

# Dear Friends of ACT,

July 1st marks the beginning of a new fiscal year for us.

This is a good time to look back and give you a Year in Review for our company. (I thought of this the other day when our City Manager provided the State of the City address for Columbia).

I took a look at the newsletters written during the last year and reflected on the journey we've taken as a company.

We started the year in a celebratory mood. ACT turned 40 one year ago! We marked the occasion with many activities throughout the year, culminating in a festive event with the CoMo Derby Dames at Father Tolton Catholic High School.

I shared the words that individuals and family members used describing the services provided by ACT. One parent said, "ACT is a jewel in Columbia, something for which our community should be both thankful and proud."

Later, I talked about the language we use, the importance of our speech, and how word choices can and should reflect the dignity and value of every person. How we speak can diminish or elevate others.

The Show-Me Careers grant produced a video demonstrating the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. Over 400 business

leaders had the opportunity to view the video at a Columbia Chamber of Commerce meeting.

Then I let off some steam. I talked about an injustice in our State pertaining to rates received for providing services. Simply put, the older, established organizations (like ACT) have some of the lowest rates in the State. It wasn't right, and we were going to do something about it.

The end of year holidays arrived, prompting us to think about all the things in our lives we have to be thankful for. There are many.

With the new (calendar) year, a new legislative session began in Missouri. We carried the message to many of our local legislators about the funding problem. Board members and parents worked with us to explain it. Legislators listened and said they would try to help.

I was grateful for the interest and involvement of Board members and thanked them for their commitment to and support of ACT.

Leaders from the State Department of Mental Health, and Division of Developmental Disabilities visited ACT in the Spring. We shared our experience of changing our organization over the year, closing the facility-based recycling program,

and focusing on community employment as the outcome of our efforts. They commended us.

I ended the year highlighting a new Federal rule from the U.S. Department of Labor. Known as the new overtime rule, it changed the compensation threshold for exempt employees. A national association was active, working to convince the Feds to establish a non-enforcement period. After reflecting on this, carving our industry out was not an ideal thing. We will still be held to the new standards. ACT will work toward meeting the new standards.

Let's look now to the future.

We are building a budget for FY 2017 that includes the new rebased rates. Pending further action by our Governor, these rates should be effective July 1st. I am hopeful. This new level of funding is a game-changer for ACT. It will allow us to retain the work force we need.

While we are pleased with this unprecedented funding, the job is not yet done. We will work to educate the legislature about additional steps needed to complete the job.

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**Mark Hassemer**  
Executive Director

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The Department of Mental Health and the Division of Developmental Disabilities leadership are committed to fixing the rate problem in Missouri. That will require additional appropriations.

We accomplished some important goals this year. But we have more to do.

As I look around ACT, I feel a positive shift in our culture. We have some new people in important leadership roles we did not have last year at this time. They are settling in and focusing on the future.



Recently, the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) held its 27th Annual Conference in Cincinnati: Soaring to Employment First.

There, organizations, employers, and individuals were honored for their single-handed and collective contributions to Employment First.

This year, Moresource President Kat Cunningham, a local pioneer in Columbia's business community, was recognized with the Small Employer Award.

This honor goes to a business that employs fewer than 29 people. ACT's Career Services Director, Jessica Mahon, and other community partners nominated Cunningham.

Our programs and services will continue to respect, value, and act on the personal choices of the people we serve. Guided by our vision and mission, we will work tirelessly toward an inclusive community, where everyone is valued.

Until next month,

**Mark**



## TIGERS ON THE PROWL

SELECTED ACT FOR 2016 CAMPAIGN

ACT is one of ten charities picked to be involved in 2016 Tigers on the Prowl! We are thrilled about this opportunity.

We will be featuring our one of a kind tiger designed by Gabe Fennel at the CoMo Derby Dames bout on Saturday, July 16 at 5:30 pm at Fr. Tolton Catholic High School

following the Tigers on the Prowl Reveal on Friday, July 15 at the Columbia Mall at 6:00 pm.

Enter our raffle to win tickets to the Tigers on the Prowl Fall Gala (a \$200 value!!), "vote" for our tiger, see MU athletes and the Golden Girls, and cheer on the Dames!•

# CUNNINGHAM

## NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED

### for Contributions in Inclusive Employment

In addition to hiring employees with, as Cunningham says, "different abilities", she is also a member of Show-Me-Careers-Columbia (SMC-Columbia), a pilot consortium for a grant-funded initiative aimed at improving outcomes for transition-aged students; Columbia Employment Consortium, a group that offers a training series on inclusive hiring practices and publishes a website for employers that provides resources for hiring people with disabilities ([www.adaintheworkplace.org](http://www.adaintheworkplace.org)); and Columbia Transition Team (CTT), a group that plans and implements actions for youth in an effort to improve transition outcomes and employment. She is also co-creator of the website [AbilitiesforBusiness.com](http://AbilitiesforBusiness.com) that aims to link businesses with qualified candidates with disabilities.

Cunningham is also exploring options for a Business Leadership Network in Mid-Missouri. This business-led initiative would serve to further enhance the other activities occurring in our local community.

"We at Moresource know the labor shortage employers will be faced with in the future. Bridging business to a differently-abled workforce is a major priority. To receive National Recognition at the APSE conference in Cincinnati only reinforces our mission!" Cunningham says.

APSE is an organization whose mission is to advance employment and self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities through

advocacy and education. ACT has been an organizational member for several years.

APSE's Statement on Employment First reads "Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability."

Congratulations Kat! This award is well deserved. Everyone in Columbia knows you are an asset to our community and a great advocate for people with disabilities. Now it is known on the National level! •

# IN-HOME SERVICES HELPS ABRAHAM

## WITH POOL ACCESS & CRITICAL SERVICES

Since Abraham was 18 months old he has loved to swim. He's good at it. His mom, Ashley Williams, says he taught himself.

"He started with the doggie paddle. Then in a short amount of time, he progressed to swimming the distance of the pool," Williams said. "It is like therapy for him. The pressure and the total body workout soothe him. In the water, he is calm and happy."

Abraham comes from a family of five. Williams says the price of admission to the pool is a cost that simply could not fit in their family's budget. In-Home Services Program Manager Tara Shade was able to access funds raised by ACT through CoMoGives to purchase a summer pass to the City of Columbia's outdoor aquatics facilities. "I'm so thankful that ACT has been able to assist families in accessing activities that provide increased opportunities to participate in the community as a family," Shade says. "CoMoGives funds are not only increasing the amount of time Abraham is participating as a community member, they are also providing him more opportunities to engage in an activity where he has found success."



**ABRAHAM**

"This pool pass is essential for him," says Williams. "He gets tired of other activities; but not swimming."

Abraham, nine, has autism and is non-verbal. At times, he displays some aggressive behaviors. He has received In-Home Services from ACT six days a week for three years. "Without support from ACT we would be lost!" Williams exclaims. "It provides necessary services from a person who is knowledgeable about the supports he needs."

ACT staff, Meiko Williams, works with Abraham on communication skills, along with safety and boundaries in the community. And, of course, they swim...a lot.

Williams continues, "It can be challenging to have a kid with a disability, especially when you have other small children. As a bonus, ACT services give this mom some relief!" •



### THANK YOU **WALMART** FOR BEING A VALUED PARTNER

In Columbia, Walmart consistently utilizes ACT Career Services (ACS) to find dedicated employees. They understand the value in using ACS as their hiring base.

ACS works with a variety of job seekers to achieve their employment goals, while assisting a large array of local employers with their recruitment and retention needs.

The personalized services job seekers and employers receive through ACS pays rich rewards for businesses and employees alike.

Local businesses benefit from having hard working, qualified employees that support their overall operations.

Walmart...thank you for being a great partner and providing jobs to an underutilized and valuable segment of the workforce. •

# SHAW LANDS A NEW ROLE BEYOND COMMUNITY LIVING TO COMMUNITY THEATER IN THE MUSIC MAN

**Larry Shaw**, Direct Support Professional (DSP) in Community Living (CL), has been bitten by the acting bug. Shaw, 44, auditioned for a small part in *The Music Man* at Columbia Entertainment Company after playfully singing with a coworker.

“She told me I had a good voice and convinced me to try out for a musical. I auditioned soon after and got the part!” Shaw says.

During the audition, Shaw’s dramatic side took over. He even started speaking with a British accent. His song choices, *I Love You Lord* and *Amazing Grace*, got him a standing ovation from the judges.

Two days later they called to offer him two parts, traveling salesman and townsman.

Shaw, who hasn’t been in a play since he was in high school, is having a blast!

“It is absolutely amazing!” Shaw says. “They are teaching me how to read music and get in touch with my voice. I have connected with everyone, sound coordinators, stage hands, and the director. Everyone is family.”

His only complaint about the show is being out of shape. “I am the opening scene. I start the show with a musical number running around the theater in to the audience. Then I have to get to the opposite side of the stage and change costume in 60 seconds.” “I’m old. It’s hard,” Shaw jokes. Shaw works full time driving a bus for Center of Responsive Education (CORE) in Columbia.

CORE specializes in working with students with emotional, behavioral and mental health needs.

On the weekends he is thrilled to work full-time at ACT in the CL program.

“Working at ACT brings me joy. It’s a fun job. ‘The guys’ (Larry, Buddy, and David) and I fit so well together. It’s crazy,” Shaw says. Shaw and “the guys” are always on the move, playing in the arcades, shopping, recycling, and attending local festivities. But they have really bonded over something that takes place at home: cooking.

“I love to cook!” Shaw says. “When I come over the guys know we are going to cook and eat well. That means fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, green beans...the works.”



**LARRY SHAW**

For Shaw, the health insurance benefits ACT provides are the cherry on top of it all. It’s a first for him.

A successful run of *The Music Man*, which wrapped up the last weekend of June, leaves Shaw contemplating roles in the upcoming *The Little Mermaid*, at CEC, and *Oliver* at Maplewood Barn Community Theater.

Break a leg, Shaw! “The guys” and everyone at ACT are cheering you on! •

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**July 15**

Tigers on the Prowl  
Tiger Reveal  
Columbia Mall  
6pm

**July 16**

ACT Tiger at CoMo  
Derby Dames bout  
Fr. Tolton Catholic High School  
doors open at 5:30pm

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

— Christopher Reeve

# JUNE WORK ANNIVERSARIES



## JAMESETTA JACKSON

**Jamesetta Jackson** started working at ACT on the advice of her husband Steve Jackson, who also works at ACT, and cousin Angel

Lawson. They both thought the job would be a perfect fit for her.

Jackson started in 2007 working the overnight shift in three different houses in Community Living. She has also worked in the Day Program and Career Services.

“My Favorite part of the job is having a positive role in the lives of others,” Jackson says. “I come to work as a Direct Support Professional (DSP), but by the end of the day I have operated as a counselor, friend, inspirational life coach, and prayer partner.”

Jackson is grateful for her career – “This job was a blessing to me the day I was hired in June of 2007 and it is still a blessing to me today in June of 2016,” Jackson says.

ACT is grateful for her nine years of dedication.



## MARSH SCHAFER

**Marsh Schafer** first started working at ACT part time in 1999 after looking for services for her stepdaughter in the program formerly known as ACT Works.

Schafer excelled in working with people with disabilities – in a short amount of time she was working full time and then offered a Supervisor position.

She left ACT for a brief time in 2001 only to come back a year later to work as a Direct Support Professional in the Day Program, where she is now a mentor.

“I love being a mentor to staff. If they truly are interested in working here at ACT and are willing to be mentored by me then we both learn a lot,” Schafer says.

Marsha brings enormous value and energy to ACT. Her passion is evident and we are lucky to have her.



## KALYNN RAMSEY

**Kalynn Ramsey** was in hot pursuit for a career after entering the “real world” fresh from graduating from Illinois State Universtiy in 2008.

Ramsey saw an ad for a Supervisor position in the Day Program and went for it. While in the interview, then Director Michelle Saunders thought Ramsey would be a better fit for the Activities Coordinator, a position that had not been created yet.

Now, Ramsey handles Communications for ACT and is loving it! “I’m in my second role at ACT where I had to start from scratch and I’m having a blast! I get to go out into the community to brag about ACT...our programs, services, and amazing employees.”



## TARA SHADE

**Tara Shade** started working at ACT while she is college as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in college. After graduating she moved away to St. Louis then Colorado where she worked in similar fields.

She came back to Columbia 12 years later in 2007 and returned to ACT as a Behavior Consultant.

In this time, she helped develop Behavior Development Services and In-Home Services (IHS). In 2012 she was named Program Manager for IHS.

Shade is a tireless, dedicated employee. Her years at ACT have resulted in the closing of a gap in services for many individuals with disabilities.



## DON LAFFERTY

**Don Lafferty** started with ACT 24 years ago in 1992.

He is now Director of Community Living.

Don brings knowledge and expertise to his position. His passion for people with disabilities comes to work with him everyday.

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## GETCONNECTED

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