

Dear Friends of ACT,

If you read this newsletter with any regularity, you know that change is a common theme. Here we go again.

Anticipating a special visit to our ACT offices this week, a few of my colleagues and I started taking a closer look at the Day Program and ACT Career Services, in an effort to better tell the story of the dramatic changes we've experienced over the past two years.

You've heard it here before. When faced with strong external pressure to change, we were disoriented and inclined to push back. We got angry. We wondered if people knew how upsetting the new ways would be, and how hard it would be to let go of something we were proud we built.

But we settled down and gained our bearings. That process of reorienting, imagining, and recreating our future began with grounding ourselves in our Mission and Vision.

When we revisited our Vision, we saw that we weren't always hitting the mark. In the ACT Works program, we weren't living up to what we said we believed. We'd been lulled into inaction by the comfort of routine.

This is our Vision:

ACT's vision is an inclusive community where everyone belongs, participates and is accepted.

These words helped us find the creativity and courage to move forward with new programs, to say goodbye to the past, and press on.

Great story. But there's more.

While preparing to welcome Mark Stringer, Director, Department of Mental Health; Valerie Huhn, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities; Duane Shumate, Director, Employment and Training; and several of their colleagues who run State-operated programs, we noticed that the language of our Vision statement falls short of our aspirations.

It's a big deal to have Missouri's top leaders in the profession visit with us, asking questions, learning about some of our stumbles and recoveries, and, genuinely celebrating.

They thanked us for our candor, for not papering over the flaws. They applauded our innovation.

They looked at the empty room where our recycling equipment once operated. No one was there working. They said, "You did what we asked you to do." People with disabilities are not congregated on that work floor anymore. They're out working or seeking work in the community, or they've chosen to do something else.

Our visitors left saying they got what they envisioned for the visit: part instruction, part motivation.

But they didn't go without us first telling them our Vision was going to be revisited. We're going to talk about it. And we intend to go back to our Board to propose a change to the last word: accepted. We don't want persons with disabilities to merely be accepted. We want them to be valued.

There's a big experience gap between the receiving ends of those two words.

I cannot close without acknowledging how extraordinarily proud I was that day of our ACT employees. Thanks especially to Jessica, Michelle, and Craig.

After the visit from the State officials, I was keyed up and a little drained. Much of that feeling was driven by how deeply satisfying and fulfilling it is to see dedicated people with direction accomplish so much.

This newsletter is full of profiles of new staff members who have recently joined us at ACT. When you read about them, you'll want to meet them. I know they'll make me proud, too, as we keep changing for the betterment of the people we serve.

Until next month,

Mark



In This Issue

Crystal Leaves Boonville for Community Living in Columbia

Cash Saver Hires Through ACS and Looking For Another Perfect Fit

Meet Two New Members of the Financial Team

ACT Welcomes Craig Valone, New Director of Day Program

Say Hello to Bethany Rawlings, ACT's New Administrative Coordinator



Crystal Leaves Boonville for COMMUNITY LIVING IN COLUMBIA

Crystal had been considering moving out of her grandma's house in Boonville for years. But nothing ever fell into place. A month ago she met with Community Living Manager Carrie Griffith and decided she was ready.

"This time it just felt right," Crystal says. "I wanted to move because I knew ACT would allow me to live more independently. The house is beautiful and is really accessible."

Crystal has used a wheelchair since she was four years old. Being able to maneuver around a house is a must.

"I am absolutely thrilled with the bathroom because I can actually get into it...I hadn't been able to take a shower independently in over ten years!" Crystal says.

Weeks later she was all settled in. Her impressive collection of Disney princesses and framed accolades decorate her room.

She has also already taken a trip to Kansas City to see Disney on Ice, a trip she never thought possible.

She is not only teaching herself about her abilities by doing things she never thought she could do. Everyone who works with her at ACT is learning, too.

Crystal plans to join ACT's Health and Safety and Accessibility committees, visit the Kansas City Zoo, tour Branson, and make new friends in her new city.

"I am anxious to get around Columbia! I would like to go to see a movie. I haven't been in 10 years!" Crystal says.

Before living in Boonville, Crystal lived in Texas, where she graduated high school with honors. She loves gospel music, Disney movies, and Facebook.

She is very close with her grandma, who always encourages her. It was her grandma who urged Crystal to publish her book of poetry called *Inspiration From Above*.

Crystal says, "After it was published, my grandma called the local paper to tell them. It was then front-page news! Representative Caleb Jones sent me the newspaper clipping congratulating me."

The poem and letter hang framed on one of her walls in her new room.

Grandma was also thrilled when Crystal chose to move to ACT. "My grandma says I am meant to be [at ACT]. She knows there is a bigger purpose for me here. My joining the committees to add perspective is proof."

We agree.

Crystal continues, "I am thankful for this opportunity. I absolutely love the staff and my new home." •



UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 6TH — Nurses Day (Nurses Week first week of May)

MAY 8TH — Mother's Day

MAY 30TH — Memorial Day (ACT facility-based offices closed)

Sandra Thompson
On Her Chopper



SANDRA THOMPSON JOINS ACT AS NEW ACCOUNT CLERK

The ACT community welcomes our new Account Clerk, Sandra Thompson!

She now handles accounts payable, payroll, "and anything else they ask me to do..." Thompson says.

Sandra has lived in Columbia most of her life with her "awesome" husband. "He spoils me rotten and has made me believe I deserve it," Thompson jokes.

Her family also includes a 29-year-old daughter, a 16-month-old grandson, and a 10-year-old Yorkie.

Thompson brings over 25 years experience in various business and accounting roles to ACT. "I've done it all," she says.

Prior to her accounting work, she served 12 years in the military.

Outside of work, Thompson sells Pampered Chef and loves riding on her motorcycle with her husband, who taught her to ride. In June she'll be exploring the Ozarks in Arkansas with friends from her motorcycle club.

Thompson was hired in ACT's Financial Department during a period of gre To whom? The neighbors? at change. Despite the shifts in personnel, she feels confident in her program. "We are a good team. We are all on the same page in that we want to make ACT a better place and are headed in the right direction with this group"

ACT is glad to have Thompson and the depth of knowledge in financial management she brings. •

SAY HELLO TO

Bethany Rawlings

ACT's New Administrative Coordinator

If you call or visit ACT, Bethany Rawlings, ACT's new Administrative Coordinator, will greet you.

"I'm a people person," Rawlings says. "I love helping people and taking care of business. Everyone at ACT is great and has been so welcoming!"

Rawlings is from Camdenon and has lived in Columbia for five years with her "wonderful" boyfriend.

"I love living in Columbia!" Rawlings exclaims.

She graduated from William Woods University with a major in American Sign Language Interpreting (a wonderful asset to bring to ACT) and a minor in Art.

Before coming to ACT, Rawlings was a nanny. "I still keep in touch with the family. They're like my second family," Rawlings says.

In her spare time, Rawlings likes to get crafty. She even hosts a weekly scrapbooking get-together with friends.

Rawlings says, "I love to sew, paint, and scrapbook. When I'm not doing those things, you can usually find me in an antique store checking out old stuff."

Please welcome Rawlings to the family. Stop in and say hi.

interesting & funny FACTS about Bethany

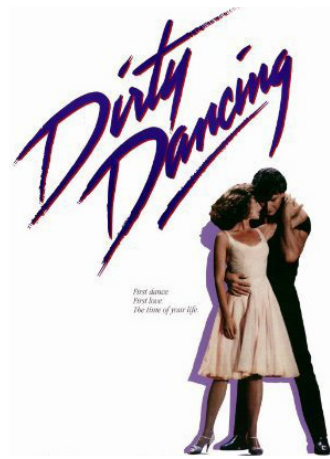
Favorite food

Sushi
*When we eat it, it's
"no sushi left behind"*

Favorite color

orange

Favorite movie



Favorite song

Good Vibrations
by Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch

Interesting Fact

I was the 2006 Time Magazine Person of the Year

Fun Fact

I have a "dad joke" sense of humor.
*If you come up with any good puns,
please share them with me. •*



ACT Welcomes

Craig Valone

New Director of Day Program

On April 18th Craig Valone greeted Day Program individuals and employees as the new Director.

ACT's Day Program provides daily activities to address individual goals in various areas such as socialization, safety, communication, etc. and to provide increased access to the community through on-site, facility-based activities and off-site, community outings.

"ACT's reputation in the community is what brought me here," Valone says of his decision to join the ACT family. "I have heard nothing but positives from current and past employees and many community members."

Valone has a deep history providing much-needed human services at Burrell Behavioral Health here in Columbia.

He began his career serving in the Army and Army Reserves. In 2005 Valone was deployed to Iraq. "This period taught me a great deal about the importance of making our time and work matter," Valone says.

His impressive education includes a Masters in Counseling from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and a Masters in Administrative Studies from Missouri State University.

Valone is from Erie, Pennsylvania and has lived in Columbia since 2009 with his wife of 12 years, Tonia, and two sons Mark and Luke.

In his spare time Valone likes to work on his small farm with his sheep, chickens and ducks. He loves being outdoors with his family canoeing, practicing archery, and participating in 4H activities.

Valone will never turn down a good cup of coffee and Chinese food.

We are pleased to welcome Valone to ACT.

"Members of our community deserve quality care and I wanted to be a part of that at ACT," Valone says. "I would like to express my appreciation for how welcoming everyone has been." •

CASH SAVER

Hires Through ACS and is Seeking Another Perfect Fit



Not long after the Cash Saver grocery store chain opened in Columbia, ACT Career Services (ACS) Career Specialist Dustin Murray knew James would be a perfect fit for the business. He approached David Ratliff, Cash Saver's District Supervisor about working with ACS to hire individuals served.

Ratliff never hesitated. "I was in need of a good, hard worker and he does a great job," Ratliff says. "James always has a great attitude. If I'm having a bad day, James can turn it around with his smile and sense of humor."

Cash Saver offers a new way to shop for groceries. You pay the wholesale cost plus 10%. Their store is located on Broadway in Columbia. They opened here in November, 2015. David has 15 years of experience working as a manager for grocery stores. Before Cash Saver, he worked for the CNR grocery chain. At CNR, he worked with an agency similar to ACT to employ people with disabilities.

James currently works two days each week stocking shelves. David hopes to increase his hours as business picks up this summer.

"I would like to give him additional tasks as he gains more experience in the store," David says.

It doesn't hurt that James seems to be bringing in business. "He knows a lot of people in Columbia!" David says.

In the coming weeks David would like to hire another job seeker referred through ACS.

David knows the secret to success: take care of your customers and employees. James is no exception.

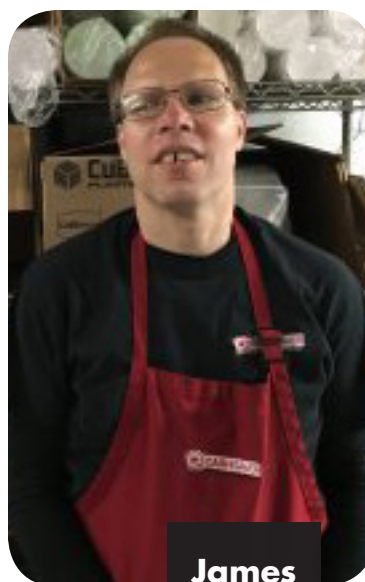
"In my experience, people with disabilities are appreciative of having a job. They just need an opportunity to prove themselves," David says. "I don't understand why more businesses don't take advantage of this valuable segment of the population." •

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

— Christopher Reeve



David Ratliff



James

SAY HELLO TO

Melody Troesser

New Financial Director

Melody Troesser is ACT's new Director of Financial Operations (DFO).

She's originally from the small town of Benton City (just outside of Mexico, MO) and currently lives just east of Fulton with her husband Mark, two daughters, Breanna and Lanelle, and a Great Dane named Angus.

She has a strong background in business and finance. She majored in Business Administration with Accounting at Columbia College and served as the Director of Accounting for Cole County Residential Services, Inc., an agency similar to ACT.

Prior to coming to ACT, she worked at Missouri School for the Deaf in a non-accounting role. That made her realize she wanted to go back to her roots in business.

When she heard about the job opening at ACT, she was thrilled. This opportunity could get her back to doing what she loves and at an agency whose mission she could get behind. And it did!

Troesser says, "Disability services are at a crucial point in history, defining person's lives based on their ability instead of a disability."

In her brief time at ACT she has transformed the department through her leadership and organizational prowess. She has positioned her team to fully utilize their strengths and made the program highly efficient. "Our department is smaller (three employees, including Melody), so we also have to be creative and utilize technology, new methods, and new software to accomplish what is needed while staying within accounting principles," Troesser says.

Troesser brings a tremendous amount of positive energy to the program and office. "I wholly believe that if we present the best version of ourselves, we can enjoy our work lives," she says.

Troesser urges ACT employees to bring questions or comments to her. There are so many revised duties among her staff. In fact, changes are still being made. "I believe my staff will move us forward," she says.

Troesser continues, "I have been impressed with the positive energy of everyone I have met who works with ACT and I believe our mission is what should drive each task."

Help us welcome Melody Troesser to the ACT family.



interesting & funny FACTS about Bethany

Favorite food

Just about any dessert

Favorite color

Coral

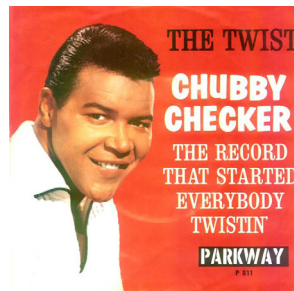
Hobbies

Gardening, walking, reading

Favorite song

Shut Up and Dance
by WALK THE MOON

or possibly,



The Twist
by Chubby Checker

Fun Fact

I love small engine flights,
such as the Barnstormers.
I have tried skydiving.
I enjoy zip-lining and dancing.

"Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

— AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA),
SIGNED BY FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH

"It means people on crutches and in a wheelchair can do anything."

— HANNAH MCFADDEN AT THE DEDICATION OF A STATUE SHOWING PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT IN THE WHEELCHAIR HE DESIGNED FOR HIMSELF

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

— Helen Keller

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