video with the sound turned down, you might say to yourself, “Isn’t that nice? They found something for this pleasant young man with Down syndrome to do.”

Wrong. He owns the place. It’s even called “Tim’s Place.” It’s a high-traffic Albuquerque restaurant. It’s successful, at least in part, because of his unique values and capabilities, one of which is making a genuine connection with every customer who walks through the door.

These two stories demonstrate at least a couple of things.

1. Tim’s Place and Nordstrom are examples of people who are actively engaged in pursuing their passions.

   The Nordstrom website says they have “an unerring eye for what’s next in fashion” and a “relentless drive to exceed expectations.”

   When you’re immersed in what excites you, your efforts don’t seem like work at all. There’s joy and ease.

2. We’re often wrong about what people with disabilities can and cannot do. Tim might be the only person with Down syndrome in the U.S. who owns his own restaurant.

   The Nordstrom website says they have “an unerring eye for what’s next in fashion” and a “relentless drive to exceed expectations.”

   When you’re immersed in what excites you, your efforts don’t seem like work at all. There’s joy and ease.

   But why is this? Once you see he’s done it, you can imagine it happening many times over.

   And won’t it be great when we can see an ad like Nordstrom’s and say, “That’s great,” referring to her fashionable clothes and not the model in the wheelchair?

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Until next month,

Mark

P.S. A couple of weeks ago, my daughter-in-law said my writing in these newsletters is “edgy.” She meant it as a compliment. I’ll take that. I’m flattered. Thank you, Sarah.

Edgy could mean irritable or anxious. But in this case she’s talking about exploring the cutting edge and being daring.

I hope you hear me calling all of us, myself included, to stand closer to the edge, closer to a world in which people with disabilities are involved in every part of our daily lives.

Give a H.O.O.T. Provides Growing Support, Beyond the Basics

Last month we told about Jennifer, whose work is now supported by funds donated by Community Living employees. (read here: http://www.actservices.org/wp-admin/post.php?post=5956&action=edit) Happily, that idea has grown now to benefit others.

“There are others in our program who are in the same situation as Jennifer: no money, no job, no family...so, no extra cash flow,” says Program Supervisor Lynette Austin.

They pay their bills, then they have nothing left to do enjoyable activities like go see a movie, eat at a favorite restaurant, or take a dream vacation.

To meet this need, a fundraising effort called Give A H.O.O.T. was initiated.

“H.O.O.T.” stands for Helping Our Own Together. That’s just what the Community Living (CL) program is doing, joining together to help those who are near and dear.

The program has held two successful fundraising events, a bake sale and a potluck lunch, which have brought in nearly $1,000.

Austin, an experienced fundraiser, has already started working on the next money-maker, a cookbook, which will go on sale in November. It’s filled with yummy recipes submitted by the ACT family.

Other fundraising ideas are also being considered, including a silent auction and a breakfast.

“I seriously did not have any pre-set goals, but from what we have done so far, I consider this a huge success,” says Austin. “It is so worth it when you see the smiles on the faces of those we’ve helped.”

Participation is high. Employees from all of the ACT programs have chipped in to donate and purchase food items. Some even stayed around to clean up!

“The ACT family has really stepped up to help our individuals,” Austin continues.

Give a H.O.O.T. has funded Tammy’s trip to Kansas City. She dined at The Cheesecake Factory, got a make-over, and did some sightseeing.

Jennifer got the support she needed through Give a H.O.O.T. to go to the Zoo for the first time in her life.

We are excited and energized about the new depth and dimension experienced by those who were giving everything they had to basic needs. The breadth of opportunities these funds are providing for individuals served by CL could not have been imagined.

Stay up to date on the Give A H.O.O.T. fundraisers by liking ACT’s Facebook page (www.facebook/actofcomo) and following us on Twitter (@ACTofCoMo).

To submit a recipe, go to www.familycookbookproject.com (login: LynetteA62, password: HOOT!) or contact Lynette Austin at laustin@actservices.org.
Dacia is On a Mission to Educate

Dacia is determined to establish a career in education. Her desire is unmistakable; her energy, contagious.

She received her bachelor’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, with an emphasis in Elementary Education in 2008. Since ‘08, she has concentrated on advocacy and volunteer work for the past few years while earning an additional educational certificate for teaching students with visual impairments.

Dacia began working with ACT Career Services (ACS) in March of this year. This is her first venture into competitive employment.

Her goal is to find a career educating or advocating for children. “I have a craving to help kids—to watch them grow,” Dacia says.

Dacia thinks that many children don’t recognize their inner strengths until a teacher is able to help them discover those strengths. “Every child has the right to realize joy through learning and creativity.” She says.

For now, she is happy to explore with Barb Wright, ACS Career Specialist, other career options to gain valuable experience.

“We have done a lot of brainstorming!” Says Wright.

For Dacia, there is no opportunity too big or small. They have explored positions at colleges, daycare centers, public and private schools, and online teaching.

They identified an opportunity for her to create her own curriculum and submit it at the Career Center. If approved, Dacia would teach the class for the assistive technology program at the career center.

Kevin Gets a Job at OATS (and More)
After 14 Years with ACT Works

Just shy of his 15-year anniversary with ACT Works (AW), Kevin took a job at OATS Transportation as a custodian.

Kevin began working at AW in October of 1998. Since that time he has had a variety of job duties.

When he started, ACT offered cleaning services to area businesses. Kevin worked on that cleaning crew.

Soon, he took a job on the recycling work floor preparing used floppy discs for resale. His duties included stripping data from the discs and then organizing them for shipment.

Eventually, Kevin was promoted to Warehouse Assistant, a job with a great deal of responsibility. He managed all of the Greendisk shipments, as well as the collection of various donated electronic devices, coined “technotrash”.

Kevin was also in charge of all warehouse cargo trips. He picked up donations from partnering businesses and later delivered recycled media material to our storage facility. (See http://www.actservices.org/?p=5133).

It seemed to his coworkers, the more responsibility he had, the harder he worked and happier he became.

“Heavy coworkers looked up to him. They turned to him when they had a question. He liked that.” Says Marsha Schafer, Community Integration Mentor (former Training Specialist at ACT Works).

Although Kevin felt at home in his position in AW, it was clearly not a stopping point but a stepping stone.

“There was a little hesitation on Kevin’s part about moving to Community Employment, as anyone might feel after so many years with the same organization.” says AW’s Davin Tipton. “But the transition is going well.”

It’s going so well that Kevin recently

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picked up a second job at Candlelight Lodge, where he manages waste.

Thank you for your years of hard work and dedication at ACT, Kevin! We are very proud of you for stepping out and succeeding in your new jobs.

Trip to CoCo Key Water Resort, a Remembrance of Tanner McDannold

On the morning of June 30, a large group of friends from the Community Integration (CI) program boarded a bus and headed to CoCo Key Water Resort in Kansas City. It was a pilgrimage and celebration to honor and remember Tanner McDannold.

Everyone who joined in the traveling celebration did what Tanner loved to do—swim!

After McDannold's passing, his family set up a memorial fund in his name. He loved swimming so much, his family wanted the money to be used to fund a swimming outing for his ACT friends, held in his memory.

It was important to McDannold's family that those closest to him attend the trip. Pheobe Grey, CI Direct Support Professional (DSP), provided one-on-one care for McDannold and had worked with him for years. Her presence on the trip was a top priority.

It was a huge success. Everyone had a great day!

They enjoyed a private party room for dining and shared fond memories of their beloved friend throughout the day.

And they had fun in Tanner's honor in both indoor and outdoor water facilities.

Kristin Cummins, Activities Coordinator, said many just couldn't get enough of the water slides. “They had huge smiles whenever they came pouring out into the pool!”

There were plenty of options for relaxing, too. Some chose to lounge in the hot tubs. Others soaked up the sun on the patio. And many just took it easy, floating effortlessly as the current of the lazy river carried them along.

Some in the group had a blast playing water basketball.

“The bus ride back was pretty quiet after the busy day at the water park.” Said Cummins. The group was tired, a true testament to a great day full of involvement and activity.

It was a special trip for McDannold's friends and family...the perfect way to pay tribute to him.

Tanner was truly loved at ACT, and now greatly missed.

Tip From Tara: Communication and Social Behavior

I recently had a parent ask me what she could do to assist her son in learning how to better communicate in social settings. This is a question we are often asked by individuals, families, and support staff.

Engaging with others socially is something that we have all felt anxiety over at one time or another.

It is important to remember that anxiety can increase for many people when they don't know what to do next or when they are not successful while interacting with others in their community.

There are many steps involved in a successful social interaction. People who have difficulty completing multi-
step tasks often struggle socially and frequently need support in learning these steps.

It is often difficult to improve social behavior when you don't have opportunities to practice skills. This is what makes mastering many social skills so difficult. Understanding the steps and the dynamics of how to interact with another person and actually doing it are two very different things.

I have worked with many individuals who aren't always successful at school, work, or engaging with peers because, even though many individuals are motivated and provided opportunities, the skills needed for success just don't come naturally.

Before we can expect success, we first need to assess whether or not an individual has an understanding of the following skills:

1. Appropriate Topics of Conversation for the setting
2. How to start, maintain, and end a conversation
3. How to pay attention, listen, and respond to questions
4. Waiting your turn to speak
5. Understanding that other people have different thoughts and ideas

When working on these skills, it is important to model appropriate interactions by breaking the skill down into small steps and practicing skills in various settings.

The following are teaching strategies that might be helpful:

1. Using role-play scenarios
2. Discussing these skills while watching a movie and pointing out what people are doing well while interacting
3. Model identified skills incorrectly for the individual and ask them to give you feedback on what would be a better way to complete the skill

Mastering communication skills and learning appropriate social behaviors is difficult, takes time, repetition, and needs to be taught using a variety of teaching strategies.

Social success isn't easy. But making learning and practicing fun while providing positive feedback, understanding, and reinforcement for effort can provide individuals with the tools they need to improve these skills.

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**August Spotlight: Tina Hill**

Tina Hill is a Direct Support Professional in the Community Living program. She has worked with at ACT for 6 years.

Other than being an incredible employee, she is also an exceptional person.

For several years, Hill has been a foster parent and worked with children in need. She makes herself available for these kids 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These kids are given the same guidance and sense of worth from Hill as her own children.

She provides an environment that feels closest to home as possible while ensuring the kids a quality of life that was probably not provided to them previously. She has become a community expert on resources available to improve the lives of the kids she is providing care for.

Mark Pickett, Community Living Supervisor says, “Tina has become a role model for myself with helping me to become a better parent and teacher for my own kids when life deals an unexpected hand.”

We are glad to have Tina on our team!

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**Upcoming Events**

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<td>August 28</td>
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<td>September 7th</td>
<td>Direct Support Professionals Week</td>
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<td>14th</td>
<td>National Disability Employment Awareness Month</td>
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