Dear Friends of ACT,

On July 9th I had the opportunity to welcome ten new employees to ACT. As always, it was exciting. Meeting new people each month who have decided to work here and support individuals with disabilities is one of my favorite responsibilities.

I provide the history (Who better than the resident dinosaur?) and then an overview of the organization. Hopefully, I also share an inspiring vision of the ideals we hold for our work.

People come here from all walks of life. Some people have a child, or a sister or brother who has a disability. Some have worked in the field. Some have no experience, but a desire to do something to help others.

Statistics show that turnover is high in this business—as high as sixty percent per year for people providing direct services. It’s hard work. Pay isn’t great.

Yet ACT consistently does better than national averages. As gratifying as that is, we must improve. It is important to attract and retain good people. Good people help us more effectively live out our vision.

We have a few direct service professionals who have been with us for over twenty years. Twenty years!

In an effort to find out more about why top people stay in this field, we are beginning to explore implementing “stay interviews”.

We have been doing exit interviews for years. Those give us some insights into why people leave.

But we want to know more about why people stay.

The stay interview approach looks to people who have had a long, successful tenure with ACT and asks, “What is it that keeps you here?” It also explores other areas that we believe will let us focus on the positive conditions that help us retain good employees.

I believe there is a link between retention and high-quality services. But the survey results have yet to tell their story.

Some very good relationships have developed between the individuals we support and staff. Those relationships are often at the very core of positive effects we see in the lives of the people we support and in our community as a whole.

Without biasing the results of our surveys, I might have to admit that I hope we discover a virtuous cycle (not a vicious cycle) wherein high-quality services fuel greater staff retention, and better retention improves our services even more.

Until next month,

Mark Hassemer
Executive Director, ACT
State-Wide Special Olympics Bowling Victors, Kelly, Seth & Laurie

The start of the 2012 Olympic Games in London is just around the corner. It’s amazing to see the excitement and anticipation build as the Games near.

To add to the excitement, two individuals from ACT Community Living and one from ACT Works have had their own Olympic-sized achievements. After each received a medal at the Special Olympics qualifying event in St. Joseph, Kelly, Seth, and Laurie went on to compete in the Special Olympics Missouri State Summer Games. Kelly and Seth were accompanied during their travel to St. Joseph by ACT Community Living staff.

Seth proudly displays his gold medal from the qualifying finals in St. Joseph, Missouri.

All three медали in bowling. Kelly received a silver medal in his group. Seth and Laurie each placed top in the state with gold medals in their groups.

They competed on May 29th and May 30th here in Columbia at Town & Country Lanes.

Our medalists did better than they anticipated earlier in the season. Each is rightfully very proud of and excited about their achievements. We’re very proud, too.

They’ve been participating in bowling this season for about 4 months. Preparations for next season will begin August 25.

Congratulations, Olympians. And good luck next season.

ACT Career Services Celebrates Lena’s McDonald’s Star of the Month Award

We congratulate Lena on her tremendous accomplishment. Lena was named the General Manager Department’s Star of the Month for June at McDonald’s on Nifong Blvd.

Lena received this award because of her team-focused attitude. Her manager and co-workers know that she consistently assists other crew members. And she always does it with a positive attitude.

Lena has been a proud employee of McDonald’s since 2007, when she started as a lobby attendant.

Until her transfer to the Nifong store in Spring 2011, Lena's smiling face was a regular feature at the MU Campus McDonald's location.

Lena continues to be a valued employee. She’s making a positive impact in her workplace. And she’s grown immensely during her tenure with McDonald’s.

She is now completing a range of duties from cleaning the lobby, to food preparation, to cooking.

Congratulations Lena on this terrific achievement.
Partnership for Hope Works for Nathan and His Family

How do you learn what it means to be in healthy relationship with someone? You’re taught, of course, either formally, or by the modeled behavior of those closest to you. Learning what positive relationships are like helps individuals identify, interrupt, and correct any negative relationships, and set the stage for good relationships in the future.

Since persons with disabilities are at higher risk of being physically abused, verbally abused, or neglected, we don’t leave this learning process to chance. Many of the individuals we support have chosen to be trained in just how to know whether their relationships are healthy…or not.

This critical training opportunity is provided by our partners at True North, a shelter in Columbia that provides safety and services for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

During the course, participants talk about their individual experiences, and participate in a variety of activities such as watching videos, reviewing magazine articles and pictures, and having candid discussions.

This two-month course meets once each week. And since everyone wants frank discussion, the course is open to only men or only women, a recipe that has worked well.

The individuals we support like this training. They request it. And often, they repeat it.

Grea, who has participated in the healthy relationships class, said “I learned that I shouldn’t give out my phone number, and I got to talk about ‘my man’ in the class.”

Four men from ACT completed the training last month, facilitated by True North’s Grant Bracken. Another women’s class is in the plans, but has not yet been scheduled.

“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
ACT Community Living Staff, Larry Barnette & Larry Collins, Deployed

Not only do ACT staff support individuals in our community with disabilities, they bravely serve our entire country.

Earlier this year, two employees in the Community Living Program, Master Sergeant Larry Barnette (Army Reserve) and Specialist Larry Collins (Army National Guard) deployed overseas, leaving family and friends behind to serve Americans on foreign soil.

Master Sergeant Barnette has been an ACT employee for over 20 years. He is a program supervisor in Community Living, managing 3 homes. He is also a live-in supporting Joey, Perry, and Richard at one home. Larry has lived in that home for over 20 years. He left ACT in February for his training and deployed overseas in April. This is his 3rd deployment.

Specialist Larry Collins has been an ACT employee for nearly 4 years. He supports 3 individuals, Chris, Ricky, and Patrick, in one of Community Living’s houses. Larry’s brother, David, is an individual we support in the Community Living Program. Larry left ACT in April and deployed in June. This is his first deployment.

These gentlemen are truly heroes in our midst. They sacrifice and risk personal safety and well-being for our benefit. Just like everyone else, they need our support.

We are proud to call them our friends and co-workers. And we hope for their quick and safe return.

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

— Christopher Reeve
UPCOMING EVENTS

August 1 - Job Fair at ACT.
August 13 - New Hire Orientation at the Training Center.
August 13 - Therap/Documentation Training at the Training Center.
August 14 - Medication administration training at the Training Center.
August 15 - Abuse/Neglect Prevention training at the Training Center.
August 15 - Positive Behavior Support training at the Training Center.
August 16 - Medication administration training at the Training Center.
August 16 - Medication administration refresher training at the Training Center.
August 17 - CPR/First Aid at the Training Center.

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