

Dear Friends of ACT,

The inaugurations are over. It seems like a moment doesn't pass now without new news of some major change in Washington, DC or Jefferson City.

I'll pile on with two observations about what I see happening and not happening in the State Capitol.

First, HB 626 has been introduced by Rep. Jim Neely. If this bill passes, it will change the way Missouri approaches guardianship and conservatorship.

I wrote here last September about the potential harms of guardianship and the expansion of SDM, Supported Decision-Making.

Portions of the bill are taken from model language developed by MO-Wings, Missouri's Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders. Leadership of the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council has played a key role in crafting this bill. Jonathan Martinis, mentioned in the September article I referred to above, has also contributed to shaping the bill language.

The bill focuses primarily on the rights of persons under guardianship/conservatorship. And it puts an emphasis on selecting least restrictive alternatives. This effort seeks to impose minimal limits on the personal freedoms of those in guardianship so their individual personal needs can be met.

The bill also prioritizes combining person-centered standards of "best interest" and "substituted judgment" for guardians who make decisions for others.

This is good legislation. It doesn't hold people captive. But it's not careless, either. Where supports are needed, they can be had.

The bill has not been assigned to a committee. Hopefully, it will advance and become law.

Gladly, what we haven't seen in Jeff City is a grab back of funds that were authorized for rate equalization. Our new Governor announced \$146 million in additional spending withholds. This amount, combined with former Governor Nixon's holdbacks, brings the total this fiscal year to \$346 million.

But the funds for the rebasing initiative have remained untouched.

Of course, we would like to see continued movement toward standardized rates this year. We still have ground to cover to meet the recommendations. Any steps backward due to budget shortfalls would make the situation even more challenging.

We clearly want to hold on to the gains we've made. But the future is uncertain. So we remain vigilant.

I think you'll agree that this is a time of great change in our Nation and our State. HB 626 and the preservation of last year's gains in the funding equalization effort are positive signs. Let's continue to hope for, and work for, positive outcomes in this time of change.

Until next month,

Mark



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CRYSTAL AND LINDSAY GET A NEW ACCESSIBLE VAN

You may remember Crystal. We introduced her to readers when she first moved to Columbia and in to an ACT supported home.

After settling in at her new house, Crystal had big plans, places to go, people to see. But one piece of the equation was missing. She had limited means of transportation.

Every residence in Community Living (CL) has access to an ACT vehicle, however Crystal, who uses a wheelchair, needed a ride that's accessible. If purchased brand new these automobiles can be pricey. To stay in budget, they had to be savvy shoppers.

After some research, Crystal and her roommate Lindsay found a van that checked all the right boxes, a 2005 Toyota Sienna.

The minivan is equipped with a mechanical lift and electric doors. Crystal can get in and out on her own with ease. And the front seat pops out easily so they can take turns riding shotgun.

The van took the pair to St. Louis in November to see Santa's Magic Kingdom, a Christmas lights display. Lindsay has used the van to go shopping. And Crystal took it to visit her grandma in Boonville.

"Winter is hard on my body so once it warms up, I look forward to getting out more," Crystal says.

Crystal can get in and out on her own with ease. And the front seat pops out easily

She is planning to go to the Night to Shine Prom in February, the new Beauty and the Beast movie in March, and The Lion King production in St. Louis in April. Community Living Manager Samantha Kathke says, "The van is great! Both of the ladies love having it."



CRYSTAL
Enjoying her new van.



CHARLIE BURGE RETIRES AFTER 27 YEARS OF SERVICE TO ACT

After 27 years working for ACT, Charlie Burge retired at the end of December.

Burge worked in many programs including the Day Program and Community Employment Services. During the last 9 years he has been a Supervisor in Community Living.

Burge grew up in Ohio where he was a star athlete. His athleticism earned him a place on the University of Missouri football roster as a wide receiver.

After college, Columbia became his home. Soon after he began his career at ACT.

Burge saw many changes during his career at ACT. And he touched many lives.

"I helped so many people over the last 27 years here. That is my greatest accomplishment. That and going through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)

approval process several times over the years," Burge says. Becoming CARF accredited (<http://carf.org/home/>) is a strenuous task.

Burge is looking forward to retirement and having time to relax. But he admits he will miss the daily grind.

"I will miss everyone. I've been here so long it's like leaving family"

Burge saw many changes during his career at ACT. And he touched many lives.

STEP PROGRAM

HELPS JAVION LAND A JOB

Javion participated in the Seamless Transition through Enhanced Partnership (STEP) program at Boone Hospital during the 2015-2016 school year.

Weeks after completing his internship, he was offered a job as an orderly in the same department he interned in, Patient Care Support Services.

Javion held other jobs before his STEP experience. He worked at HyVee, Camp Salsa (a Columbia Public Schools work program), The Cottages (housekeeper), and Columbia Public Schools (janitor).

He had more work experience than any other STEP participant. But the program helped him develop more valuable skills, including interviewing and creating a resume. Now he's starting a career at one of the nation's leading hospitals.

During the internship, Javion excelled. He even approached his supervisor (only three months into the program) to inquire about getting additional certification.

Nine months into his current position, Javion is settled into his roles and has taken on other responsibilities. When needed, he works on the food line in the kitchen, post-anesthesia care unit, surgery waiting area, and sitter needs (sitting with patients who have dementia or Alzheimer's).



Javion has a knack for soothing irritable, anxious patients. He transports patients where they need to go all day long.

"I like to work and I love my job," Javion says. "I want to make my own money so I don't have to rely on anyone else. Right now, I am killing it in overtime!"

Javion has a knack for soothing irritable, anxious patients. He transports patients where they need to go all day long. He works with every kind of patient you can imagine, including those who simply don't want to be there.

Javion remains calm and collected in every situation.

"My department is fun! There is always a lot going on. I like that," Javion says.

His enthusiasm for learning has not faded. He takes on extra training whenever he can. He is now MRI and Helicopter Pad Certified.

He is also enrolled in Moberly Area Community College, taking anatomy and psychology classes as he moves toward his goal of becoming a nurse.

His enthusiasm for learning has not faded. He takes on extra training whenever he can. He is now MRI and Helicopter Pad Certified.

"Javion is a self-directed and motivated employee. We are proud of his success and proud to watch him grow in his career," says STEP Career Specialist Barb Wright. "He is proof of what STEP can accomplish for these students!"

THERAPY DOG SMOKEY IS DAY PROGRAM'S **BEST FRIEND**

Day Program Manager Michelle Bell met one of the program's favorite volunteers at an unlikely place, Sam's Club in Columbia.

While promoting ACT through the Tigers on the Prowl campaign, Bell was introduced to Katelyn Sanders, Shelter Advocate/Youth Specialist at Rainbow House, also involved in Tigers on the Prowl, and her canine companion, Smokey.

Katelyn told Bell she found Smokey from the Humane Society and enrolled him in a Service Dog Training at Pet Smart.

The pair now frequent nursing homes on a weekly basis.

Bell immediately thought how much the people her program supports would benefit from Smokey's visits. This was music to Bell's ears!

Katelyn also loved the idea... now Smokey is a regular on the activities schedule.

"Everyone loves him!" Bell exclaims. "He is super sweet, friendly, and patient."

Smokey offers some love and attention once a month for the program. And he is a hit!



SMOKEY
Offering some love.

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!

MARCH IS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES MONTH!

We are all unique and beautiful, but together we are a masterpiece.

Based on the quote by Charles Dickens, "Our" Website, Susan Sparks, & Kelley Sparks



FEBRUARY

	1	2 <i>Groundhog Day</i>	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 <i>ACT offices closed</i>	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31				



MARCH

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