

interACTION



Alternative Community Training

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Dear Friends of ACT,

What does it take to make change? Really. How do you implement change at a place like ACT?

We're all too familiar with the why of change. A new law gets passed. A court ruling is handed down. A vendor discontinues its service or product. A new administration takes a new approach. Been there. Done that.

The why is very clear to us. Then... we're stuck with the how.

Jessica Mahon, ACT's Director of Employment Services, and I are on our way to a Baltimore conference at which she'll be presenting the story of how ACT changed when the Medicaid Waiver definition unceremoniously dropped like a rock a little over 2 years ago.

The whole conference is about how. It's called "Reinventing Quality—Moving from the Why to the How".

We now know that many others, including the Missouri-owned and -operated facilities, are facing change, too. Now they want to know how. How can they succeed when what they've been doing well for decades is bound to go away?

I'll cut to the chase. You won't need to go to Baltimore to hear about the secret in our sauce that, once tasted by State leaders in mental health, was heralded as informative, inspiring, confidence-building, and sure to be in high demand.

Our secret: communicate and train, rinse and repeat.

This may sound stunning to you, but not long ago Jessica took me out to the production floor, the heartbeat of ACT Works, a nationally known and celebrated recycling operation that took what people didn't want (spent media) and turned it into reusable plastics and paying jobs for people with disabilities.

She smiled and said simply, "Look!"

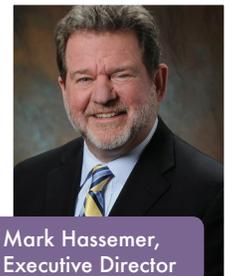
No one was there. The place was empty. A major part of our transition was over. Those who once worked here were now either training for jobs in the community, retired, or receiving services elsewhere at ACT or from another agency.

It was a key moment of taking stock and celebrating because it was observable verifiable evidence that we had moved on. The change was really made. Not just half-baked.

How? We did it by employing an adaptable, multi-pronged, well-timed, complex communication strategy that involved persistent repetition, reinforcement, and a strong emphasis on our vision for positive results. The end, we knew, would be good.

We coupled this with training. We had to equip our staff with the tools and everything else they needed to do the new work of preparing the people we serve for jobs in the community at equal compensation rates.

That's how.



Mark Hassemer,
Executive Director

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

— HELEN KELLER

Here's a taste of what the communications piece looked like.

Individuals in the work program needed to hear from us about the change. It was challenging. Some thought they had failed because they were losing their recycling program jobs. They were concerned about losing contact with their friends and disrupting beneficial routines.

Parents and guardians also heard our messages. Some welcomed the innovation. Others mourned the loss of a familiar program that had provided safety and security for their family members.

Residential providers and support coordinators were also involved. We all needed to work together to help present options to the individuals they support. They needed to understand that in the future, schedules were likely to not be as rigid as before.

ACT's Board of Directors initially expressed

anger and frustration. Rightfully, they were proud of the recycling program. It's been creating opportunities and accomplishing good work for over two decades. Naturally, they wanted to hold on to it. And there were real financial impacts to consider. Resources had to be reallocated.

Some of our staff were excited about changes to the work program. They embraced the new goal-directed training opportunities and moved forward with anticipation. Some chose to leave.

Our referral and funding entities were in this, too. They were supportive of the new direction and had high expectations for future outcomes. They saw too that there would be changes in what we measure and report.

It was important to communicate with our local community and customers about the future. The community would see an increased presence on work and volunteer sites. Our media customers would be directed to the new

company that has taken over the recycling work.

It wasn't simple. It wasn't easy. But it was worth doing. And now it's worth sharing.

Without doubt, we will face change again. We've learned. We'll face what we don't even know about yet better equipped to alter the course of our business and our services, so that people who need and choose our support can receive the service they seek.

**Until next month,
Mark**



Conference Delivers New Insights to Columbia Transition Team and ACT Career Services

Preparing for the big leap out of high school is a major endeavor, especially if you have a disability. The Columbia Transition Team (CTT) is a partnership of area agencies (including ACT) serving people with disabilities. Its aim is to ease the path through this stage in life.

The team meets monthly to discuss strategies and ways to improve transition services for students and their families.

To meet the needs of everyone involved, subgroups were formed e.g., Teacher Group, Student Group, Parent Group, and others.

Tara Shade

Tara Shade, Manager of PA and BDS, is currently Chair of the Parent Group. Manager of ACS, Fontella Jackmon-Jones, is a Parent Group member, too. She recently attended the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Transition Institute at the Lake of the Ozarks Tan-Tar-A Resort.

The training is a three-day event that addressed transition services related to The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and strategies to achieve goals set by the Act.

"The conference was an eye-opening experience," Jackmon-Jones says. "I signed up for sessions out of my area of expertise, so I learned a lot!"

University of Missouri's Pre-Employment Training Services, Recovery to Re-entry, and Family Engagement from High School to Adult Life are some of the sessions Jackmon-Jones attended at the Conference.

"I gained so much about interventions that can be provided before individuals walk through ACT Career Services doors," Jackmon-Jones says.

Conferences have a way of making you return to your professional with renewed passion. Now Fontella is ready to apply her insights to both CTT and ACT.



Fontella Jackmon-Jones

Community Support for Family Affected by Childhood Cancer

Two months ago Karla Bevell received heartbreaking news. Her son Jayden, 5, has inoperable brain cancer, an optic pathway brain tumor located in the optic chiasm.

Jayden, who has participated in ACT's Behavior Development Services, has been traveling to Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital in St. Louis every week since the diagnosis. He receives two different types of chemotherapy treatments. He will continue this regimen for the next 18 months.

The travel, plus the medical bills, is a lot to handle for a single mother of three. Jayden has two sisters, Kyra, 10, and two-year-old Ally.

Funds ACT raised through the CoMoGives campaign have given the family some ease by providing them with a new washer and dryer. Bevell was toting all three kids plus her laundry to the laundromat to clean clothes.

Lori Dreyer, a Behavior Consultant who worked with Kyra in years past, is now working with Jayden. Dreyer says, "Due to his delicate and compromised immune system, it is imperative that Bevell keep their home as sanitary as possible. Mom was struggling taking three children several times a week to the laundromat.

It was not a sustainable situation with Jayden's medical condition."

Community members stepped forward and helped the family with repairs to their minivan. They also watch the sisters while Bevell and Jayden travel back and forth to St. Louis.

Jayden's headaches and frequent blinking led Bevell to see a neurologist. Jayden's MRI then revealed a tumor below his optic pathway.

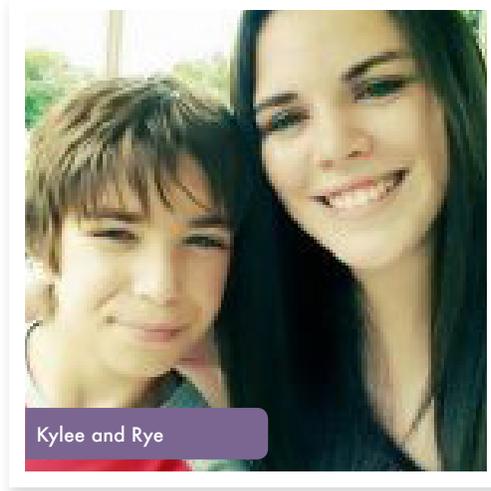
Doctors told Bevell surgery would leave him blind and disrupt hormones in his body, causing many other issues. Their best option was chemotherapy.

Now, Jayden has a blood infection. He's vomiting and has a high fever.

Bevell is taking it day by day, focusing on his recovery. She is grateful for the generosity of the community and ACT.

To follow Jayden's Journey, visit his Facebook page, Jaydens Journey #TeamJayden.





TIP FROM TARA: Kylee's Poem

When I sat down to write my tip this month I could not get my amazing niece Kylee out of my head. We had been sending messages back and forth all morning. I recently sent her an article written by a young woman named Taylor Raines. You can find the article posted on The Mighty, a blog I follow.

Ms. Raines writes about 8 things she wished she knew long before receiving an autism diagnosis at age 22. I encourage you all to read the article in its entirety. Here are the eight things identified by Ms. Raines:

1. You know just how much other people mean to you-but they don't.
2. You'll find an amazing companion to share your life with, but it'll take time and effort.
3. If you never reach out to your friends, your friends will never reach out to you.
4. You're not "crazy".
5. You're not "weird".
6. You're not lazy or unintelligent.
7. You're not ugly for dressing comfortably.
8. You're you. And you're wonderful.

My niece is wonderful. She is also extremely caring, smart, and creative. She and my son Rye have always had a very special bond. They understand each other.

They both speak Pixar, Disney and Cartoon Network. They both love fireworks, carnival rides, and driving my father's golf cart around the yard for hours on end. They both love trampolines, swinging, and swimming. They both sometimes need a break from too many people and they both sometimes need support when dealing with social situations.

A few months ago Kylee wrote a poem about what it feels like to have autism. I wanted to share it with you all.

I'm so proud of my niece for not being afraid to share her voice and her perspective. She doesn't always know it or recognize it, but she is so brave. I will admire that about her always.

Special Children: An Autism Tribute

By: Kylee Johnson

Sometimes I act different

But I feel just the same

I cry and I smile

I lose and I gain

I may not like kisses

Or accepting your hugs

I have a hard time showing it

But I feel your love

I love those around me

And those around me love me

They don't stare like the others

It's only me that they see

They look past the standards

Society has set

For kids just like me

Kids they never bothered to have met

That people who are different

Are awkward or dumb

Because they sing their own songs

And dance to a different drum

Some think I'm spoiled

Or have a mischievous streak

When I'm actually overwhelmed

And how I express myself is unique

Children like me are different and few

But we still go through life learning
the same thing as you

To live is to love and who we are we embrace

The only difference is I learn at my own pace

Because I don't speak

Doesn't mean I have nothing to say

I show it with actions, writing, and pictures

Not wrong, but in a different way

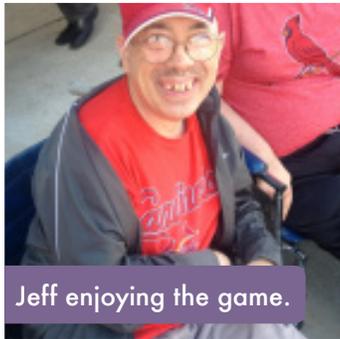
I hope my voice is heard by others

And those who can't speak for themselves

My voice is a loud one

I use not only for myself

ACT's Day Program is Taking Summer by Storm



Jeff enjoying the game.

Things are heating up in ACT's Day Program. And it's not the temperature. Activities Supervisor, Kristin Cummins, has the schedule buzzing with fun-filled activities.

"There were a lot of requests in our monthly meetings to do all-day trips. We wanted to fulfill them. We started scheduling these extended trips once a month," Cummins says.

First was a trip to Busch Stadium in May to watch the Cardinals play against the Phillies. The group of 20 included several who had never been to a major league game before and three who use a wheelchair. Dinner was provided at the game and everyone was able to take home a souvenir. To top it off, the Cardinals won!

In June, a group of 15 ventured to the St. Louis Science Center. This trip was also a first for many, including Buddy, who loved learning about dinosaurs and the new addition to the venue.

For July, 35 people headed to Kansas City to CoCo Keys. This was the second time a group from ACT has visited the water resort. Everyone enjoys relaxing on the lazy river, going down the water slides, and the pizza party.

Two more trips are scheduled to round out the summer. The Day Program will be taking individuals to the State Fair (Sedalia) in August and the St. Louis Zoo in September.

"We try to take advantage of value discount days offered to serve a larger group of people," Cummins says. "For instance the State Fair has a free access day that is sponsored by the Jaycees. Entry and a meal are provided. So we will plan to go on that day."

Funds raised through CoMoGives also provide some financial support. For the trip to the Cardinals game, CoMoGives money was used to pay for the tickets, a ballpark meal (hotdog and an ice cold drink), and parking.

To ensure everyone gets to go on the trips, Cummins and Program Supervisors are thoughtful when coordinating the groups. "We like to make sure every person gets an opportunity to go on these extended trips," Cummins says.

A baseball game, a water park, the Science Center, the State Fair, and the zoo! It looks like a great summer for everyone in the Day Program!



The whole gang at the Cardinal's game.

Event of the Season

You can now buy tickets to the event of the season - Tigers on the Prowl Fall Gala. Support ACT and our tiger, Endana Rawrr Ferrum!



SHOP and Donate!

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!



APSE-MO Holds its Annual Summit Here in Columbia

Missouri State Chapter of Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE-MO) held its annual Employment Summit: Advancing Employment, Expanding Our Skills the last week of July.

“It was great!” Director of ACT Career Services (ACS) Jessica Mahon exclaimed. “Abilities for Business, ACT and Columbia Employment Consortium all served as Gold Sponsors and were represented at the summit.”

This year’s attendance was a record breaking one for this event! Over 200 people from around the state were registered.

Each year, APSE-MO hosts this summit to provide members with high quality professional training. This year’s lineup includes guest speakers Michel Bortolotto, the Positive Rebel, Bob Niemiec, from Griffin-Hammis, David Hoff, Past President of National APSE, and the Department of Justice

Also on the schedule is Employment University Only, a one day training that gives participants an overview of the employment process.

The sessions includes lecture presentations, interactive activities, discussions and group networking covering the following areas: History of Employment Services, Discovery and Exploration, Job Search and Building Business Partnerships, and Workplace Supports.

Formed in 1988, APSE has been dedicated to improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

As a national non-profit, its members include individuals with disabilities, their families, employment providers, funders, and employers.



Bob Niemiec



Michael Bortolotto



CoMoGives Funds Give
To everyone that participated in
CoMoGives, THANK YOU!!

100% of the money raised in this campaign goes to the individuals ACT serves.

In 2016, a family can now afford to buy a new kitchen appliance; Robbie could pay for crucial dental work; Abraham and his family got a family pass to Columbia Parks & Rec pools; and more!

Also in this newsletter, read about Jayden - a six-year-old boy recently diagnosed with an inoperable brain cancer.

Jayden’s family of four is struggling but CoMoGives funding afforded them some relief...a brand new washer and dryer!

Now Jayden’s single mom, Karla, can take care of laundry at home instead of hauling the whole family to the laundry mat.

Keep in touch for more heart warming stories like these brought to you by the CoMoGives.

Thank you for supporting ACT!

Upcoming Events

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sept 5		ACT facility based offices closed for Labor Day
Sept 11-17		Direct Support Professional Recognition Week
Sept 13	1p-3p	DSP Week Reception 1403 Hatham Place,
Sept 23		Tigers on the Prowl Fall Gala
October	12:00-1p	National Disability Employment Awareness Month

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