Dear Friends of ACT,

It’s wrong. I’m mad about it.

This injustice is more frustrating because our Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities developed it. We work with them every day.

Since they developed this way of assigning rates, they’re able to develop something else. One that’s fair. One that doesn’t create arbitrary classes of people and treat them differently.

That’s what I want. That’s what the ACT Board of Directors is calling for. We’ve decided we won’t sit still.

I believe it’s illegal to set rates this way. In the Code of Federal Regulations (42 CFR 447.205), the feds set forth the process for states to make changes in the methods and standards for setting payment rates. MO HealthNet and DMH should first propose a rule with the Secretary of State, publish it in the Missouri Register, and receive public comments (Chapter 536 RSMo).

My outrage about this isn’t about what’s legal. It’s personal.

In June, 2009, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) sent a report to the Senate Select Committee of MO HealthNet Provider Rate Equalization. In it they identified a concern with long-term contractor provider rates. They recognized that every year long-term providers go without a cost of living adjustment the gap between their rates and those of new contract provider rates grows.

To fix this inequity, they proposed that the Legislature establish a process to rebase rates on an annual basis. This would keep the community contract provider system healthy. The report said:

The Division, subject to appropriation or redirection of DMH funds, would address the oldest and lowest contract provider rates first and continue with the process until all long-term contract provider rates have been rebased to the current cost of providing services.

They thought (incorrectly) the process might take five years. I believe we are no closer now, in the third year since rebasing was first proposed, than we were when this started. Given the way rates have been assigned, the gap between rates may be even wider today.

How did this happen? The Division adopted a method for determining the level of care needed for each person living in an Individualized Supported Living (ISL) setting. They used a tool called the Support Intensity Scale to assign each person a number from 1 to 7. This number, a Rate Allocation Score (RAS), ranked people from the lowest service need (#1) to the highest level of need (#7).

ACT provides ISL services to almost 60 individuals. Eighteen of them have a RAS of 7. The average rate we receive for those 18 persons is approximately $18 per hour. A new person entering the system today with a RAS of 7 receives a rate of more than $35 per hour. The rate for someone entering today with a RAS of 1 is over $25 per hour!

As it stands now, the rate sticks with the person. People who leave one of our ISLs take their rates with them wherever they go. Those whose base levels of funding are stuck in the past end up losing.

ACT struggles because our costs increase and our
employees leave for better compensation. Better pay is right around the corner at agencies serving more people who recently entered the system.

We are not alone. Other agencies in Missouri face the harsh reality of this inequity.

It's absurd. It's as if government is saying people who've been in ISLs the longest are more accustomed to injustice. Let's let them languish while we provide better rates to those who recently qualified.

The outcome of this irrational process is predictable. That 2009 Report I mentioned earlier said failing to establish long-term provider rates that keep pace with inflation will cause some providers to reach a “tipping point” that could drive them out of business and create a dramatic crisis for the individuals they serve.

I'll pile on one more piece of nonsense that makes this whole thing worse. In 2015 the Missouri Legislature approved rebasing funds and a cost of living adjustment for agencies like ACT.

But the failure of the tobacco settlement funds to arrive as expected has Governor Jay Nixon worried. He's announced he'll cure the $50 million dollar shortfall by restricting funds.

Twenty percent of the $50M gap will be borne on the backs of people in Missouri with intellectual or other developmental disabilities.

The fingerprints of lots of people are on this problem. Take your pick. The Governor, the Legislature, the Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities have all played a role in this.

Join me in making some noise. Speak your mind.

I'm still mad about it.

Until next month,

Mark

Show-Me-Careers Columbia and the Columbia Employment Consortium Presents Three Inclusive Business of the Year Awards

Each October Show-Me-Careers and Columbia Employment Consortium (CEC) honor three Columbia businesses for inclusive hiring. The timing of the Inclusive Business of the Year awards is not a coincidence. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Show-Me-Careers and the Columbia Employment Consortium are work to increase disability employment in the community through collaborative efforts.

The 2015 winners are Kathleen Brown, Missouri Auto Auction, Mike Lindsey, University of Missouri Athletic Department, and Mickey Gerstner, Wendy's Clark Lane.

Jason Mize and Jeff Johnson of People First of Boone County presented the awards.

These businesses know the tangible benefits of hiring diverse, well-qualified candidates. They increased diversity of their staff by recruiting, hiring, training, and promoting people with disabilities.

“The selection process was difficult because so many businesses in our community this year are deserving,” said Director of ACT’s Career Services, Jessica Mahon

Show-Me-Careers and the Columbia Employment Consortium include: Alternative Community Training, Boone County Family Resources, Burrell Behavioral Health, Columbia Public Schools, Great Plains ADA Center, Job Point, MORE Group, Moresource, Services for Independent Living, Thompson Center, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and other representatives from the business and disability communities.

If you are interested in learning more, please visit www.abilitiesforbusiness.com www.adaintheworkplace.org www.showmecareers.org

Members of Show-Me-Careers Columbia and Columbia Employment Consortium include: Alternative Community Training, Boone County Family Resources, Burrell Behavioral Health, Columbia Public Schools, Great Plains ADA Center, Job Point, MORE Group, Moresource, Services for Independent Living, Thompson Center, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and other representatives from the business and disability communities.
Three Ladies Took Walt Disney World by Storm

In September we told you about Minna, Barbie, and Tammy. They planned a dream vacation to Disney World with Community Living Supervisor, Vicki Schulte.

They’re back. Been there. Done that.

To say they had a good time is a serious understatement. Nothing could have prepared Mickey for what was coming.

They took in as much as they could in the few days they were there. Their favorites were Splash Mountain, Planet Hollywood, and THE Disney parade.

At Planet Hollywood they ate every last bite of the biggest dessert any of them had ever seen.

They made a stop along the way to see the beach, a first for all.

So a beach party had to happen. Barbie and Tammy splashed and stumbled in the waves. And Minna collected her fair share of seashells.

They came home with souvenirs and memorabilia, Mickey Mouse ears included.

What do you do when you get back from a fun, fabulous adventure like this? Plan your next one! Tammy and Barbie are working on flying to Disneyland next.

HERE ARE SOME MOMENTS FROM THE TRIP.

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.

CoMoGives.com

Support ACT through CoMoGives the month of December.

Join us at our kick-off party
Joe Machens Toyota Scion
Tuesday, December 1st
5pm - 8pm.

Help us surpass our goal of raising $20,000. 100% of the money we raise goes to the individuals served by ACT.

Logboat Brewing Co and appetizers will be provided.
Health Class Underway for Individuals in Community Integration

For most people, managing their weight gets harder as they get older. When diet-related health problems start to show up, it’s not about fitting into your favorite jeans.

Several people served in ACT’s Community Integration (CI) program want to avoid those problems. So they requested a class on weight management.

“A couple of the individuals who expressed interest in the class are making excellent progress in their personal weight loss. They want to keep it up,” Program Director, Cindy Burlison, explains.

So Burlison asked ACT’s Communications Coordinator, Kalynn Ramsey, to teach the class. Ramsey has a bachelor’s degree in community health education. She’s passionate about good health.

Ramsey use to work in CI. So coming back to her beginnings with ACT sweetened the deal.

The group meets Tuesday mornings for 1.5 hours. The seven-week course finishes up in early December.

Participants have learned about listening to hunger cues, food groups, moderation, and food labels.

A grocery store tour is planned. And segments on the benefits of exercise, staying on track at the holidays, and cooking healthy meals are on the schedule.

“I enjoy the class!” participant, Heath, says, “I am learning a lot.”

The intent is for participants to succeed at taking what they learn and applying it on their plates at home.

Ramsey says, “I’m seeing lots of enthusiasm in the class. I am excited to see their results, too!” •

New Addition to Career Employment Services

Career Employment Services (CES) welcomed Forrest Neal in September. The busy program is excited to have an addition to the team.

Neal saw an ad for a Career Specialist position at ACT and new it would be a perfect fit for him.

He has background in Human Resources and working with students at various universities. So he has experience working with a wide range of people.

Currently, Neal is completing the training process and is excited about getting out into the field.

“I can see big picture while putting all the little pieces together,” Neal says.

Neal has lived in Mid-Missouri for 11 years but hails from Illinois. He also has an 11-year-old son that keeps him busy.

Neal says, “We went camping for the whole weekend a couple of weeks ago!”

Neal likes to stay active playing racquetball, golf, and lifting weights.

We are glad to have you on the team, Neal! •

More fun facts about Neal:

Hobbies?
Reading, listening to music and whatever son wants to do.

Favorite song?
I listen to all kinds of music and have over 2000 albums. I like mellow music but rap and blues are my favorites. I really like a band called The Weeknd.

Favorite celebrity?
President Barack Obama.
Two New Faces in Financial Department

Michelle Miller and Angie Mathews Stuart have joined the Financial Operations department at ACT.

Miller is the new payroll Accounting Clerk. She brings plenty of experience to her new role. She worked nine years in the accounting department for a casino. She worked 13 years in banking. And she was a budget analyst for two years.

She moved here about a year ago from Spokane, Washington to be closer to family that lives in Columbia. She applied at ACT to get back to what she enjoys, accounting.

“I have really enjoyed working here this past month, interacting with everyone. They have been nothing but gracious to me. I look forward to being here for a long time,” Miller says.

Miller has two children, a daughter who’s 22, and a son, 16.

In her spare time she enjoys watching baseball and football. And she’s bowling in a league.

Stuart is the new Account Clerk. She has worked as an accountant and a payroll and human resources coordinator. She is looking forward to expanding her experience at ACT. Her new focus will be in accounts payable and accounts receivable.

She’s no stranger to non-profits. “I have worked at non-profits all my life, as often as possible, besides volunteering whenever I’m able,” Stuart says.

Her experience includes work at the Boys & Girls Club, Goodwill Industries, GLBT Partnership, and Literacy Coalition.

“I am extremely happy to be here!” Stuart exclaims. “I’m passionate about working for non-profits. ACT fulfills and exceeds all my hopes about a commitment to the mission and a cooperative and positive environment I envision when looking for employment.”

Stuart came to Columbia from Wisconsin (she’s from California) to be closer to family. She fell in love with the diversity, arts, and community support the Central Missouri area offers.

Her hobbies include music, dance, civil rights, and learning new things. And smiling! “I love smiling. It is my favorite!” Stuart says.

She also has two nieces and two nephews in California she treats as her own. She’ll break out a slideshow of pictures if you give her even the slightest opportunity. •

Welcome Michelle and Angie!

Fun facts about these two:

**MILLER**

Your favorite movie?
Top Gun

Favorite color?
Blue

Favorite song?
Someone Like You by Adele

**STUART**

Your favorite movie?
Babe: Pig in the City!

Favorite color?
Burgundy & Dark Purple

Favorite song?
Here’s one of many: “Put a Little Love in Your Heart” by Jackie DeShannon

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

— CHRISTOPHER REEVE
Community Living Has Two New Supervisors, Sally Wright and Josh Sawe

Community Living (CL) recently added two new Supervisors, Sally Wright and Joshphat (Josh) Sawe.

Wright began her career with ACT two years ago as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in the Community Integration program. Eight months later, she took a position in CL and in August she was promoted to Supervisor.

She is originally from Huntington Beach, California, where her two sons still reside. She has also lived in Phoenix, Arizona and Spokane, Washington.

Wright decided to come to Missouri to be closer to one of her sisters. She also wanted a change of pace from the West coast.

“I had never lived in the Midwest before. I wanted to see what all the fuss was about,” Wright jokes. She loves how green the area is and also loves winter weather. Summer heat and humidity….not so much!

Previously, she worked at Boone County Juvenile Justice Center working nights. She was looking to switch back to day shift hours when she found a job posting for ACT in the paper.

“It is wonderful!” Wright says about being a Supervisor. “I really enjoy working with the gentlemen.”

Wright’s hobbies include caring for her pets and reading.

Sawe was also a DSP prior to becoming a Supervisor. Manager Carrie Griffith saw potential in him after only 2 months on the job – he was then promoted.

In the short time at ACT, Sawe is fitting in very well in CL. He has found a mentor in fellow supervisor and friend Brenda Wilson and enjoying his time as a Supervisor.

“Amazing!” Sawe says in response to the individual’s he works with.

Sawe is originally from Eldoret, Kenya. He loves to travel and has been all over the country – from Washington D.C. to the state of Washington, and due to having family scattered all over Texas, he has covered almost every inch of the Lone Star state.

Fittingly, he also likes to run long distances. He used to compete in cross country running and still does it for fun.

Help us in welcoming Wright and Sawe to ACT?

Fun facts about Wright and Sawe

WRIGHT:

Favorite color?
Blue

Movie?
Argo

Song?
I like all music

SAWE:

Favorite color?
Blue

Favorite movie?
Hunger Games series

Favorite song?
All kinds of music

“Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”

— Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed by former President George H. W. Bush
CoMoGives Funds are Opening Opportunity’s Door for Many

Imagine a life without swimming or putt putt golf. No tree houses or vacations.

For many with disabilities this is a reality. Camp Wonderland allows them to experience all of this and more.

Thanks to the generosity of many ACT supporters through CoMoGives, an online fundraising campaign, Chelsea and Joe were both awarded scholarships to attend Camp Wonderland!

This camp is anything but ordinary. The summertime retreat offers campers a weeklong full of activities, many of which are not possible for people with disabilities anywhere else.

Cabin, a tree house, swimming pool, boating, and a lodge for bingo, dances, karaoke, and video games... ALL of which are accessible!

The camp also offers a nursing staff for people that have medical needs.

Chelsea utilizes a wheelchair and is medically fragile, requiring a nurse around the clock. This keeps her budget tight so she has never been able to go on vacation, let alone Camp Wonderland.

Joe also uses a wheelchair and has never been to Camp Wonderland. He does not have access to an accessible vehicle, making travel difficult.

We are so thrilled that Chelsea and Joe got a much needed first-time accessible vacation!

Several more individuals that receive services at ACT recently benefitted from the funds raised through the CoMoGives Campaign.

Two individuals supported in the Community Living program were able to buy some needed furniture. Bill purchased a lift chair that will enable him to get in and out of his recliner. Daniel bought a patio table for his beautiful backyard.

Several individuals in the Community Integration program will be prepared for colder weather this winter – they all received clothing such as coats and insulated boots.

A girl that receives services through ACT’s Personal Assistance program will live out her dream to take dance classes.

Dennis and Tim are now able to sit at their dinner table on stable, hearty chairs thanks to CoMoGives funds.

Our CoMoGives Fund Committee is currently reviewing other scholarship applications. We will update you on the many more opportunities made possible through our participation in CoMoGives.

On behalf of everyone at ACT, thank you to everyone who participated in CoMoGives – regardless of which non-profit you chose to support.

Every non-profit involved in CoMoGives now has their own Joe and Chelsea story. As a result, our community is a better place because of the graciousness of those that gave.

The CoMoGives campaign runs December 1st through December 31st. Last year ACT raised over $13,000, the campaign as a whole raised $263,929 and involved over 50 non-profits.

ACT is already gearing up for another successful December in 2015!

### Upcoming Events

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td>12-1pm</td>
<td>ADA Lunch &amp; Learn, Volunteerism, Community Room City Hall, 701 E Bdwy</td>
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<td>Nov. 19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Great American Smokeout</td>
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<td>Nov. 26 &amp; 27</td>
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<td>ACT offices closed for Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 1</td>
<td>5-8pm</td>
<td>ACT’s CoMoGives Kick-Off at Joe Machens Toyota, 1180 Vandiver Dr.</td>
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<td>Dec.</td>
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<td>CoMoGives Campaign, support ACT!</td>
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November 2015 Tip from Tara: The Journey and the Way

Not too long ago, a good friend of mine forwarded me a message from a blog she frequently reads. It has been a long time since I read something that made me think so deeply about something so simple.

The message was a discussion from a group of people talking and sharing their thoughts on happiness. Several participants pointed out how many of us spend much of our lives convincing ourselves that life will be better once we complete a project or achieve a goal, finally buy that dream car, or when we ultimately fulfill a short-term or life-long dream.

Some of us, me included, spend a lot of time convincing ourselves that we will finally be truly happy as soon as we finish that never ending to-do or bucket list. For those of us who are parents, how many times have we said as soon as my child can “learn to” or “master” this skill everything will be okay.

Our lives are hectic. We are all so busy. We all have challenges. Some of us are faced with challenges every single day of our lives.

I have certainly discussed and shared my challenges as a parent in previous articles I’ve written. Recently, because of what is going on in my life, I figured out that there really isn’t a universal gauge that can determine what makes a challenge big or small. Only we can determine what makes some things in life harder than others.

None of us can control everything that happens no matter how hard we try but we can all control what we ultimately make out of what we are given.

I think most people are probably familiar with the Alfred D. Souza quote that says, “Happiness is a journey, not a destination.” However, some of you may not be familiar with what Souza actually wrote before his famously successful one-liner:

“For a long time it seemed to me that life was about to begin – real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time to still be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.

This perspective has helped me to see that there is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way.”

I’ve spent a lot of time trying to finish what I thought needed to be finished to be happy. But recently, I’ve determined and accepted that my life will always be full of challenges. I may never, no matter how hard I try, finish my to-do list.

I may never successfully teach my children everything I want them to learn or master. My life may never be exactly what I’ve thought I wanted it to be. But, you know what? It doesn’t mean I shouldn’t be happy the entire time I’m trying.

As we all head into the busy and typically hectic holiday season, do me a favor – be HAPPY and ask, what I finally had the courage to ask myself, “If not now, when?”

“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
CoMoGives.com

Support ACT

December 1st 5p-8p
Joe Machens Toyota Scion
1180 Vandiver Dr, Columbia, MO
Logboat Brewing Co. and appetizers provided

Can’t make it?
Donate online anytime in December
comogives.com/product/act-alternative-community-training/
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CONTACT US

ACT
2200 Burlington
Columbia, MO 65202

1-800-359-4607
1-573-474-9446