Dear Friends of ACT,

I’m sure you know the Golden Rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Tremendous strides toward treating one another with dignity have been made by embracing it and living by it.

I was thinking about this after Jason, who is a member of a self-advocacy group called People First of Boone County, made a presentation on “people first speaking” at a meeting I attended last week. He started off with a bang when he said, “Hi. I’m Jason. I’m not disabled Jason.”

He was making the point that when we refer to people who have a disability we routinely speak first about what seems different.

The people first proposition says first and foremost that we are not distinct. We are all persons. Above all else, we deserve to be spoken of with respect and dignity.

This is part of the training we offer every new employee at ACT. We say “person with a disability” not “disabled person.”

How you speak can diminish or elevate others.

Words we now see as pejorative were once perfectly acceptable, even clinical, descriptors of people who, along with the diminishing language, were marginalized. It’s as if the language alone was enough to justify sidelining or segregating people, real people.

I’m glad that ACT has adopted this people first approach to speaking about the people we serve. I’m glad the School of Journalism at MU invites the People First group to speak to their students and identifies ways of speaking and writing that have less negative impact.

I’m glad our State laws no longer contain derogatory labels for people with disabilities.

I’m glad that sports fans are calling out big-name athletes for their public and callous use of the “R word.” These are signs of progress.

But, we might also consider upgrading to what some call the Platinum Rule. Don’t treat others how you want to be treated, says the Platinum Rule. Treat them the way they want to be treated. Do unto others as they want to be done unto.

Even if you have fully embraced the spirit and practice of people first speech, you may not know that some identify so strongly with and are so proud of a characteristic, they want that characteristic called out first.

It’s common among those who are deaf or blind to be proud of Deaf Culture and Blind Culture and the richness of their unique shared experiences, values, and mores. They want to be clearly identified so they can be included.

By referring to the person first, we may not have landed precisely on the linguistic or conceptual sweet spot that honors everyone’s preference about how to be addressed.

A lot of good gets accomplished with the Golden Rule; even more with the Platinum.

Regardless, our speech and actions need to reflect the dignity and value inherent in each person and, as my colleague Cindy Burlison pointed out to me, be sensitive to his or her preferences, too.

Last month I commented on a brief talk given by Debra
McDannold about her late son, Tanner. In it, she referred to Tanner as “differently-abled.”

She talked about the gifts she had received from Tanner and encouraged us to do the same.

Let’s all start seeing persons with disabilities, or disabled persons, the way Debra does, and have it be reflected in the way we speak.

**ACT’s Job Preparation Program Takes Off**

ACT’s Job Preparation program is growing. Five groups of hopeful individuals are now receiving services through Job Preparation at volunteer sites throughout Columbia.

Formerly known as ACT Works, Job Preparation activities were all sited at ACT. Participants developed and acquired work skills while processing recycled plastic media materials. Now this is also happening at work and volunteer sites in the community.

“We truly believe that opportunities in other environments will assist individuals with further skill development as they work toward their goal of community employment,” says Jessica Mahon, Director of ACT Career Services (ACS). “We are already seeing benefits for the individuals served and the community at large.”

Partners such as The Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, Ronald McDonald House, and the Senior Center have joined with ACT to offer job seekers consistent volunteer work at their work sites.

“They are all great partners,” says Hilary Mueller, Employment Training Specialist (ETS). “And they are excited about their roles in preparing people for jobs and supporting ACT’s mission.”

The individuals Job Preparation serves are experiencing tremendous benefits. They are acquiring and honing both hard and soft skills in these environments. Most importantly, they are coming to realize they have what it takes to work and contribute in community-based jobs.

“The individuals I am working with are seeing that they are more capable than they thought,” Mueller says.

Some of the partnering businesses are already asking for more Job Preparation participants. The Senior Center is anticipating more opportunities for Job Prep groups.

One-on-one service for individuals looking to gain employment is also available in the Job Preparation program. The support needed and provided depends on the individual job seeker.

Job Prep participants are thrilled. Every one of them is excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

“So far, we have experienced nothing but a very warm reception from the community when introducing Job Prep. People love the idea!” Mueller exclaims.

If you have volunteer roles open at your place of business, please let us know. We may have the perfect candidate to meet your needs.

**Disney World Dream Trip Coming for Barbi, Minna, and Tammy**

“When you wish upon a star… makes no difference who you are…”

Disney World is a dream vacation. It’s magical. It’s the “happiest place on Earth.” And it touches everybody.

For many, the dream never comes true. It wasn’t that long ago when the only ‘vacation’ that was available for individuals in services was a 5-day trip to Camp Wonderland.

Barbi, who is supported in ACT’s Community Living program, has been yearning to go for years. She has expressed her desire to go to Disney and meet Cinderella at every single meeting consistently.

“She doesn’t want to just go to Florida, she wants to move to Florida and live next to Cinderella,” Vicki Schulte, CL Supervisor, says.

There were no vacancies in Cinderella’s castle, but Schulte was determined to find a way for Barbi to visit the Magic Kingdom and meet Cinderella.

Barbi’s housemates, Minna and Tammy, wanted to go too. Minna has long been a fan of Minnie Mouse. She’s even had Minnie Mouse themed birthday parties. The chance to meet Minnie was too good to pass up.

Tammy had her own ideas of what the Magical Kingdom was all about. So they’ve been saving together. Three people setting aside money for this adventure is much better than just one.

It has been difficult. At times Schulte was discouraged. It took more than wishing upon a star to make this dream a reality. Accumulating the funds took a long time. “Each morning we would add change to the bank and sing a song that goes: "jingle jangle, we are going to Disney!?” Schulte recounted.

Meanwhile, a determined Schulte started laying the groundwork for the vacation of a lifetime. The planning and the logistics took time and work to figure out.

She contacted a travel agency to find out exactly how much they needed to save. Kinsey Bailey at Adelman Vacations proposed a couple of reasonably priced packages for them.
Some Disney magic must have touched the would-be travelers because not long after some extra money came their way. This trip was on.

They squealed with excitement when they heard the news. The next day, the ladies went to Adelman and wrote their Disney World checks. It was a proud moment for them. The next step on their journey to Disney, they sealed the deal that would get them to Florida.

Each wants to see something in particular at Disney. For Barbi, Cinderella is the top priority. Rapunzel is a must, too. So a visit to Fairytale Hall is on the itinerary.

Minna wants to see Ariel. So “Under the Sea – Journey of the Little Mermaid” is on the schedule. Minna also wants to have her picture taken with Minnie, a long time favorite.

Tammy wants to kiss (not just meet) Mickey Mouse. So “Meet Mickey Mouse at Town Square Theater” won’t be missed.

They also plan to meet Pluto, Goofy, and Donald Duck.

The drive is planned. They’re leaving Columbia the September 20th and returning on the 25th.

We are excited that this once unattainable wish is now just days and 1,121 miles away. It just goes to show, “When you wish upon a star… your dreams come true.”

Ladies, please tell Cinderella, Ariel, and Mickey everyone at ACT says hello! •

Two New Supervisors Join Community Integration

Adella Altamirano and Latroya Cowans became Supervisors in ACT’s Community Integration (CI) program in May.

Participation in CI has grown over the past several years. Altamirano and Cowans were brought on as part of a reorganization to better accommodate the program’s expansion.

In June, A new team, the Orange Team, was added to the four existing CI teams.

Altamirano joined CI as a Direct Support Professional in May 2014. Just one year later she was promoted and now supervises the Blue Team.

Altamirano moved here from California. She worked for several years in a residential care facility mentoring and providing support to over 50 individuals. She has proven to be a perfect fit for CI.

“ACT is by far one of the best companies I have had the pleasure to work for,” Altamirano says. “They value their employees greatly and truly care about the individuals they serve.”

Impacting others’ lives in a positive way has always been Altamirano’s desire. She takes great pride in advocating for people with disabilities, to make a difference in their lives.

“Adella brought the California sunshine to Mid-Missouri when she came here,” Cindy Burlison, CI Director, says of her upbeat nature and west coast positive demeanor.

When she’s not at work she enjoys spending time with her family doing pretty much anything outdoors, including riding four-wheelers, barbecuing, fishing, and going to concerts and sporting events.

“I may be a valley girl, but I’m a country girl at heart!” Altamirano exclaims. Her coworkers do not disagree.

Her greatest accomplishment is her four beautiful children, Hayley (10 years old), Kyleigh (9 years), Ayden (7 years), and Nataly (4 years) with her high school love of 15 years.

Latroya Cowans also began as a CI Supervisor in May. She worked previously as a Program Supervisor at an agency similar to ACT in Fulton, Missouri.

She credits her mom, a social worker, for inspiring her interest in working with people with disabilities.

“She was her role model,” Cowans says. “She’s always been a role model.”

Latroya Cowans also began as a CI Supervisor in May. She worked previously as a Program Supervisor at an agency similar to ACT in Fulton, Missouri.

She credits her mom, a social worker, for inspiring her interest in working with people with disabilities.
decision to join this field,” Cowan says.

She learned at a young age that she enjoys helping others. She was amazed when she saw in her mom’s work the rewards of contributing to another person’s well being.

She is adjusting well to her new work. Burlison said, “She came with Therap experience and was able to hit the ground running, using skills and knowledge that benefit our program and the people we support.”

Cowan says, “All of my colleagues, as well as upper management, helped make my transition into the new position a breeze!”

Her favorite part of the job is when the clock strikes 9:00 am and the doors to CI open. She greets the individuals on her team to start the new day.

“I absolutely LOVE my job at ACT!” Cowan exclaims. “I have never worked with a more diverse, kind, or compassionate group of people.”

“She brings a professional presence to ACT that is much appreciated and acknowledged by many of our stakeholders,” Burlison says.

Cowan has two children (6 and 7 years) whom she proclaims are her biggest and most significant accomplishments. She also has a fiancé, her high school sweetheart.

We are excited to welcome these wonderful women to our team of Supervisors. •

Missouri Job Center: a Great Resource for Job Seekers

Missouri Job Center is a valuable resource for any Mid-Missourian seeking employment.

“Theyir goals align well with [ACT Career Services’ (ACS) goals]. They want to help everyone who wants to work achieve that goal,” says David West, ACS Career Specialist.

Missouri Job Center provides job leads, career fairs, and, using counselors and computer-based tools, can help you get to know yourself better and the type of work that’s right for you.

“Our primary service is to help people of Missouri find jobs,” says Lisa Marshall, Supervisor at Missouri Job Center.

After a brief, confidential registration process, their facilities are yours to use. Computers are at your disposal for job searches. Fax machines can be used to send applications. Their classes are available to job seekers at no charge.

The course calendar is loaded with opportunities to gain or fine tune skills, such as resume preparation, networking, and career exploration.

The NCRC skills certification test, highlighted in our last newsletter, is also offered at Missouri Job Center.

They allow ACS Career Specialists to assist anyone ACT serves through taking advantage of their services, a major benefit to individuals who need this one-on-one support.

“We encourage individuals to use all the tools at hand. [The Missouri Job Center] is one we strongly recommend. They are a great resource,” West states.

Learn more about the services offered by Missouri Job Center at www.jobs.mo.gov, or visit them at 1500 Vandiver, Suite 115, Columbia, MO. •

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<td>September 3</td>
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<td>Columbia Chamber Quarterly Membership Breakfast, Show-Me Careers Gold Sponsor</td>
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<td>September 7</td>
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<td>ACT’s facility based offices will be closed for Labor Day.</td>
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<td>September 13-19</td>
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<td>Direct Support Professional (DSP) Week, follow us on FB &amp; Twitter for event details</td>
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<td>September 15</td>
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<td>DSP Week Celebration at City Hall (701 E Bdwy, Columbia, MO), 3:30pm-5pm</td>
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<td>September 22</td>
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<td>ACT’s birthday party 2207 Burlington, Columbia, MO</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>National Disability Employment Awareness Month</td>
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<td>CoMoGives Campaign, support ACT!</td>
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40 Years and Still Rollin’

Our 40 Years and Still Rollin’ event was a huge success!

Thank you to all who attended, volunteered and celebrated in spirit from afar.

And to our sponsors:

Joe Machen’s Toyota, Flat Branch, Missouri Cotton Exchange, Caledon Virtual, Columbia EDP, LaBruberie Financial, The Insurance Group, Williams Keepers, Moresource, MasterTech, Veteran’s United Home Loans, 100 Percent Wine, Columbia Speed Academy, Dents Unlimited, Law Offices KKB, HyVee, Schnucks, Olive Branch Imports, & G Wright Way Services.

The CoMo Derby Dames put on quite a show for us at Tolton High School! Thank you ladies (and men)!!

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.

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!

Want to see what a 40 year-old non-profit looks like?

Come celebrate with us at 2207 Burlington in Columbia on September 22nd (ACT’s actual birthday) at 4pm.

Don’t miss this great opportunity to learn about ACT, meet some of our great employees and see where all the magic happens.

At 4:15 there will be a Ribbon Cutting presented by the Columbia Chamber of Commerce.

Light refreshments will be served and ACT birthday t-shirts will also be available for only $10.
GET CONNECTED

Come follow us on social media:

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- pinterest.com/alternativecomm
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