Dear Friends of ACT,

I’ve watched over the last few weeks the build-up, and then the final culmination, of the amazing and entertaining 33-year television career of David Letterman. His final Top 10 list made me laugh. And it made me think, too... about change.

Twenty-six years ago, with hopes of doing something innovative, we built a building here in Columbia. Not knowing what would happen, we moved ahead, almost like Ray Kinsella in Field of Dreams, responding to a voice in his head and a tug in his heart that said, “If you build it, he will come.”

Shoeless Joe Jackson walked out from between the corn stalks and on to the field that Ray built. He brought his teammates, too. And they almost made a fool of Ray when it looked like his fascination with the 1919 Chicago White Sox was going to be the ruin of his Iowa farm.

Unpredictably, we had a stranger unbidden appear to us, too. He suggested that we use our new building to create a media recycling center. We did. And they came.

People with disabilities, and those without, working together, side by side, learned from each other, grew, experienced the dignity of work, and put some money in their pockets that translated into freedom. It was new. It was novel.

Media attention came, too. And so did donors. Warehouses filled up. And brokers paid us to haul away tapes, and then plastic. We became known for this work. And it’s been confirmed to me, even recently, that no one else in the U.S. is apparently doing what we’re doing.

But the good in that blinded us to the better. The people we serve can work in the community. And like anyone else, they deserve at least the minimum wage. Medicaid regulations changed. We had to change, too. We have.

As you’ll read in this newsletter and the ones we’ve published over the last few months, Job Preparation, with a prescribed timeline, is how we do our work now, shepherding job seekers toward full employment in the community.

Another change has come, too. I’ve hinted at it before. But I’ll say it plainly now. We’ve looked at the spreadsheets and determined, along with our Finance Committee of the Board, that we can’t keep doing what we’re doing with the recycling program.

What we will do next and when we will do it, have not been determined. But I expect that in the not too distant future the work floor on which our workers disassemble and grind tape cases and disks, may be filled with offices. That might give us the opportunity to save money on office space we currently rent.

Equally as unpredictable, a new player has approached us, this time by phone. He is a key leader in another organization that, to our surprise, is recycling media and putting folks to work who might not otherwise have that opportunity. We are not alone. And...we may be able to build something new, together.

I don’t know how this will turn out. Even though
the future of recycling at ACT will be decidedly different, our vision and our mission for serving people with disabilities will not.

Perhaps Jerry Seinfeld was being prophetic during the final Top Ten List when he said, “Dave, I have no idea what I’ll do when you go off the air. You know, I just thought of something. I’ll be fine.”

When we built it 26 years ago, we could not possibly know what it would turn into today. And today, we cannot possibly imagine exactly what it will be like 25 years from now. But we’ll be fine. And I expect that it will be good.

Until next month,
Mark

P.S. Amanda Blumhorst has been my DFO for more than 12 years. I want to thank her for her dedication to ACT. She’s absolutely the best with the numbers. Importantly, she’s also fully bought in to our mission. She gets it. I wish her all the best.

ACT’s Administrative Support Team Welcomes Cindy Carpenter as Director of Financial Operations

Cynthia Carpenter is adjusting just fine in her first weeks at ACT!

“It’s like coming home!” She says referring to joining ACT after years spent working at the Judevine Center for Autism in the St. Louis area.

Carpenter was a Financial Controller at Judevine, an agency that serves children and adults with autism. She then worked at DeSales Community Housing for six years, also as a Financial Controller, before joining ACT as Director of Financial Operations.

If you can’t tell from her professional history, non-profits and numbers are in her wheelhouse.

“A passion for analytical math runs high in my family. Many cousins are CFO’s, plus numerous math teachers including my sister and father,” Carpenter says.

She has volunteered and been involved in fundraising efforts for several non-profits, including agencies that provide services to people with disabilities.

Carpenter has two daughters and four beautiful grandchildren. When she is not with the grandkids, she is actively involved with various community organizations.

We are thrilled to have Carpenter at ACT! Welcome home.

Dolly Cappa and ASM are Wonderful Partners with ACT’s Community Employment Services

Dolly Cappa, Advantage Sales and Marketing (ASM) Associate District Manager, is proud to tell you that two out of the four employees she has received through Community Employment Services (CES) have been top sellers – and in one individual’s case more than once.

ASM does the demonstrations for many companies, including giving food samples, for Sam’s Club here in Columbia. Cappa runs the demos in Columbia and oversees the demos for two other clubs in Missouri.

About two years ago, CES contacted Cappa about partnering with ACS with the purpose of gaining quality employees.

Cappa was eager about the opportunity. Since then, she has hired four employees, all of whom still work for her.

“I have a great relationship with CES!” Cappa explains. “There is an open line of communication with the job coaches – I feel comfortable contacting them.”

As with many employees that find their stride after some time on the job, Cappa explains how she has watched one individual from ACS improve her performance while on the clock.

“The first person I hired from CES has come out of her shell…she used to be really quiet. She recently earned second place in sales!” Cappa says.

Another individual hired through CES that had moved out of the area contacted Cappa after returning to Columbia and Cappa gladly rehired her.

It is easy to say that the relationship between ASM and CES has been mutually beneficial. Four people now have a paycheck and ASM hit the jackpot with top sales people!

Thank you Cappa and ASM for your partnership!
Soft Skills: A Hiring Distinctive and Key to Success in the Workplace

What skills does an employee need to succeed on the job?


Those qualifications are important. For many jobs, they’re mandatory. In today’s professional environment demonstrating soft skills can be key to landing a job. More importantly, employing these soft skills can also lead to long-term success on the job.


These are the intangible traits employers are also looking for. These are the soft skills.

“Today, employers want to see a candidate’s ability to show value in the workplace beyond the job description,” says Stefanie Cross-Wilson, co-president of recruitment and talent management at Hudson. “It’s the tangible skills or core competencies that get you in the door. It’s the soft skills that often get you the job.”

“Job Preparation Services works with individuals on developing soft skills. We realize the value of these skills for job success and continued career growth,” says Jessica Mahon, Director of Employment Services.

Training for and developing these skills is a major component of the work ACT does in Job Preparation Services. They are taught, implemented, and polished to a shine.

Each trainee originally starts with a set of ten goals, the majority of which are soft skills that he or she works on. When one goal is accomplished, trainees focus on the remaining goals, or add a new one.

The program has a documenting system used solely to document progress toward meeting these goals.

“It is a very effective tool,” says Program Manager Bob Meier. “It pinpoints the skills that the individuals need to work on and tracks their progress. I can also organize the data to easily communicate with staff about the needs of any individual.”

Because the job market is highly competitive, acquiring these soft skills is vital. Others vying for the same job may have more experience. However, a candidate gains a distinct edge if she demonstrates she is easy to work with and possesses many of the traits listed above.

Teaching these traits to individuals in Job Preparation is crucial to their success in the workforce. People with disabilities typically don’t start their job searches with a level playing field. Widely held prejudices and stereotypes, and even simple misunderstandings, stack the odds in favor of those who don’t have a disability.

Job Preparation allows the people we support to move beyond the acquisition of tangible qualifications, into the intangibles, where a new level of success awaits.

Cruise King Entertainment Owner Turns Up the Volume in CI Program

If you hear the sounds of a party coming from what we at ACT call the blue building, there’s no need to notify the authorities. Every couple of months Danny Roberts, owner of Cruise King Entertainment, comes to rock the house for individuals in ACT’s Community Integration (CI) program.

As soon as he starts playing hits like Blue Suede Shoes, Shake Rattle and Roll, and The Twist, individuals and staff alike are up on their feet.

Kim Rodgers, Job Prep Supervisor, and Emily, an individual in Job Prep, meeting about goals.

CI DSP Phoebe and Buddy, individual in CI, tearing up the dance floor.
“The music from the 50’s and 60’s is my favorite. Everyone enjoys the music from this era. So I play it primarily,” Roberts says.

Roberts was first introduced to ACT when he was asked to DJ the annual holiday party. Since then, his role has grown to include making regular visits, much to the delight of the dance party lovers at ACT.

“I enjoy coming to do this!” exclaims Roberts. "I did the Carnival Cruise line for years and made my own business around music and performing.”

Roberts also does impersonations—Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash, to name just a couple.

“I like it when Danny comes to ACT,” says Ruth, who attends CI. “I like getting to see him and dance!”

“Michael Jackson is my favorite artist!” says Nancy, another individual in CI. "I always request his music.”

Thanks, Danny, for taking the time to bring the party—and so much joy—to ACT!•

Community Living Welcomes Heath

Just shy of his 40th birthday, Heath moved into an ACT supported home on April 1st. He joins new roommates Larry and William, who are happy to share a home. Together, they are a tremendous trio!

Heath is from the St. Louis area. He’s adjusting well to his less urbanized Columbia home.

“He is looking forward to going to the famous Memorial Day Air Show,” says Mark Pickett, Community Living Supervisor.

Heath is close with his aunt and uncle, whom he communicates with on a regular basis via email. They plan to visit to celebrate Heath’s big 40th birthday, a major milestone.

Heath is somewhat of a techie. He enjoys electronics and computers. These interests may come in to play soon. He and his public administrator are exploring the possibility of his participation in ACT’s Job Preparation Services.

Please help us welcome Heath to ACT and Columbia! •

Happy Birthday ACT

ACT turns 40 this year! The big event will be SATURDAY, AUGUST 8TH at Tolton High School!

We are pleased to announce we will be partnering with the CoMo Derby Dames for a unique, fun, and interactive event.

We cannot wait to CELEBRATE with Columbia!

Stay connected with ACT to be a part of the celebration, see fun throwback photos, and more! We will use the hashtag #ACTTurns40. •

Support ACT by shopping Gerbes, Schnucks, and Amazon

You can now donate to ACT by shopping at Gerbes, Schnucks, and AmazonSmile!

For Gerbes and Schnucks, simply apply for their community/rewards program, pick ACT as your designated charity, and shop away!

For AmazonSmile, create an account, pick ACT as your charity, and again, shop away!•
Tip from Tara June 2015: School’s out! School’s out!

For many children and families the anticipation of school being out for the summer is an exciting time with big plans of travel or attending various summer and sports camps.

However many parents of children with disabilities typically aren’t that excited about summer due to the need for specialized childcare and limited activities available for their children to participate in.

Summer is also a time that is more difficult to maintain a routine and full of more unexpected transitions.

Here are some ideas that might help make that summer a fun and exciting time for everybody:

- **Try to stick to a schedule and routine as much as possible even if it is different than the routine you have during the school year. It is impossible to keep to a schedule all day every day. Don't try. You will only end up frustrated. Try to maintain a few hours a day that are consistent and involve structured activities. This can be particularly helpful if the consistent, structured time is in the morning.**

- **Keep track of your busy schedule using a family calendar that outlines all activities. Using a visual calendar is often a good way to communicate upcoming events to individuals who have difficulty reading and using a calendar.**

- **Most kids love to play video games and watch television. During the summer it is easy to fall into the routine of our kids engaging in too much screen time. At the beginning of the summer make a summer “bucket list” of activities you want to complete before the end of the summer and try to complete the list. It may also be helpful to set a time limit on screen time for each day. Keeping kids physically active and working on some academic skills typically makes the transition back to school a lot easier.**

Here are some resources for activities and ideas to keep your family active and engaged in structured but fun activities this summer:

- www.comokidsfun.com
- midmokidsguide.com

Summertime can be a fun and exciting time for everybody in the family. Remember to make a plan when you can, and when you can't, don't stress yourself out. Predict for your child as much as possible about any changes in the routine.

Have a great summer everybody!

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**Upcoming Events**

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 21</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s Day (get your gift from AmazonSmile and support ACT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cool Tools &amp; Toys: Assistive Technology, Speaker Michelle Wheeler, SL, please RSVP</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 16</td>
<td>11:30a-1p</td>
<td>ACT Gold Sponsor of Women’s Network Luncheon, Peachtree Catering &amp; Banquet Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 26</td>
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<td>ADA 25th anniversary event at Orr St. Studios</td>
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<td>August 8</td>
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<td>ACT 40th event with the CoMo Derby Dames at Tolton High School</td>
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**ADA Celebrates 25 Years**

The Americans with Disabilities ACT celebrates its 25th anniversary this year!

Area agencies have come together for this important milestone to provide informative and fun events throughout the year.

A fun, community event will be held in Columbia, MO on Sunday, July 26th at Orr Street Studios starting at 11:00am.

More details are soon to come in our newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ pages.

If you value inclusion and equal rights, join us in commemorating the ADA.
GET CONNECTED

Come follow us on social media:

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