

Dear Friends of ACT,

Unfortunately, high employment turnover and low pay are hallmarks of our business.

Most of our funding as a service provider comes from Medicaid. Therefore, we have no ability to negotiate the rates at which we recover costs for the services we provide. They're dictated.

The result: there isn't enough money to provide our dedicated staff the pay the market bears were they working in another sector.

I've never seen this predicament more vividly portrayed than in the video *The Cost of Compassion* co-produced by Oregon Rehabilitation Association and ANCOR. Please search for "*The Cost of Compassion*" online.

While it is inspiring to see Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) sacrifice so much for the care of others, at the same time it's horrifying to see the trauma often caused when a DSP must quit her or his job to be able to earn enough money to support a family.

Last week, President Obama announced the publication of the long-anticipated overtime rule that defines exemptions for executive, administrative, professional, and other employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

This rule will have a major impact on ACT and our employees.

On one hand, it will likely result in some of our mid-level employees receiving fair pay for the level of work they do. On the other hand, if implemented poorly, it could challenge us and others in this field financially.

The rule will raise the salary threshold for exempt employees from \$455 per week to \$913 per week. For a fulltime employee, that's \$47,476 annually. The threshold doubles.

This would impact many supervisory employees at ACT and at other providers who are currently classified exempt, earn more than \$23,660 per year and less than \$47,476, and meet a duties test.

This rule will require us to raise the salaries of employees in that category to \$47,476 per year, or keep their wages the same and make them hourly employees. We are required to pay hourly employees time and a half for work in excess of 40 hours per week. Our other option is to limit hourly employees to 40 hours per week.

ANCOR, the group I mentioned above, is doing something about this. Happily, they've succeeded, at least in providing us a reprieve while the details of the plan come in to focus.

The message is clear, as service providers, we want to comply with the new regulations, but we need real help in the form of

Medicaid enhancements, increases that will allow us to adequately compensate these critical staff.

ACT is a member of ANCOR. We're glad the SOS campaign to Save Our Services is working.

The Department of Labor has heard the message and agreed to implement a limited non-enforcement policy for providers of Medicaid-funded services for individuals with intellectual or other developmental disabilities (I/DD) in residential homes and facilities with 15 or fewer beds. The non-enforcement period will last from December 1, 2016 (the effective date of the rule), to March 17, 2019.

We understand that non-enforcement is not compliance. Compliance is our goal. So we'll be making changes during the second half of this calendar year to get as close to compliance as we can afford.

But this is not enough. It gives us some time. But it does not give us the funding we need through Medicaid to finish the job.

Unfortunately, many who have listened to our call for a way to gradually implement the rule hear it as a call to kill the new regulation.

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Mark Hassemer
Executive Director

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No. We cannot throw the baby out with the bath water. I'll mix another metaphor and say this is surely the time to thread the needle. We need to get this just right.

We cannot solve this problem on the backs of the people who receive our services nor those who provide them. The video shows this clearly. If you haven't done it, please go look up "*The Cost of Compassion*".

ACT SELLS

26 Year-Old Business to AMVAC

26 years in the recycling business recently came to an end with great hope and a few tears.

In early May, American Military Veterans Assistance Corporation (AMVAC) took possession of ACT's recycling program, formerly called ACT Works.

"We are thrilled to pass the business along to another agency whose mission aligns with ours," Director of ACT Career Services Jessica Mahon said.

AMVAC is a non-profit organization created, directed, and run by veterans. They operate two facilities in St. Louis, MO and Alton, IL. (Visit www.amvacstl.com)

Veterans work to recycle or properly dispose of computers, computer components, laptops, microwaves, and other electronics. They say, "if

Let's adjust Medicaid rates so services continue and organizations like ACT can operate while adequately compensating the dedicated staff who give so much for the wellbeing of others.

Join me in adding your voice today.

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!•



Executive Director Mark Hassemer shaking hands with James Kravec, AMVAC founder.

it plugs into a wall our veterans can recycle it." Now they can add the recycling of VHS tapes and other media to their list of recyclables they keep out of the landfill.

James Kravec, two-time Iraq War Veteran, founded the agency in 2011 with \$10,000 from his military pension and a burning desire to assist returning veterans re-enter the workforce. He knows what it's like to come home and struggle to find employment.

His vision is to mentor, employ, and find meaningful positions in society for veterans of all branches of the military. The AMVAC motto is: "Recycling is our process. Veteran employment is our objective."

When AMVAC learned that ACT's media materials were for sale, Kravec leaped at the opportunity.

ACT began recycling videocassette tapes in 1991. Soon after, the program experienced fame. When you say ACT, some people still immediately think recycling.

The recycling business made it possible for ACT to employ individuals with disabilities in its Affirmative Industry Program.

But two years ago, a Medicaid Waiver definition change forced ACT to change services. That meant the end of an era for ACT Works. Recycling had to go.

And so it has. Now we can watch as an organization that provides valuable services to veterans thrives, knowing we took part in their success.

The deal has been sealed.

By early July all media material and recycling equipment will be in AMVAC's possession. Soon, their system of accepting material and payment will be up and running. Until then, recycling services can still be purchased through ACT's website; current and previous orders will continue to be honored.

"I am very pleased that AMVAC has acquired the recycling business we operated for over two decades. I hope it provides future employment for many veterans for years to come," ACT Executive Director, Mark Hassemer, says.

For ACT, it's the end of an era. But we like where this change is taking us.•

STEP Graduates Its Fifth Class

Each year in August we welcome another group of career-driven high school students into Seamless Transition through Enhanced Partnership (STEP). In May, we celebrate their graduation from the Program.

On May 12, five seniors from Columbia high schools gathered with family, friends, partnering agencies, and supporters to receive their STEP diplomas.

Mis'hael, Kylie, Brandon, Roman, and Javion took the stage, calmed their nerves, and spoke about their professional growth and where they want to go from here.

Jacquie Bowles, STEP teacher, says, "Each intern is unique, wonderful, and has a lot to offer."

This is the fifth class to complete the program. Michelle Zvanut, Boone Hospital Vice President of Human Resources reflects, "This is the best partnership Boone has been privileged with being involved in. The program aligns well with Boone's mission. Young adults thrive when they have purpose. We are glad to be a part of the success of these interns."

Many people at Boone work tirelessly with the partnering agencies (ACT, Vocational Rehabilitation, Boone County Family Resources, Central Missouri Regional Office, and Columbia Public Schools). Each is critical to STEP's success.

Bill DeLima and Randy Frye in Human Resources have STEP on their minds year-round. They are constantly considering and planning everything they can do to ensure everything runs smoothly and the experience is beneficial to interns and Boone Hospital.

Department heads are dedicated to this program. They make sure everyone is on the same page and lines of communication are open. Everyone is a part of a team.

This thoughtful dedication maximizes the potential for every STEP student.

Carol Smarr, Transition Coordinator, said to the students during the graduation ceremony, "I look back on the first few days of the school year and am amazed and proud of you all. You have gained incredible work experience and skills that will set you apart from others."

Mis'hael worked in Rehabilitation and the South Tower stocking linens, monitoring equipment, and doing walker runs.

In her time at Boone Hospital she improved her communications skills, gained confidence by having real work experience, and learned it's okay to ask for help.

"I want a job!" Mis'hael exclaimed.

Kylie worked in Environmental Sciences. She cleaned offices, restrooms, and she says, spent a great deal of time showing people where the nearest bathroom is.

She learned that she has the skills and aptitude to work at a phone store or at a store stocking shelves.

"I can't wait to get a job, do really good, and get paid!" Kylie said.

Brandon worked in Nutrition and Distribution where he stocked trays, operated the dishwasher, put dishes away, and managed waste.

To be successful, he learned he needs to monitor his talking, increase persistence and consistency, and ask for help when needed.

His short-term career goal is to work at a video game store or pet store. Long-term, he wants a career in astronomy.

Roman worked in Central Services. He was in charge of opening shipments the hospital receives and dispersing them to their ultimate destination.

This is a very busy part of the hospital. Roman really had to evaluate his tasks and his performance to ensure he was being efficient with his time. He learned to multitask, focus, and find strategies to keep himself on schedule.

He got better at communicating effectively, presenting a professional appearance, being accountable, and working as a team player.

His short-term career goals are to work at Andy's Frozen Custard, a dirt bike shop, MC Sports, or Bass Pro. In the long-term, he is interested in being a pilot or a mechanical engineer.

Javion worked in Patient Care Support Services. His role at Boone was making sure patients were taken care of and had a pleasant experience at the hospital.

At the ceremony, Javion and the STEP team were proud to announce that he was offered a job at Boone Hospital!

"It was a phenomenal experience!" Javion exclaims. "I love coming here because I want to take

care of the patients. The Boone Hospital employees are supportive, helpful and respectful."



In the future, Javion would like a career as a Patient Care Tech or a 9-1-1 Dispatcher.

STEP interns gained valuable, real work experience while still in high school. They also learned more about themselves professionally and personally. This definitely gives them an edge over others entering the work force.

STEP Career Specialist Barb Wright said, "We watched five tentative students turn into capable adults."

Good luck STEP graduates! We will be watching and cheering you on. •

THREE MEN IN COMMUNITY LIVING TAKE FIRST VACATION

Roommates Kelly, Gary and Derrick headed north in April with Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Shelly Gardner and Jason Due to Chicago. Without a doubt, they had the time of their lives.

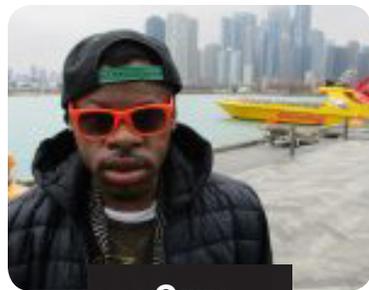
A long list of first time experiences was checked off: first vacation, first time in Chicago, and first time in a hotel, just to name a few.

The men had been planning the trip for a year, saving and

waiting for the perfect time to go on the 4-day trip to the Windy City.

“I didn’t like the drive but it was fun. We did so much. I wish we could go back!” Derrick said.

When they arrived, it was cold and rainy. But that did not stop them. They went to the aquarium, saw Soldier Field, took Michigan Avenue by storm, visited the Navy Pier, and dined like kings.



Gary



Derrick

“I loved eating out every meal!” Derrick exclaimed. “We went over my birthday, so I got to pick the restaurant that night, pizza and cake.”

Shedd Aquarium was a favorite for everybody. The varieties of fish, especially piranhas, had everyone mesmerized.

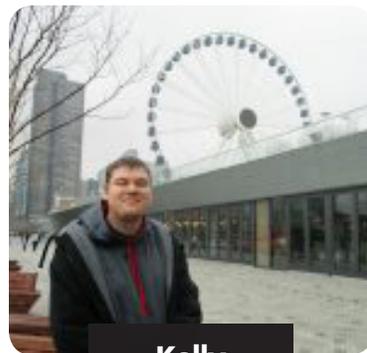
A second favorite was the hotel. “The bathroom was so nice,” Kelly said. Gary, meanwhile, took full advantage of the complimentary breakfast.

“He tried everything on the menu,” Shelly joked.

The three really bonded during this memorable vacation. Gary bought the birthday boy a present, a White Sox ball cap. Gary liked it so much he got one for himself, too.

They have already started planning their next trip.

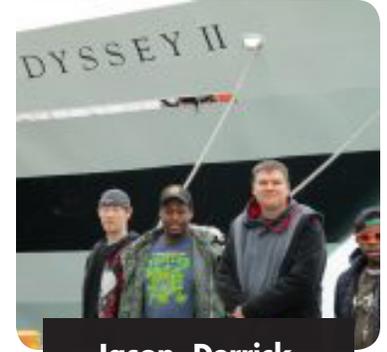
“I want to go to Vegas!” Gary said. Derrick, who’s not a fan of long road trips, says, “I’ll go to St. Louis next year.” •



Kelly



Jason, Derrick, Gary, & Kelly



Jason, Derrick, Kelly, & Gary

CLARISSA COLLIER

PROMOTED TO DAY PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

The decision to promote Clarissa Collier to the Day Program’s Purple Team Supervisor was an easy one.

“She was selected because of her experience, knowledge of the Department, enthusiasm, and work ethic,” says Day Program Manager Michelle Bell.

Collier recently celebrated her six year anniversary of working in the Day Program. She started as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) providing direct support to individuals served.

A few years later, Collier was promoted to Mentor, providing additional support and guidance to DSPs and individuals in the Program.

Now as a Supervisor, she is managing both. It’s no easy task.

“No day in the life of a Supervisor is a cookie-cutter day. No two days are the same,” Bell says.

Her job requires the usual interpersonal skills. On top of that are requirements that she schedule, attend, and prepare for Individualized Planning meetings for her team; monitor the schedule of activities

and medical administrations; provide support for DSPs; attend Department- and Agency-wide meetings; track her team’s trainings to ensure they don’t expire, and so much more.

Along with the new title comes a new office. She got a new space she shares with the Red Team Supervisor.

“It was a bit of a change. But I got right on the ball, and I’m getting it down,” Collier says of her promotion.

New in the position, Collier is still getting to know everyone on her team and organizing the Team’s room to align with her vision.

Known for her artistic abilities, Collier has made sure the Team’s room and her office are aesthetically pleasing.

“I like being a Supervisor a lot!” Collier exclaims. “I have a great team with excellent staff. That makes a big difference.”

“Clarissa is a great team player and a very fast learner,” Bell states. “We are pleased to have her as a part of our management team!”

Congratulations, Clarissa! •

JUNE 2016

TIP FROM TARA

THE TALK

I think it is safe to say that most parents thinking about having “the talk” with their children who our entering puberty meet this task feeling excited or completely confident.

Most parents I know feel a great deal of anxiety just thinking about it.

When is the right time? Is my child ready? Will they be embarrassed? Can we both handle it? How much information should I share? Did I do a good job? Did I leave things in a space that will allow my child to feel comfortable in asking questions when they need to?

Not all parents handle this conversation the same. Some parents avoid the conversation completely. Parents of children with disabilities have a lot to think about when they have this talk and there is another “talk” that weighs on many parents.

I work with many families who ask when, how, and if they should talk to their children about their disability. This topic typically comes up about the time of the traditional “talk” for a lot of families. Thinking about your child growing up is a scary thought and talking to them about becoming an adult is even scarier.

I don’t have all the answers, but it has been my experience that it is best to provide individuals with all the information you can.

Provide them with the truth.

Talking about things that are hard for individuals and explaining why it might be more difficult for them seems to be helpful in the long run, even though starting the conversation and dialogue is never easy.

I remember the first time my son Rye tried to ask me about his disability. He referred to it as being “sick” and asked me if he “was okay”. I was initially taken back that he would perceive his differences in this way.

I knew right then it was time to have “the talk”.

I have taken the approach of explaining to Rye that his autism diagnosis does present it’s challenges but it also has a lot to do with why he is so good at certain skills.

I’ve explained that he is not sick but his brain works differently than most other people.

I’ve told him that autism makes it hard for him to talk to other people sometimes and to understand that other people think differently than him. I’ve also told him autism is what makes him so good at Legos, why he always remembers a lot of details and facts about his favorite things, and why he can always pull a picture into his brain and remember it forever.

There is a lot to consider when talking with your child and the best advice I can give is to have a plan.

Setting and maintaining a positive tone about everyone’s uniqueness is usually a good place to start. Everyone is unique, has different likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and physical characteristics. Like anything in life it’s probably best that your child hear information from you first to prevent confusion and to avoid false information. You know your child better than anybody. You know what they are capable of understanding and what they can ultimately handle. Being aware of who you are and what makes you different isn’t a bad thing. Being aware, understanding differences and focusing on ability is what makes a great Advocate.

Having “the talk” is the first thing you can do to ensure your child becomes one. •

**Provide
them with
the Truth.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 19
Father’s Day

July 4
Independence Day
ACT facility based programs
and offices closed for

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

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