

Dear Friends of ACT,

A couple of weeks ago, one of ACT's Direct Support Professionals (DSP) came to my office and asked how many employees we have. This remarkably generous person had received a financial benefit as a result of a life event that would surely sadden each of us had it happened to us. But this person wanted to share it with everyone on our staff.

Our big-hearted friend was neither depressed nor sad about the circumstances; instead, there was excitement and happiness about sharing the news of this decision with me.

I won't describe the family circumstances because it might betray some cherished anonymity. But I can say that the responsibility for earning a living and providing for family has not suddenly evaporated just because the end of year holidays are upon us.

Like most DSPs at ACT, this person earns less than \$24,000 a year. But this DSP is always cheerful, always happy, and always doing what only happy people do. I'll let you imagine for yourself what those things might be.

I didn't know what to say. I was overwhelmed by the offer. Then I simply said that ACT was in a fortunate position this year to give every employee a bonus at the end of year holiday party. "Okay. That's good," came the reply.

After that conversation, I sat and thought a lot about my own giving, and why I do it. I'm honestly not sure how often I give with a cheerful heart, as was exemplified by this tremendously selfless offer.

I saw the person again later. I said, for now, it would probably be best to keep the money, in case it is needed later. The response was a shrug and a smile.

Right now, I don't know where that money will go. But I doubt it will stay put in the pocket of the person who probably needs it most.

Generosity on this scale is confusing, unsettling. Where does it come from? What motivates this kind of selfless giving? I'm not sure.

But I think it's a good story to share at this time of year. Our days are short and cold. We bundle up and run from our cars to our houses to avoid the chill. It's as easy to slip on the ice as it is to slip into isolation, depression, and loneliness.

The tradition at Christmas is giving gifts. The spirit of giving warms and elevates each of us... if done as intended, not out of obligation, but generosity.

Giving generously sends a very strong message to one's subconscious mind: I have enough and everything will work out in the end. The miser

Scrooge, we know, was miserable in his stinginess. He had plenty to give and was happy in the end that he did.

Many of the people we support at ACT have needs. Usually it's the basics like clothes, kitchen tools, help with dental care, transportation, or other ordinary things that fall between the cracks and are left unattended.

Each December we participate in CoMoGives, a month-long campaign to raise money for over 90 organizations in Central Missouri. It's an online campaign organized by the Community Foundation of Central Missouri. If you're inspired by the generosity of our staff member, I hope you'll consider digging deeper this year to make a contribution that benefits one of the people we serve. You can do it here.

I don't think I measure up to the example I've shared. But my co-worker's willingness to act as if he or she has plenty to offer has inspired me to see that I have plenty, too. I've been shown how to give with a cheerful heart. What a gift!

Until next month,

Mark



In This Issue

Tip from Tara

STEP's 5th Year is Underway with Many Successes

Holiday Traditions Make This Time of Year Special for Community Living Ladies

Day Program Celebrates the Holidays with a Month of Giving

Annual Community Living Halloween Costume Party Turns 15

Autism Spectrum Disorder Training for Public Safety



Mark Hassemer
Executive Director



STEP's 5th Year is Underway with Many **SUCCESSSES**

The 2016-17 school year kicked off STEPS's (Seamless Transition through Enhanced Partnership) fifth year at Boone Hospital. Students spend the first six weeks in the Transition Center at BHC learning interview skills and participating in team building and problem-solving activities. During this time, each of the students in the program job shadows in each department involved in the STEP program and then ranks his or her top two preferences for their internship. Just like any other job, interns apply for the positions they want. Then the hospital's Human Department interviews applicants before they move on to interviews in preferred departments. This year each candidate was interviewed only by his or her first choice, which isn't always the case. Then interns are offered a job. Once they begin their internships each student is paired with a Skills Trainer who is an ACT or Columbia Public School employee. The Skills Trainers coach the interns in learning skills that will transfer to any job in the community. Russell, Nick, Louis, Jordan, and Shekila, this year's STEP students, have already settled into their positions and are doing a great job. STEP Career Specialist Barb Wright says, "They have all adapted well to their jobs and working hard learning the skills involved." Russell was assigned to Central Services Department, where sterilizing happens. He, rolls tubing needed for procedures, retrieves carts full of used surgical equipment, and returns carts to the Operating Room area to be filled up again. Russell also prepares laryngoscopes and cysto pans for sterilization. Russell caught on quickly. He is enjoying his

work and is definitely excelling. "He is very independent," Wright says. "When he finishes his tasks, he will find something to do and he will do it well." "This department keeps me going," Russell says. "I like every part of this job!" Nick says of his job in Central Services, "It's amazing!" Stocking the isolation closets are his main duties. He must make sure the closets have a specific number (which he has memorized) of gowns, goggles, thermometers, stethoscopes, masks, wipes, gloves, garbage and dirty linen bags, pen lights, and other items needed for patient care. "Nick is very quick and efficient," Wright says. "He can stock a closet in less than 2 minutes. When he's done, it is neat and organized." He takes pride in his job. He critiques the closets that are not up to his standards. He's doing so well his supervisors have given him more responsibility. An additional floor is now his. Louis was thrilled to be assigned the House Orderly Technician position. A major aspect of this role is stocking oxygen tanks throughout the entire hospital. He wheels a cart full of heavy tanks to different places on his list. He ensures that tanks are full. If not, he restocks them. Then he takes empties to the basement. Between restocking tanks, Louis transports patients and makes sure there are plenty of wheelchairs distributed throughout the hospital... the "wheelchair run". All of these roles require walking, a lot of walking! That requires energy. "One day we walked six miles and took the elevator 30 different times," says Skills Trainer, Paul Heywood. Over in the Food and Nutrition department, Jordan is working hard keeping up with dishes used in the cafeteria and those used for patients. During breakfast and lunch rush he is on the tray line at one

of the three positions. He sorts trash from dirty dishes as quickly as they come in. He also loads dirty dishes in the dishwasher and puts clean ones away. During slower times he disposes of menus that have confidential information, preps the line for the next rush, organizes and cleans equipment. He does all of this while monitoring the cafeteria tray line for incoming trays. "He has progressed a lot," Wright says of Jordan. "He is building skills needed for this multitasking position and gaining independence from his Skills Trainer." Shekila is everywhere and seemingly never at the same place twice. She works in two different departments. That keeps her busy and on the move. When she arrives at the hospital she starts in the Rehab Department, cleaning equipment and printing patients' daily exercise protocols. This would keep most people busy all day. Not Shekila. The hospital added a walker run, like the wheelchair run, to her responsibilities. Then Shekila is off to the South Tower to stock linens in ICU and the clean patient pantries and staff lounges on five floors. "They have all progressed since they began," Wright says. "This is a fun group of students to work with!" This is evident in their work and in their interactions with coworkers. Students have left their checklists behind because they are confident in their positions. Each student is also eating with coworkers instead of on his or her own or with a Skills Trainer. This is a huge social accomplishment. They all feel like a part of the team. Wright says, "Their successes wouldn't be possible without the support of the departments. Boone Hospital accepts and honors these students. The interns recognize that and greatly appreciate it."

Autism Spectrum Disorder Training for Public Safety

The Department of Mental Health, Office of Autism Services, in consultation with Dennis Debbaudt (national expert on autism and public safety), and in partnership with the University of Missouri Extension and the Fire and Rescue Training institute, produced a web-based training module called Autism Spectrum Disorder Training for Public Safety.

It is offered at no cost for a period of three years and can be accessed through the University of Missouri Extension website.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December
Support ACT through the CoMoGives Campaign

December 23 & 26
ACT Facility Based Offices Closed

December 30
January 2
ACT Facility Based Offices Closed

January 16
ACT Facility Based Offices Closed

DAY PROGRAM CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS WITH A MONTH OF GIVING

Christmas comes but once a year, as the saying goes, so Day Program is making the most of the season...and keeping busy in the process. In the monthly team meetings, individuals served in the program were asked how they wanted to celebrate the holidays; there were so many great and thoughtful suggestions, it was decided they would try to do them all!

And the month of giving was born! At the beginning of December, they got busy and started checking supplies off their shopping list - household goods for Ronald McDonald House, materials to make homemade blankets for the Salvation Army and a homeless shelter, and items for a care package to send to a soldier in Afghanistan who has two kids with disabilities.

People in the program that can carry a tune delivered the holiday spirit by caroling and handing out homemade greeting cards to patients at the Veteran's Hospital

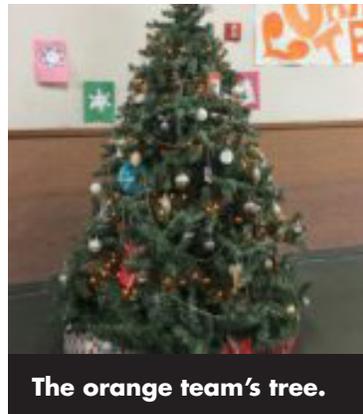
and residents of Columbia Manor (a local nursing home). A canned food drive for the food bank was also spearheaded. This will run throughout the month of December. "It has been a busy month!" Day Program Manager Michelle Bell says. "Everyone has been busy shopping and baking and sewing."

All the while, the five teams (learn about day program's teams here) have been gearing up for a holiday party by decorating their team rooms. Each room's decorations will be up against each other in a heated competition, which has become a fun tradition for every holiday. As if that weren't enough, there will also be an ugly sweater contest and a Secret Santa gift exchange.

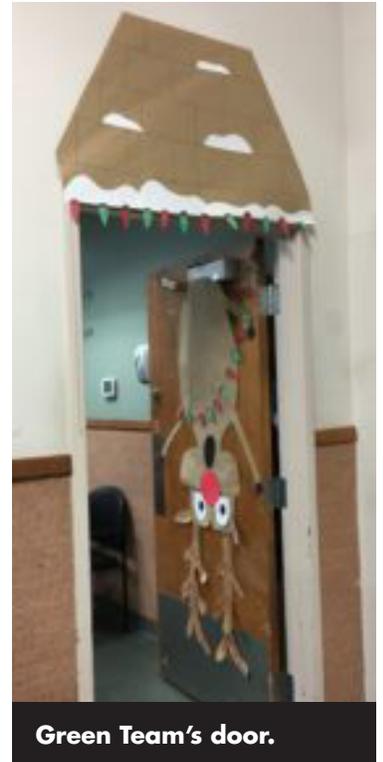
Day Program's Month of Giving should serve as a model for the true meaning of the season. It may have made for a busy month but it was worth the hard work.



Santa's sleigh and reindeer adorn the wall.



The orange team's tree.



Green Team's door.



Red team's door decorated for the season.



Blue team's door.



The red team's tree.



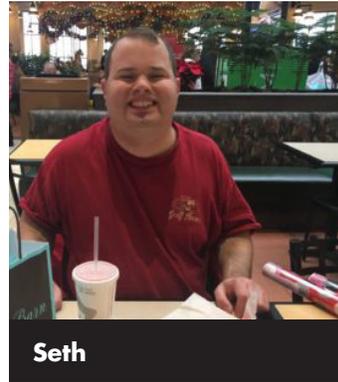
Purple team's door.

TIP FROM TARA

IT'S OKAY TO LIKE WHAT YOU LIKE

I first met my friend Seth when he was a teenager about to graduate from Hickman High School. We didn't start as friends. I was requested to assist in him in transitioning out of high school and later into his home, an ISL, supported by ACT. Seth's transition wasn't easy, like many young adults, his journey had several hurdles along the way. Even though it wasn't easy or perfect; I feel confident saying that today Seth is pretty happy. He may always have days that are difficult, or harder than others, but who doesn't? Seth likes otoscopes. He also likes ophthalmoscopes and stethoscopes. While liking medical equipment might not be typical for most people, Seth likes what he likes. It would be accurate to say that he has real passion for his "favorite things." For those of you who know Seth personally know exactly what I'm talking about. Those of you who don't know Seth, just need to know he likes his favorite things so much that he recently visited the Welch-Allyn factory in Minnesota where they make his favorite things as part of his ultimate dream vacation (read about that trip here). When I first met Seth, a majority of the goals we worked on together were associated with assisting him to learn to find additional things he likes outside of his restricted range of interests. Seth has had some success in meeting that goal, and he tries his best to limit his need to share his knowledge and love of his favorite things. I have always told Seth, "it's okay to like what you like", while explaining that he will probably never find anybody else who loves otoscopes as much as he does. I've told him "it's okay to like

what you like" so many times that he frequently tells me the same thing, and finds it funny to tell me my own words. We laugh about it. Seth also likes routine and feels comfort in rituals. One ritual that we share is a trip to one of his favorite stores followed by lunch at the food court. We do this on his birthday every year. It's a ritual we both enjoy. I pick him up at 11:00 on the dot, and we have done this for the past eight years. This year was no different. I picked Seth up and we headed to the mall. He picked out his gift and we went to the register. We started a conversation with the sales associate. Seth shared that it was his birthday and we had a conversation about many things for several minutes. As we were wrapping up and heading out of the store the associate turned to me, and in front of Seth, said "Thanks for helping him." I looked at Seth and then back at her. It was awkward. I know that she meant well and did not in any way mean to assume that Seth needed my help, but still, it was awkward. I really didn't know what to say. Seth recognized this and turned to the associate and said, "It's okay to like what you like, Tara likes me, she's my friend." It was a great moment and I felt like it was an important thing to share. Most of us tend to make resolutions and set goals this time of year. This year I'm going to try harder at finding what is meaningful about all my relationships. Seth is my friend. We help each other when we need help. I've helped him try to find other interests and he's helped me out of an awkward conversation. It's what friends do. Happy New Year Everybody!



Seth



ANNUAL COMMUNITY LIVING HALLOWEEN COSTUME PARTY TURNS 15

There are three things you can be sure of in this life: death, taxes, and the Community Living Halloween Party! Assistant Director Carrie Griffith first organized the event 15 years ago (read more about the history here). A decade and a half has passed and it keeps getting bigger and better. This year people even brought guests from outside ACT! "The individuals we serve in Community Living (CL) wanted to participate in the holiday by dressing up and socializing. The Costume Party was created to meet that need." What's a Halloween party with out a costume contest? This year's winners were Minna, Barbi, Tammy, and Manager Vicki Schulte, who together came as The Village People, and danced to the music of YMCA. Best Individual Costume went to Drew, who dressed as Bob Barker from the Price is Right. Best Staff Costume went to CL Manager Larry Barnette (also the party DJ) as Smartie Pants. Had there been a category for fitting into two groups' themes, that prize would have gone to Schulte, who dressed as a construction worker. She was a perfect fit for the Village People and Price is Right. Heath, who dressed as Jason from the movie Halloween, says, "I had an awesome time. There was great music and cool dancing...I broke out a few maneuvers myself." There was lots of Pizza, cookies, treat bags, dancing, fun and trying to figure out who everyone was! You won't want to miss it next year

Holiday Traditions Make This Time of Year Special for Community Living Ladies

Traditions make holidays special. Many are passed down through generations, while some are born from a mishap and then carried on. The latter is true for Barbi, Minna, and Tammy and their annual tree search. Three years ago their artificial tree went kaput. Since then, they've been heading out to Lowe's the first weekend in December in search of the perfect tree. "The ladies love it!" Community Living Manager Vicki Schulte says. "They start talking about getting their tree right after Minna's birthday in October." On December 3rd, the trio, along with Schulte, made their now annual pilgrimage to Lowe's, after stopping for their favorite drink. Once at Lowe's, the judging begins. "It's like a tree fashion show," Schulte says. Schulte pulls out the trees the women suggest. One by one she twirls them around and taps them on the ground to see how many needles fall out. A vote of 'yah' or 'nah' is the deciding factor. As soon as they get home, they put up the tree and dress it with lights and each lady's collection of ornaments. You can often find their cat, Sherman, under the tree. So this year, Barbie and Minna added stuffed animals to the base of the tree to keep him company. Soon, the final touch will join the stuffed animals: the presents the ladies will exchange with each other. And

that makes the tree a perfect image of a special holiday tradition. "I like the tree!" Tammy says. "Decorating it is my favorite part." Another tradition they have is the holiday house calendar. Direct Support Professional Jonnette Whittler designs a detailed calendars each month for the ladies. The calendar is filled with community activities, appointments, shopping trips, holiday outings, and even healthy and seasonal recipes to try on certain days. But the important dates are not marked in words. Rather, they use pictures so everyone can see exactly what's going to happen. "I love Jonnette's calendar. It really gives the ladies of visual of the events coming up," Schulte says. This month, they are having a hot chocolate night, getting their nails done, going to a holiday party, shopping (of course!), and making gingerbread cookies. The calendar is the "go to" decoration any time of the year. But it's especially nice, and pretty, around the holidays!

Schulte continues, "I want to give a shout out to the Community Living employees I work with. They greatly improve the quality of life of each person they serve. And they take the ACT mission, vision, and value statements seriously. I appreciate their hard work and dedication to the individuals and the agency. Thank you everyone!!!"



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GETCONNECTED

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