

interACTION



Alternative Community Training

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Dear Friends of ACT,

I'm fortunate to have many opportunities to speak about ACT and the good work that gets done on behalf of people with disabilities.

Last week, I turned down a great opportunity to personally raise awareness about ACT. I was invited to give a five-minute "commercial" to about 200 local business people who are active in the Columbia Chamber of Commerce's Women's Network.

It struck me that if I got up and talked to this group, my voice would be lost among the many who have come and talked about their organizations and projects, all of which are contributing some good to our community.

A message from those served by ACT, I believed, would be more impactful and lasting.

I want to leave you with the words of the three women whom I invited to talk about ACT that day.

I wish you could have been there. At times, you could have heard a pin drop in that ballroom. The audience was locked on with laser beam focus when these women spoke. **Here's what they had to say:**

"ACT has helped me live in my own home for twenty years. ACT helped me get a job at Otscon. I have been there 19 years.

My roommates (who are my best friends) and I used to live in a house that didn't allow pets. ACT helped us find a new house where we can now have our dog, Maya.

Brenda, our house supervisor, has helped me a lot."
— JODIE

Near the entrance of ACT's front office sits a green bench with a plaque that reads, "In loving memory of Tanner Hayes McDannold - ACT family and friends". Tanner is my son. He spent much of his adult life involved in ACT's day program, enjoying time with his peers and a sense of community.

In addition, I was given the peace of knowing that though his care was daunting, he would be well taken care of throughout the day. This serenity had not developed until Tanner was here.

A sense of value and belonging is important to all of us. And ACT certainly provides that. If you haven't had the opportunity to get to know a differently-abled individual, I encourage you to do so. You will be blessed beyond imagination.

ACT is a jewel in Columbia, something for which our community should be both thankful and proud. Through support of these individuals and their families, ACT makes a significant contribution to the happiness and well-being of our community.

— DEBRA
TANNER'S MOTHER

ACT has been a wonderful and amazing and exciting part of my life.

I have been working with them for a little over a year, primarily with Barb Wright, who has been a true champion right along with me.



Mark Hassemer,
Executive Director

When I first met Barb, her first question to me wasn't, "So you're blind. What do you think you can do?" Her first question was, "What do you want to do with your life? What are your goals?"

[I said] at some point, I would like to teach. But most of all, I want to help people.

The VA has hired me as a Medical Support Assistant at their call center. I will begin soon. And it wouldn't have happened without the hard

work of Barb, ACT, myself, and several others.

It was a great support system. I am glad to call them not only my support system, but also friends.

— DACIA

There's really nothing for me to add, except my thanks. Thank you, Jodie, Debra, and Dacia.

At times, it's easy to forget that the work we do is personal. These three friends of ACT, Jodie, Debra, and Dacia spoke from their hearts about the very

personal impacts ACT has had on them. Those impacts were felt by the audience that day.

I hope you feel and understand the striking significance of what, together, we are sometimes able to accomplish with the individuals we support.

**Until next month,
Mark**



College of Direct Support Means More Cash in the Pockets of ACT Employees



ACT's Direct Support Professionals have a great opportunity to earn more as they learn more.

At ACT, hourly employees can earn \$0.50 more per hour by completing a series of College of Direct Support (CDS) courses on line. This optional training is completed outside of scheduled work hours.

In 2006, the Department of Mental Health made an investment in a program that gives provider agencies such as ACT access to CDS. Only 19 other agencies in the State currently take advantage of this training and development opportunity.

There are two levels of certification available from the state of Missouri: the Basic certificate requires six courses, and Advanced, for which seven more courses are required.

Increased earnings are a definite plus to attaining the certification levels offered. So is being more confident in your profession. "The information available through CDS classes benefits employees through skill building," Community Integration Director Cindy Burlison says.

The individuals ACT serves benefit too. Better quality of service is a result of staff development.

Each new ACT employee gets a paid introduction to CDS during his or her orientation. New employees are required to complete the Introduction to Developmental Disabilities course in CDS.

Burlison says, "I tell potential employees about CDS during the interview process. Eligibility for a raise after only six months on the job (the introductory period) is always something that a job seeker is interested in."

Community Living Supervisor Mark Pickett has had many of the Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) he supervises obtain CDS certification. "After the courses are completed, I meet with staff for an overview. We discuss other topics in the field that come up through the material. I feel staff appreciate this part of the process," he says.

Because these courses cannot be taken while employees are working (with the exception of the Introduction to Developmental Disabilities course completed during new employee training), ACT offers employees the use of its facilities and technology so those who don't have a computer

or internet access can also take advantage of this training.

Since this program has been available at ACT, 683 employees have participated; 36 have completed basic or advanced certification requirements.

Community Integration DSP Mark McCollum has worked in direct care for 14 years. He recently completed both the Basic and Advanced certifications. McCollum is proud of his accomplishment. He believes the courses are a tremendous benefit and says he applies the knowledge gained every day at work.

"I learned a whole lot more while taking the courses than I did in all the years working in this field," McCollum says.

The certifications and accompanying raise came at a crucial time in McCollum's life. His wife lost her job a little over a year ago. "The extra cash will definitely help," McCollum says.

ACT is committed to offering professional development for all staff so we can provide excellent services to the individuals we support. CDS is a valuable tool for accomplishing this.

If you would like more information about the College of Direct Support, contact Brian Tvietnes, ACT Director of Human Resources, at (573) 474-9446. •

Allan Reunites With His Son, and Meets His Granddaughter

After decades apart, Allan and his son Elliot came together in an emotional and touching reunion.

Allan, who has COPD and lung cancer, had not seen Elliot since he was a child.

Prior to his cancer diagnosis, Allan was actively participating in ACT's Community Integration. Then, radiation treatments started making him ill. He had to do a brief stint in a rehabilitation hospital. Then he bounced back, just in time for his annual Individual Plan (IP) meeting.

In an IP, a person's dreams, desires, and goals are identified and spelled out, along with milestones by which to reach them. Loved ones, case managers, the individual for whom the plan is written, and other integral players are present during the IP meeting.

While the IP was being developed, Allan revealed to Community Living Supervisor Angela Erby that he

would like to see his son before it was too late.

Allan's sister and Erby worked hard to make sure this request became a reality. They managed to track down Allan's ex-wife, Barbara. That led them straight to his son, Elliot, now 36.

Allan and Barbara split up years ago and lost touch. Elliot has two daughters now. And that makes Allan a grandpa.

"He was anxious, but strong," Erby said, describing Allan on the day of the reunion.

His sister and niece were by his side as he embraced his son and one of his granddaughters in a bear hug.

Barbara was grateful they reached out to her. "This made my and my son's day!" she exclaimed.

For Allan this was a wish come true. •



Allan and his son.



The whole family!

National Career Readiness Certificate Benefits Job Seekers and Employers

Many job seekers might wish there was a test in which the score could show their worth as an employee. But wait. There is.

"The ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT NCRC) is a certification you can earn by taking three tests covering workplace skills everyone needs, no matter the position, from a CEO to truck driver," says Diana Brady, Career Consultant at the Missouri Career Center.

ACT NCRC was introduced in 2006. More than 2.8 million ACT NCRCs have been issued nationwide since then.

Many employers use the test. Here in mid-Missouri, approximately 100 agencies recognize the certification. A handful of local businesses mandate ACT NCRC for all employees.

Some are predicting that within the year as many as 50% of businesses will utilize the test in some way.

Community Employment Services (CES) Career Specialist David West says, "We urge individuals at CES to take this test. It puts them a step above the competition. It is beneficial."

So far, ACT has had a few take the test with much success. Having the certification can allow the individuals we serve to gain an advantage, especially in an area where barriers have a strong hold.

"If you and I are applying for same job and have the same work experience and skills, and if the employer recognizes the ACT NCRC, the certified applicant will more than likely get the job," Brady explains.

The Missouri Career Center will make accommodation for test takers who may need more

time or utilize an interpreter. The exam is given at their Vandiver Drive location for no charge.

ACT NCRC is benefits employers, job seekers, students, educators, workforce and economic developers, industry associations, and law- and policy-makers.

To learn more about the ACT NCRC, contact the Missouri Career Center, 1500 Vandiver Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, MO 65202, (573) 441-6361, (888) 728-5627 columbia@ded.mo.gov.

**Note: The ACT NCRC is not affiliated with Alternative Community Training. It is a subsidiary of the ACT test for college bound students. •*

August 2015 Tip from Tara: Cherish Every Moment

Tonight I sat down to write my monthly Tip from Tara but I couldn't help but feel distracted.

I had checked Facebook several times throughout the evening and learned that Bryson, a child from Columbia who was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor last October, was not doing well.

I have been following the Facebook page established by his mother Lily called Prayers for Bryson for several months.

Prayers for Bryson was asking for prayers and posting updates throughout the evening, each one making more clear that Bryson was soon going to lose the battle he had been fighting for many months.

At 12:18 a.m. the following was posted to the Prayers for Bryson page:

"After a strong fight and long battle the heavens have gained our precious angel, Bryson. We thank you all for your continuous support, unconditional love, and prayers through out this entire journey."

Please keep us in your prayers, as this journey is not over. We love you BMan, fly high and watch over us little buddy."

-TEAM BRYSON

As I read this post I couldn't help but think about how completely lucky I am to have two boys that are healthy.

As a parent of a child on the autism spectrum I know how easy it can be to get caught up in feeling sorry for myself sometimes and frequently thinking about how hard life is for us some days.

I struggle knowing how hard it is for my son to communicate, understand, and interpret the world he is living in.

That being said, tonight all I can think about and even begin to write about is the fact that I am so thankful that we have two boys who love us unconditionally.

Autism is a journey that my family did not ask for



but we are so thankful to have the experience of raising a child who is teaching us to look at life from a unique perspective.

Our son is a blessing. He is a gift.

We will cherish every moment of his life; the happy times, the hard times, and the meltdowns.

We are so lucky that he is healthy.

I want to ask all of you to please keep Team Bryson in your thoughts and prayers. Heaven gained an angel and may we never forget the faith, courage, and love displayed by Bryson's mom Lily over the past few months. •

Happy Birthday ACT

ACT turns 40 this year! Mark your calendars for SATURDAY, AUGUST 8TH at Tolton High School!

We are pleased to announce we will be partnering with the CoMo Derby Dames for a unique and fun birthday bash - 40 Years & Still Rollin'.

We cannot wait to CELEBRATE with Columbia!

Stay connected with ACT to be a part of the celebration, see fun throwback photos, and more! We will use the hashtag #ACTTurns40. •



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.

A fun, community event will be held in Columbia, MO on Sunday, July 26th at Orr Street Studios starting at 11:00am.

More details are soon to come in our newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ pages.

If you value inclusion and equal rights, join us in commemorating the ADA. •

Support ACT by shopping Gerbes, Schnucks, and Amazon

You can now donate to ACT by shopping at Gerbes, Schnucks, and AmazonSmile and JustGive.org!

At Gerbes and Schnucks, simply apply for their community/rewards program, pick ACT as your designated charity, and shop away!

When shopping at AmazonSmile, create an account, pick ACT as your charity, and again, shop away!

JustGive makes donating to charitable organizations easy. Go to their website and search Alternative Community Training to donate. You can even pick to give one time, monthly, or to put on a registry.

Thank you for supporting ACT! •

CoMoGives Funds are Opening Opportunity's Door for Many

Imagine a life without swimming or putt putt golf. No tree houses or vacations.

For many with disabilities this is a reality. Camp Wonderland allows them to experience all of this and more.

Thanks to the generosity of many ACT supporters through CoMoGives, an online fundraising campaign, Chelsea and Joe were both awarded scholarships to attend Camp Wonderland!

This camp is anything but ordinary.

The summertime retreat offers campers a weeklong full of activities, many of which are not possible for people with disabilities anywhere else. Cabins, a tree house, swimming pool, boating, and a lodge for bingo, dances, karaoke, and video games... ALL of which are accessible!

The camp also offers a nursing staff for people that have medical needs.

Chelsea utilizes a wheelchair and is medically fragile, requiring a nurse around the clock. This keeps her budget tight so she has never been able her to go on vacation, let alone Camp Wonderland.

Joe also uses a wheelchair and has never been to Camp Wonderland. He does not have access to an accessible vehicle, making travel difficult.

We are so thrilled that Chelsea and Joe got a much needed first-time accessible vacation!

Our CoMoGives Fund Committee is currently reviewing other scholarship applications. We will update you on the many more opportunities made possible through our participation in CoMoGives. •



Chelsea



Joe

Federal Employees Can Now Give to ACT Through CFC



ACT is now a part of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), the Gateway Region!

CFC is for individuals to consider giving through their workplace. Potential donors are all federal, military or postal employees.

We are excited about this opportunity to raise funds for the individuals we provide services to but also to have another avenue to connect with our community.

The Gateway Region covers and reaches employees in 120 counties comprising the eastern side of Missouri (including Jefferson City), southern Illinois and four counties in Kentucky (Paducah area).

And they do give generously, at the rate of about \$2.5 million/annual in our region! •

Upcoming Events		
DATE	TIME	EVENT
August 8		ACT 40th event with the CoMo Derby Dames at Tolton High School
August 25	12p	Etiquette, Sensitivity, and People First Language lunch & learn, Boone Electric Cooperative
September 3	11:30a	Columbia Chamber Quarterly Membership Breakfast, Show-Me Careers Gold Sponsor
September 7		ACT's facility based offices will be closed for Labor Day.
September 13		Direct Support Professional (DSP) Week
October		National Disability Employment Awareness Month
December		CoMoGives Campaign, support ACT!

GET CONNECTED

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