Dear Friends of ACT,

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is observed every year in October. Governor Nixon recently proclaimed October as Disability Employment Awareness Month in Missouri.

This month-long observation was created to:

• acknowledge the value and accomplishments of workers with disabilities, and raising focused awareness on increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Displaying impeccable timing, just last month, the Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) for Individuals with Disabilities sent their Final Report to the U.S. Secretary of Labor.

This federal Committee was charged with recommending actions for:

• increasing CIE for adults with disabilities, making ideal use of Section 14(c) certificate, and improving oversight of Section 14(c) certificates.

The Committee's findings and recommendations portray a vision of the future worth noting. ACT has already taken steps where we can to move toward the vision laid out by the Committee.

Here are a few highlights. You can see how they view us now and where they'd like our nation to be:

1. Widely inconsistent local and state funding structures lead to disparity in CIE participation across states.
2. Reimbursement rates under Medicaid vary from state to state.
3. Funding structures and approaches likely unintentionally support segregated rather than integrated services.
4. To prepare persons with disabilities for CIE, we need a highly skilled workforce that has been trained and is adequately compensated with salaries that reflect the responsibilities and competence levels expected of professionals. Funding must be rebalanced to support this.
5. Early work experiences are needed, along with a seamless transition from school to work. Federal agencies should require all people with disabilities to begin pre-employment transition services at or before age 14.
6. Those same agencies should promote and fund innovative projects to create new CIE programs.
7. Regulatory requirements that make it difficult for states to use and braid funding should be waived.
8. We need a process that encourages and develops family involvement and support. Helping families navigate service delivery systems is a must.
9. Congress should amend the Fair Labor Standards Act so Section 14(c) certificates can be phased out in a well-planned multi-year process. (Section 14(c) allows employers to pay sub-minimum wages.) Measures should be put in place to mitigate unintended consequences of receiving services from 14(c) certificate organizations.
10. We need stronger oversight of organizations that continue to use the 14(c) certificate.
11. Stricter standards are needed for agencies that seek 14(c) certificate renewal.
12. The federal government should assist states that are building capacity for services that promote CIE as an alternative to facility-based employment using the certificate.
13. Capacity building in the marketplace is necessary to increase CIE. Businesses need to hire individuals with disabilities because it makes sense, not because it's good for a favorable public appearance.
14. Business-led efforts that promote CIE should be developed. The Social Security Administration (SSA) should emphasize employment as a goal for working age Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries. They should work to dispel fears...
of losing cash, health benefits, financial stability, and personal security for those who enter CIE.

While we are unlikely to change the Social Security system, there are many things ACT and our community can do to reverse the impact of some of the undesirable findings in the report and advance the cause of CIE.

ACT provides information to job candidates on the impact of work on their benefits. We work closely with job seekers to help them understand the Social Security system so they don’t needlessly limit themselves.

The STEP Program, Seamless Transition through Enhanced Partnerships, is a good example. We work with Boone Hospital and other community partners to provide meaningful transition into the work world for high school students in their senior year. And it’s working.

We’ve left our Section 14(c) certificate behind, too. Earlier this year, ACT notified the Department of Labor that we would no longer need it. Another non-profit company acquired our former facility-based recycling program. We are now preparing workers at volunteer sites in the community.

Abilities for Business (abilitiesforbusiness.com) is a great local example of building capacity with employers. It was started by a small committed group, including Kat Cunningham (President of Moresource), a tireless advocate, passionately spreading the message of the value of hiring a diverse workforce.

I think you’ll agree that this train has left the station and ACT is on it. We’ve not been left behind. But we’re not there yet.

The Final Report is 122 pages long. It offers much more than I can summarize or comment on in this letter. But the future envisioned in it is a good one and should be pursued to the benefit of Americans with disabilities.

We’ll certainly do our part in our Community. Join us in making new things possible for people with disabilities.

Until next month,

Mark

MARK
MARA ROBERTS
WELCOMED TO THE ACT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In August, ACT welcomed Mara Roberts to the ACT Board of Directors. Roberts brings a high energy level and a “get it done” attitude the Board.

“Empowering people motivates me. And that is what ACT is all about,” Roberts says.

Roberts has worked at Columbia College for the last nine years in various positions. Currently, she is Special Assistant to the Provost, Academic Affairs.

If you want to catch Roberts, good luck. She is very busy.

Girls on the Run, Women’s Network (a division of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce), Changing the Odds Committee, Emerging Professionals In Columbia (EPIC, a division of Columbia Chamber of Commerce), Kiva, and Hospice volunteering keep Roberts active and involved in the community.

Even her leisure time is active. Roberts enjoys running, volleyball, power yoga, and Pilates.

She has two daughters, 16 and 9. She enjoys every minute of watching them grow. One of her favorite things is including her girls in charitable endeavors they are passionate about.

If that’s not enough, Roberts is working toward her Doctorate degree in Education Leadership and Policy at Vanderbilt University. She travels back and forth to the Nashville campus every other week.

And now she adds the ACT Board of Directors to her resume!

“I look forward to learning more about ACT,” Roberts says.

A TRIP TO THE
ST. LOUIS ZOO
SATISFIES MANY IN THE DAY PROGRAM

ACT’s Day Program Activities Supervisor has been planning a trip to the St. Louis Zoo all summer long. Scheduled toward the end of September in hopes of cooler weather, Cummins was excited to finally fulfill the longstanding requests of many animal-loving individuals in the program.

“It ended up being 90 degrees the day we went. But everyone still really enjoyed seeing the animals and walking around the zoo,” Cummins says.

The group of 13 enjoyed seeing almost everything the zoo had to offer: rhinos, elephants, hippos, hyenas, fish, sea lions, chimpanzees, and the big cats.

They got to escape the heat by taking in the penguin exhibit, where the polar bears, puffins, and, of course, penguins are showcased; and the primate exhibit, too.

A favorite was the elephants, especially the adorable, playful calf. An adult elephant came close to the group to drink some water and caught everyone’s attention.

Thanks to one individual who is fluent in sign language, zoo goers learned how to sign the animals they saw.

One person on the trip had been waiting to go to the zoo for a while. He especially wanted to see the sting rays. He even brought his own money to ensure he got the chance to pet them.

“The trip went really well!” Cummins exclaimed. “Now that we are doing the monthly extended day trips, the individuals have more opportunities to go on these special trips and experience more things. We are able to meet more activity requests that are given in monthly team meetings.”
Columbia organizations (Alternative Community Training (ACT), Boone County Family Resources (BCFR), Central Missouri Regional Office, Columbia Public Schools, Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Moresource, Inc., Services for Independent Living) interested in improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities joined forces in 2012 and sought and received a Show-Me-Careers grant.

The four-year grant allowed the Columbia Team to implement a variety of programs. Their efforts generated significant momentum in the community behind diversifying the workforce.

The primary goal of Show-Me-Careers is to enhance effective practices that support the seamless transition from high school to either inclusive employment or post-secondary education for young adults ages 16-30 with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Show-Me-Careers believes that improved collaboration, policies, funding, and practices that support transitions to employment at the system level will support scaling-up of evidence-based practices on the community level. These will result in improved employment outcomes on the individual level.

Under the grant, the guiding principles for Show-Me-Careers were developed for communities to be successful in their endeavors:

- **Career Planning and Early Work Experiences:** All students should have paid work experiences and participate in high-quality, person-centered career planning.
- **Youth Development:** Students should have the opportunity to build self-determination skills and social capital.
- **Integration of Systems:** School-based and post-school service systems should coordinate efforts to make sure students move seamlessly from school to career.
- **Family Involvement:** Families should be encouraged and equipped to have high expectations for their child’s future and to participate actively in all parts of transition planning.
- **Employer Engagement and Business Partnerships:** School-to-career initiatives should engage employers as active partners and should focus on the needs of both businesses and youth.
- **Post-secondary Education and Training:** Students with developmental disabilities should get the support they need to aim for, apply to, enter, and succeed in post-secondary education.

The Columbia Team hit the ground running and made many accomplishments in the first year.

They first started working in local high schools with teachers and students, to better prepare them for the transition out of high school. They developed a mentorship program with the Columbia Transition Team (CTT) (learn more about CTT here), pairing high school students with business people who shared common goals. And a Special Education learning event was held to educate high school teachers about community resources.

A Community Network was enhanced for families and individuals with disabilities. This network hosted transition workshops to prepare for high school to work or high school to post-secondary education. Curriculum and supplies for transition workshops and presentations were purchased with the grant funding.

Once the foundation was established, the team started building upward in the second year.

The Future Fair continued and expanded to include middle school students. Activities were added to give students exposure to the world of work and adulthood. More work experience programs were added throughout the district.

Three more outstanding businesses were recognized for hiring people with disabilities through the Annual Inclusive Business Awards.

With the support of the grant, the Columbia Transition Team started planning for the Transition Academy, a workshop for students, families, and other professionals to learn more about work, self-advocacy, and adult service providers.

BCFR’s Life and Work Connections program began implementing the Life Course, a tool to help individuals with disabilities and families develop a vision for their lives and everything needed to achieve those visions.

From 2014 to 2015, Show-Me-Careers expanded and emphasized getting the word out to a broader audience.

The nomination process for Annual Inclusive Business Awards became more formalized to allow all interested parties in our area to be involved.

CONTINUED ON Page 5
Over 150 students attended the Future Fair. This year students led some components, which promoted self-advocacy and responsibility.

The first Transition Academy was held at Stephens College. Over 200 students and 22 parents/professionals participated. Sessions included Life Course Planning, Self-Advocacy, Asset Planning, Alternatives to Guardianship, and Employment and Education.

To gain momentum within the community, the Team developed a powerful video to show the value of a diverse workforce (see the video here). The promotional video was featured at the Chamber of Commerce September 2015 Quarterly Membership Breakfast, with 435 in attendance, and 199 organizations/businesses represented.

Two websites were launched to start to eliminate barriers between the business community and potential employees. Abilitiesforbusiness.com matches qualified job candidates with businesses, allowing employers to hire from a more diverse candidate pool.

The Columbia Employment Consortium (CEC) was formed, a collaboration of local organizations committed to supporting the employment and independence of people with disabilities. This group launched the website adaintheworkplace.org.

This site meets a need for a single place where businesses can find information they need about diversity in the workplace. Before, there wasn’t a centralized place to find employment services for people with disabilities, information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or information on hiring individuals with disabilities. (Read more about both websites here)

Since October, 2015 the team has continued carrying out its mission. They have been reaching out to the business community by presenting a booth at the Chamber of Commerce Business Showcase to market AbilitiesforBusiness.com. They connected with 55 new businesses that signed up for email updates.

A Dine & Development series was developed targeting the business community. One held in March offered training on Work Opportunity Tax Credits. Fourteen businesses participated. Twenty-five people attended. The Team added 22 new email addresses to the update mailing list.

The June Dine & Development offered training on Reaching Qualified Applicants with Disabilities. Another 15 businesses were reached.

The Team also orchestrated new trainings suited for teachers and service providers.

A training for school system employees and partners was conducted by The Arc, with nearly 700 state and local chapters, the nation’s leading advocate for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Topics ranged from self-determination for students in transition and Person Centered Philosophy to understanding workplace culture and Job Coaching strategies and supports.

Another training was offered by Keith Weidenkeller, entitled “Engaging Businesses in Disability Inclusion: An Employers’ Perspective” or “Why We’re Just Not That Into You.” Eleven agencies participated. Thirty-five people came to listen to this enlightening speaker.

The Team registered Abilities for Business as a Missouri corporation and applied to be a Business Leadership Network (BLN) Affiliate in Central Missouri. Based on the initiatives supported through the Grant for close to four years, the group has now grown to include 100 Percent Wine, Burrell Behavioral Health (BBH), City of Columbia’s Career Awareness Related Experience (C.A.R.E.) Program, EnCircle Technologies, Gamm, Inc., Great Plains ADA Center, Job Point, Missouri Job Center, Missouri Rehabilitation and Employment Group (MORE Group), and the Thompson Center. Many other agencies also participate as a part of the Columbia Transition Team.

In September, the grant expired. But the accomplishments continue beyond the Show-Me-Careers funding period.

The Team expanded opportunities for early work experiences for students through the Transition Academy and Future Fair.

A partnership was formed with the community, especially with businesses. With the development of CEC, this relationship with businesses will be solidified. Comprised of many of the same businesses as Show-Me-Careers, CEC provides resources to local businesses to help promote and support diverse hiring practices.

We will be seeing the positive impacts of The Columbia Team through the Show-Me-Careers Grant for years to come. •
You can now donate to ACT by shopping at Gerbes, Schnucks, and AmazonSmile and JustGive.org!

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

When shopping at AmazonSmile, create an account, pick ACT as your charity, and again, shop away! JustGive makes donating to charitable organizations easy. Go to their website and search Alternative Community Training to donate. You can even pick to give one time, monthly, or to put on a registry.

This summer Jodi and Jesica, individuals served in the Community Living (CL) program, and Brenda Wilson, CL Supervisor, volunteered at the Show-Me Exercise: New Madrid Seismic Event on August 24 in Independence, Missouri.

As the title suggests, the trio helped emergency personnel practice and prepare for a massive New Madrid earthquake experts predict may take place by 2040.

The disaster response exercise required volunteers to act as actors for the Evacuee Reception Center, cooperate with the emergency shelter operations, help carry out plans to evacuate pets, and work at supplies distribution areas.

The daylong simulation set up volunteers in various scenarios designed to test emergency crewmembers preparedness. The latest technology for natural disasters was used: wristbands with digitized information detailing personal information that helps keep families together and organized.

Jodi, Jesica, and Brenda’s simulation was a newborn that wasn’t getting enough breast milk, and a pet. Crewmembers analyzed the situation, entered the proper information on the wristband, and sent them on their way.

“It was an adventure!” Wilson exclaimed. “This was definitely a new experience.”

“I got to meet a lot of new people. And I saw some people I did know,” Jodi says.

The New Madrid fault runs through southern Missouri. It caused the devastating New Madrid earthquakes in 1811 and 1812. The fault has been responsible for several smaller earthquakes, called aftershocks, since that time.

Scientists are closely watching fault movement to understand and predict the probability of another major earthquake. Until then, emergency responders are getting ready for what might be.

To everyone that participated in CoMoGives, THANK YOU!!

100% of the money raised in this campaign goes to the individuals ACT serves.

In 2016, a family can now afford to buy a new kitchen appliance; Robbie could pay for crucial dental work; Abraham and his family got a family pass to Columbia Parks & Rec pools; and more!

Also in this newsletter, read about Jayden - a six-year-old boy recently diagnosed with an inoperable brain cancer. Jayden’s family of four is struggling but CoMoGives funding afforded them some relief...a brand new washer and dryer!

Now Jayden’s single mom, Karla, can take care of laundry at home instead of hauling the whole family to the laundry mat.

Keep in touch for more heart warming stories like these brought to you by the CoMoGives.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication. It is greatly appreciated. Happy work anniversary!

Angie Shockley
09/05/1989

Lisa McGee
09/05/1991

Demettrice Bell
09/01/1992

Charlene Yaeger
09/06/2006

Dennis Collier
09/14/2009

Theodore Malisch
09/14/2009

Chelsea Dimbat
09/19/2005

Michelle Davidson-Bell
09/27/2010

Norma Henson
10/01/1990

Robert Mokono
10/11/2010

David Tipton
10/28/2011
InclusionWorks

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Inclusion Works for Opportunity

Inclusion Works for Business

Inclusion Works for Innovation

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dol.gov/odep
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