Dear Friends of ACT,

My friend and former State Senator Chuck Graham sent me this link to a TEDx video Titled:

Disabling segregation: Dan Habib at TEDxAmoskeagMillyard

He said, “This is brilliant. It sums up in 15 minutes what we’re all trying to do in this world...” I couldn’t agree more. Please watch it.

The video shows Dan Habib talking about inclusion, the value of including individuals with disabilities in all that we do.

He offers his son Samuel (who has cerebral palsy) as an illustration of many expected and unexpected benefits that come from integrating people with disabilities into school, athletics, the arts, shopping, and every area of life.

What happens when you integrate people with disabilities? They do better on every measure.

What might surprise you is this: everyone else in an environment where people are integrated does better, too...on every measure.

The video ends with a story about a girl from Burundi who had been resettled in Concord. When her family arrived, they knew nothing. No language. No customs. They were so disoriented they built a fire on the floor of their new apartment to cook a meal.

Because of their experience with Samuel, the girl’s new classmates compassionately took the girl into their close circle of relationships and showed her how to do everything–how to use the cafeteria, what to do during a fire drill, and what happens on a field trip, for example.

Much like the saying about the economy, integration is like a rising tide that lifts all boats. It elevates us all.

I saw a vivid illustration of this when I attended a graduation celebration in May for five students who completed the STEP transition program at Boone Hospital.

Last year, six brave pioneers completed the first year program. STEP remains a collaborative effort of Columbia Public Schools, ACT, Division of Vocational

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Rehabilitation, Department of Mental Health, Boone County Family Resources, and Boone Hospital.

While we joyfully celebrated the accomplishments of the interns, what could not have been missed was the outpouring of testimonials about others who had benefitted from working with them.

Managers talked about becoming better managers. Co-workers’ lives were improved. Top executives of this large and already inclusive hospital spoke about how they and the entire organization benefitted from the everyday interactions they’d had with STEP interns.

Believe it or not, integration benefits everyone. Let’s keep getting better at what Habib set out to do for Samuel. Let’s make sure people with disabilities are always included.

Until next month,

Mark

ACT Goes Above and Beyond to Acquire and Retain Quality Employees

ACT staff work hard to provide the best services in the best possible way. To accomplish that, we know we must invest in our employees.

So, we train. We conduct high-quality, high-value trainings every month. These are mandatory for all employees, as are other annual or biannual trainings required for re-certifications. We make sure that all ACT employees are prepared, knowledgeable, and able to understand and attain professional standards in the field.

ACT has developed a two-week block-training schedule that reaches beyond minimum State requirements. “Medication Administration,” “People First Language,” and “Positive Behavior Support” are titles of just a few of the classes offered.

In addition to the block training, ACT also offers online education through the College of Direct Support. This gives Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) the opportunity to progress and earn a one-time pay increase after being employed for six months.

Our benefits are also top-notch. ACT pays 90% of employee health insurance premiums and 50% of dependent coverage. ACT offers a generous match on the 403(b) retirement fund, as well as an incredible vacation accrual plan.

Flexibility is also a hallmark of the ACT workplace. “The flexibility of the careers offered at ACT is a plus. We have a wide range of shifts that can accommodate different schedules,” Brian Tveitnes, Human Resources Manager, says.

Career advancement is real at ACT. We are known for promoting from within. Nearly all of our current managers started out doing direct care. A DSP at ACT knows his/her supervisor is leading and guiding from a place of experience. This type of support from managers is unusual.

The perks of working at ACT are many. The additional rewards a career in the direct support profession offers are tremendous. Being a DSP can be challenging. But our DPSs have found that they get back much more than they give.

Unlike a job where one stares at
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a computer all day long in a dimly lit office building, a DSP’s typical day might include strolling in the park, shopping, fishing, assisting with preparing meals, and helping maintain a cozy home— all this while getting to know a person and enjoy his or her companionship.

We think it’s rare to have work that really makes a difference in a person’s life and in the community. DSPs provide services that give a people with disabilities the chance to be a part of the community, to live a life independently.

“DSPs get the satisfaction of being able to help others while earning a paycheck,” Says Tvetnes.

It takes a kind, compassionate, and patient person to make a great DSP. “A sense of humor is also vital”, Juanita Hamilton, Community Living Program Supervisor, adds.

ACT has built, and continues to develop, a great team established on these principles. But more applicants (and more employees) are needed. Do you know a person who has a strong desire to do good? A person with a caring touch? Please share this story with her or him.

Kim Watkins Promoted to Program Supervisor

Kim Watkins loves her work. And for her, like others who love what they do professionally, it doesn’t seem like work. That’s just one of the reasons why we are thrilled that Kim is our newly-promoted Program Supervisor in ACT’s Community Integration (CI) program.

During the last 18 months Kim has worked for ACT as a Direct Support Professional (DSP). Before that she worked eight years at Woodhaven, including several years in a supervisory role as a Home Coordinator. She’s been working in direct care services for 12 years in various locations across the United States.

Kim holds a degree in Sociology, with minors in Psychology and Women’s Studies.

As her job history and field of study indicate, Kim has found her niche in direct care. “I am genuinely satisfied with what I do,” Watkins exclaims. “I’m not in it for the money. I like knowing that I am directly affecting others’ lives right then and there.”

For Kim, variety in her work is a major job perk. Every day brings surprises in CI.

And she’s talented in other areas, too. She was previously the co-owner of a graphic design business and she’s worked as a freelancer providing web page creation/maintenance services and social media strategy and implementation.

She lives in Columbia with her partner of 12 years. In her spare time, Watkins reads...a lot. “I’m a closet nerd,” Watkins jests. Her book shelf is full of anime, manga (a type of Japanese comic book) and books on social issues.

Please congratulate Kim as she takes on this new role for ACT and the individuals we support. Her friendly, outgoing, and attentive personality makes her a perfect fit for the job!

●
Billy Gets his License and a Step Closer to Community Employment

Billy’s wallet was a little thicker when he strolled into work on Monday, May 12. He was toting the paperwork to prove that he had passed his driver’s test.

Because community employment is a goal of Billy’s, ACT Works Employment Coordinator Davin Tipton urged Billy to get his license.

“It took some encouragement.” Tipton says of Billy’s reluctance. “He was intimidated by the responsibility having a license might bring.”

Despite his inhibitions, Billy got to work.

He diligently studied every page of the driver’s manual for 3 months before earning his permit in March. He then drove with a driver’s education instructor to prepare for the driving portion of the exam.

“After my sixth lesson, the teacher told me I had a knack for driving and I was ready to take the test.” Billy stated.

By the following Monday, he was a certified driver!

And to say Billy is proud is an understatement. “I feel great about it!” Billy exclaims as he pulls out the documentation from his wallet.

He is now working on getting a car – looking at car ads and creating a budget.

Everyone in ACT Works is so proud about his accomplishment and the opportunities it will bring.

“We are so excited for him!” ACT Works Manager Bob Meier says. “This was a great way for Billy to prove to himself that he can take challenges head on and be successful. We are floored that he is that much closer to getting a job in the community.”

His next step: working with Vocational Rehabilitation to discover where his career path may lead.

Old Navy, a Great Place to Shop AND Work

Jared, who received services through ACS, began working at Old Navy last November. Since then, he has gone from being a seasonal employee on the Truck Team to full-time staff, taking on additional custodial duties.

Store Manger Leslie Abel believes he still hasn’t reached his full potential at her store and could take on even more responsibilities. “He is a little shy; so I have been urging him to interact with customers. I feel he would make a great addition to the sales floor.”

His professional growth is no doubt in part to Abel’s willingness to work with her employee’s schedule. Jared was having a hard time making it to work at his originally scheduled time, due to transportation difficulties. She immediately adjusted his hours. From that point on they’ve never looked back.

“He is loyal, timely, and dependable,” says Abel of Jared’s work ethic. “I never worry about him not being here.”

“I like to work!” exclaims Jared. “I try hard to come to work every day.”

His devotion to his work is so great ACS has been able to gradually fade out of the picture. The routine check-ins performed with Jared and Abel to evaluate his progress will be

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ending soon. Jared continues to meet the expectations of his employer and make great progress.

Thank you, Old Navy, for continuing to be a good partner in the community. And thank you, Leslie Abel, for being everything we think a manager should be—supportive, positive, and encouraging employees to do their best.

ACT Job Fair Thursday, May 29 at 10am - 3pm 2111 Burlington

ACT is looking for positive and enthusiastic individuals to join our team. If you are looking for an opportunity to work in a challenging but rewarding field helping individuals with disabilities, ACT is the place for you.

ACT provides an array of programs and services throughout Mid-Missouri to about 400 persons with disabilities annually, in the areas of employment, residential services, and day programs.

ACT provides its employees with a competitive starting salary and benefits package. Benefits include Health, Dental and Vision Insurance as well as a 403b retirement plan.

Please submit an application online prior to the event.

Mark and Don Each Honored with a Patriot Award

On Wednesday, May 7th Community Living Director Don Lafferty and Executive Director Mark Hassemer were honored by Larry Barnette and Larry Collins with Patriot Awards.

Both Larry’s are currently in the Army Reserve. Barnette has been deployed 4 times and Collins once.

“These guys serve our country and then return to service jobs as Program Supervisors here at ACT.” Hassemer states. “They are the ones that should be honored.”

You can learn more about the Patriot Award at the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve website.

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### Upcoming Events

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<td>June 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 17 &amp; 18</td>
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