Dear Friends of ACT,

“We had lunch together every day.” “I miss Tan Man.” “My heart is broken.”

Those are just a few of the words spoken at a memorial service here at ACT by people with disabilities. They were talking about their friend Tanner, a young man of 24, who died unexpectedly in early December.

No one knows the full story of the experiences each shared with Tanner. But these came to light during an outpouring of emotion.

Though these remarks might seem ordinary, each was stunning in its tenderness and candor.

Tanner’s mom, Debra, spoke to me afterward. She, along with Tanner’s dad, his siblings and his brand new niece, whom Tanner had once held in his arms, were here too to remember and celebrate “Tan Man.”

She said the honesty she saw and felt that day was nearly unbelievable.

Each of us experienced a range of unchecked expressions of joy and loss. From roars of laughter to anguished wailing, they were all there to be felt and shared.

Some of my colleagues are taking Tanner’s absence from us pretty hard. But I hope they are also challenged by what we faced that day.

The fact that people with disabilities feel and display the full range and depth of emotions is often dismissed or disregarded. We make assumptions that aren’t true.

Tanner’s remembrance challenged the tacit assumption that people with disabilities are somehow blunted in their feelings.

As saddened as I am by his loss, I am thrilled that Tanner, his family, and his peers teach me, and all of us, so much about life.

As I write this, the end of year Holidays are upon us. Most of us will gather with family for what might seem like a long day cooped up in the house, perhaps feeling trapped by obligation or treacherous weather.

We hold high hopes for these times together— that we’ll feel some magic we felt when we were young, or that we’ll create some magic for the little ones now with us. We want to be happy, to feel warm and connected.

Instead, we often feel... discomfort, unable to say or show how much we love one another, or how much it hurts to be reminded of past injuries.

Let’s take a lesson from Tanner’s peers, many of whom cannot walk, or talk, or get dressed in the morning without support. Let’s find a way to uncover and express our emotions, and make room for others to do so as well.

Until next month (and next year!),

Mark Hassemer
Executive Director, ACT
ACT and GreenDisk Win Bid for Library of Congress

ACT is the only operation in the United States that recycles VCR format videotapes. ACT has unique equipment that lets us do this work efficiently. That unique capability has allowed us to establish and maintain a very successful relationship with GreenDisk that is paying off once again.

Within just a few weeks ACT will receive a truckload of video tapes from the Library of Congress. With that shipment we’ll be embarking on a two-year agreement to recycle VCR tapes under contract with GreenDisk.

GreenDisk founder and CEO, David Beschen says, “We were able to win the bid for the Library’s business in large part because of ACT’s ability to recycle video cassettes. Also, they came to GreenDisk looking for a company that could handle a large quantity of media materials and could provide the privacy they desire. It is important that people are not able to access and resell their materials.”

Keeping media secure is nothing new to ACT. It’s obvious when you do a walk-through in our production area. GreenDisk materials are clearly marked, segregated and audited.

Executive Director Mark Hassemer says, “We track the items from the time they come in, to the time they leave our facility. This information is sent to GreenDisk to ensure the numbers match.”

The first truckload is just a start. The volumes of material will continue to ramp up.

We are fortunate to have GreenDisk as a partner and the Library of Congress as a new addition to our list of impressive customers.

Community Integration Program Celebrates the Holidays

This time of year brings about many celebrations in ACT’s Community Integration (CI) Program.

Fall brings about a focus on harvest activities and Thanksgiving. Program participants enjoyed wagon rides through pumpkin patches, playing bingo, dancing to live music, getting silly in the photo booth, decorating pumpkins and dining with friends at the annual Thanksgiving banquet.

“Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”

— Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed by former President George H.W. Bush
“The turkey was really good!” says Mike S., an individual in the program. “Bingo was really fun too!”

Josh C., also in the CI program, has the trip to the pumpkin patch on his favorites list. “It was fun and I had a great day. I was so happy to be able to go!”

In the month of December the activity schedule was full of holiday choices. Some took a trip to a Christmas Tree Farm where tours in a wagon were offered. Many visited Santa at Bass Pro. And several groups enjoyed touring a mansion in Boonville adorned with 64 Christmas trees.

Each team gathered for their own holiday party – full of activities, yummy snacks, and good cheer. Purchasing gifts during community outings and then exchanging them with friends at the parties was a highlight. “Each person had the opportunity to purchase a gift for someone else on their team,” Robertson said. “Most of the individuals were really excited about this part of the day.”

This was certainly so for Emily M, “Opening the presents was my favorite part!” She exclaimed.

Winter-themed games like pin the nose on the snowman, faux snowball fights (with balled up paper), and a snowman relay race were enjoyed by all. Craft activities were part of the festivities, such as making bead candy canes and snowflake collages.

“There are lots of crafts to do and that is my favorite.” Stated Brynn, another individual in the CI program. “I like celebrating Christmas. I have great friends here at ACT and that makes the celebration better.”

By the afternoon, they had live music and a visit from Santa himself!

Of the themed party planning, Robertson says, “This is the most rewarding part of the job for me. I get a chance to mingle and do something special for everyone. I love that I’m here to see everyone enjoying the hard work and planning.”

And everyone got to do just that!

Happy holidays!

Tiger Tots Grows While Partnering with ACT Career Services

Paul Prevo is proud to offer the best possible childcare at a cost that is affordable for families. Tiger Tots was founded on five core values: love, structure, wisdom, involvement, and fun. And he hires his staff looking specifically for these traits. “I want to hire phenomenal teachers that have a passion for kids.” Says Prevo. “It is the best part of the job; I love hiring awesome staff and watching them make a difference in children’s lives.”

In a short six-year span, Tiger Tots has expanded its first location (adding a building each year, the most recent one for infants), opened a second location, and made plans for a third facility to open next year.

Continued on p. 4
This success is no surprise considering how he encourages growth for his staff. “We encourage continued education in our staff by being a part of the Teach Missouri Program (a grant program that covers tuition for working teachers). Tiger Tots wouldn’t be what it is without its teachers.”

Of the kids who attend Tiger Tots, many go on to the gifted program at school. “Our kids are challenged and we make learning fun!” Prevo exclaims. “We teach sign at 8 months. Our kids are bilingual in Spanish and English and can write simple 3 word sentences by graduation.”

Prevo also sees the value of expanding the workforce to include those with disabilities. Tiger Tots has partnered with ACT’s Career Services to serve as a center for the Discovery and Exploration phase of job development. Here, individuals can experience providing care for children in a professional setting to see if it is a viable career for them.

“I urge them to get into the classrooms and interact with the kids to get a full understanding of what this career entails,” Prevo says. He has since even hired two job seekers through this evaluation process. “I am very glad to help ACT out!” Prevo stated.

Prevo is truly a Champion of the Community.

He values diversity. He takes pride in his center’s ability to care for those with disabilities. He says, “It is a great experience for kids to be around those with disabilities. I love seeing them be inclusive and to hear them say, ‘this is one of my friends!’”

And he is also actively involved in making a positive difference beyond the walls of this business.

Prevo currently serves on five area boards including the Mayor’s Crime Task Force and the Boone County Family Resources board of directors. “I serve on boards to make the community a better place.” He spoke with a notable passion while talking about all his activities.

His relationship with BCFR further proves his dedication to diversity and bettering the lives of people with disabilities. “There are lots of opportunities for enhancing lives for people with disabilities. There are lots of agencies leading the way such as BCFR and Veterans United,” says Prevo of Columbia.

It is clear Prevo has established a high-quality program with Tiger Tots and why he’s built a great reputation in Columbia. We wish him continued success in all his endeavors.

ACT Career Services is grateful to have found such an extraordinary business to partner with.

Buddy Earns Food Handler Card and Seeks Employment

After a short stint in retirement, Buddy N. discovered he actually enjoys working. “I’m waiting and want to work at a restaurant,” Buddy says of his job search. David West, Career Development Manager of ACT Career Services, has been doing Discovery and Exploration with Buddy since August to help Buddy determine if finding employment again would suit him.

As part of his Exploration process through Career Services, and due to his desire to work in the hospitality industry, Buddy needed to get a Food Handler Card that certifies he is trained to safely handle food. He attended a class conducted by the Columbia Health Department and then took an oral exam with the instructor. Community Living Program Supervisor Tom Haywood said, “Buddy emerged from the room with his Food Handler card and a big smile on his face.”

“Having the card opens up more employment opportunities,” West says of Buddy’s accomplishment.

Buddy is extremely proud. He keeps the card and the papers verifying he passed the test in his wallet at all times!

Buddy has now completed the Discovery and Exploration process with Career Services, which helps individuals assess their own abilities and skills and to explore opportunities to assure the right fit for the job seeker, and is looking for

Continued on p. 5

... continued from p. 3

Buddy N. discovered he actually enjoys working. “I’m waiting and want to work at a restaurant,” Buddy says of his job search. David West, Career Development Manager of ACT Career Services, has been doing Discovery and Exploration with Buddy since August to help Buddy determine if finding employment again would suit him.

As part of his Exploration process through Career Services, and due to his desire to work in the hospitality industry, Buddy needed to get a Food Handler Card that certifies he is trained to safely handle food. He attended a class conducted by the Columbia Health Department and then took an oral exam with the instructor. Community Living Program Supervisor Tom Haywood said, “Buddy emerged from the room with his Food Handler card and a big smile on his face.”

“Having the card opens up more employment opportunities,” West says of Buddy’s accomplishment.

Buddy is extremely proud. He keeps the card and the papers verifying he passed the test in his wallet at all times!

Buddy has now completed the Discovery and Exploration process with Career Services, which helps individuals assess their own abilities and skills and to explore opportunities to assure the right fit for the job seeker, and is looking for

Continued on p. 5
employment in the community. “He wants to clean and organize and thrives in an environment that is managed well,” West says.

Prior to retiring, Buddy worked for 30 years at the Little General Convenience Store and Perche Creek Café. He enjoyed stocking items and cleaning, and he valued the laid back atmosphere the position offered. Before that, he worked summers at McConnell’s Plant Land.

“An idle mind is a wasted mind,” Buddy’s brother David Nolke says of Buddy’s mentality. “He enjoys regularly volunteering at the Food Pantry, but it’s not fulfilling enough. He wants the satisfaction of a job well done that was earned that a paycheck represents.

Of Buddy’s work ethic West says, “Buddy is eager to please and willing to do what is asked of him. He is diligent and detailed. If he feels confident in his ability to do the task, he is gung-ho!”

We wish Buddy well in his renewed search for suitable employment.

As the adage goes, it's often not what you know, but who you know. The individuals ACT serves do not always have the benefit of an extensive network of connections. If you or someone you know might have the opportunity to provide employment, please contact ACT by phone at 573-474-9446, or on our website at www.actservices.org.

On December 3rd ACT lost a dear friend. Tanner McDannold was only 24 years old and had attended ACT’s Community Integration Program since 2008. Tanner lived much longer than any of the doctors predicted, but that does not make the loss any easier to take.

His ability to fight the odds was in large part to his family. His parents, Rick and Debra McDannold, were tremendous advocates for Tanner and people with disabilities. They ensured Tanner had the best care, and above all else, they loved him unconditionally. His siblings, Tyler and Ashtyn, were always right there too – making sure he was included to the full degree he was able in everything the family did.

A Celebration of Life was held in Tanner’s honor on December 13th. The church parking lot was filled and the support for the McDannold family was tremendous. There was not a dry eye in the place.

“Tanner was a gift” his mother and sister stated. To friends. To family. “But, sadly, some chose not to open the gift,” his dad stated. But for those of us who did, we received Tanner’s unconditional love, saw his playful spirit, and came away feeling like we gained more than we gave.

“Working in the field that I do and serving the people that I do, you become attached and you become a family. The staff and the individuals are close. So, when we lose a special someone the “family” hurts. This happened to our “family” when we lost Tanner... We will

Continued on p. 6
support one another and remember him as truly special.” Nancy Beatty, Community Integration Mentor says.

Tanner’s family has set up a Facebook page, In Loving Memory of Tanner McDannold. Here you can see the outpouring of memories, love, photos, support, and the amazing legacy that Tanner has left behind.

In lieu of flowers, they have also graciously asked that donations be made to ACT. You can do so by visiting our website, www.actservices.org.

---

**Job Opportunities**

ACT is seeking positive and enthusiastic employees to provide assistance and instruction to individuals with disabilities.

If you are interested in a career supporting individuals with disabilities, join us and help make a difference in someone’s life. You must be willing to embrace challenges and accept great rewards. We invite you to consider ACT when seeking employment and/or work experience in the human services field.

ACT is an equal opportunity employer.

Visit actservices.org/jobs to view a list of job opportunities.

---

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”

— Christopher Reeve
Upcoming Events

January 20th - ACT facility based programs & offices closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 14th at 8am & 9:30am - Annual Benefits Meeting for full-time employees

January 22nd at 3pm & 4:30pm - Annual Benefits Meeting for full-time employees

February 17th - ACT facility based programs & offices closed for President’s Day

For more events, please check out actservices.org/about-us/events

“I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do something I can do.”

— Helen Keller