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inter **ACT** ion

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Alternative Community Training

DREAM COMES TRUE FOR ONCE HOMELESS MAN

Just a little help from ACT helped Willie Pippins land his dream job. While once homeless for a year, Willie now works as a parking lot attendant for one of Columbia's most popular eateries, Shakespeare's Pizza.

"I'm at Shakespeare's now and I love it," says Willie, 52. "It's the best job they could've found for me."

Willie came to ACT after trying a labor service, which didn't provide him the number of hours he wanted to work. He wants to keep busy and he is now, about three and one-half hours a day, Monday through Friday.

He's an important employee for the pizzeria because of its location next to the University of Missouri-Columbia. Without Willie, the restaurant's parking lot would soon fill up with students' cars parked while the students are in class. Being in downtown Columbia, non-Shakespeare's patrons, also might abuse the lot.

To make sure pizza patrons are the only ones using the lot Willie walks up to each driver asking them in a soft, polite tone, if they're headed to Shakespeare's



DREAM JOB. Willie Pippins is well known in Columbia as a parking lot attendant for Shakespeare's Pizza. He landed the job with a little help from ACT's Community Employment Program.

eventually lived on the street for a year. He was referred to ACT from another agency and it was with ACT that his luck turned around. ACT had an established relationship with Shakespeare's, tested Willie for his work readiness and soon he was hired.

"I appreciate all of them," he says about ACT employees who assisted him. Because of back and leg disabilities his hours are limited, however he does receive Social Security in addition to his Shakespeare's pay. He now has his own apartment and is saving to buy a motorcycle.

As part of his job, he went to a thrift store and bought several security service shirts to wear particularly on Fridays when some drivers may have a little too much to drink. "A lot of people are drinking so when they see security they know to behave," he says.

It's that kind of initiative that Willie brings to the job every day, several Shakespeare's managers say. "Willie does a bang-up job," says Leonard Griswell, payroll manager. "He's very energetic and very amiable. He always asks if he can help and he waters plants, sweeps the patio and does other things. There's nothing he doesn't mind doing. There's no need for supervision."

His friendly personality, however, may be his greatest job skill. "Willie is awesome," says Manager Tobias Epstein. "The most important thing is to be a good greeter and Willie is perfect. Willie's done better than any lot attendants we've ever had."

"He's one case I'll remember and always will," adds Almond. "I'll never forget Mr. Pippins because he's just amazing."

It's Willie's easy manner that works so well with the customers. "He is the most gracious man you'll ever meet," says Trina Almond, Program Manager for the Community Employment Program. "He'll say thank you for the smallest thing you've done for him."

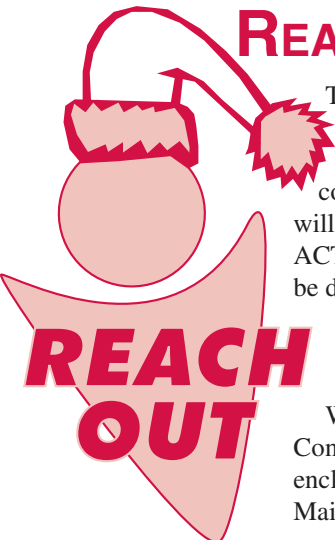
Willie came to Columbia from St. Louis in 2006 not knowing a single person in Columbia. He tried finding work with little success and

REACH OUT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season brings to light needs for many ACT consumers. A few no longer receive family support. Only a generous holiday spirit can provide what many of us take for granted. This year, consider contributing to ReachOut, the special giving program that will directly help ACT consumers. ReachOut was established to help ACT consumers or programs. This time of year your contributions can be designated for:

- Holiday gifts
- A Christmas tree
- ACT's annual holiday party

With your contributions you'll be Santa to many individuals. Consider making your ReachOut contribution today. Just use the enclosed envelope and designate how you'd like to see your gift used. Mail your gift to: **ACT, 2200 Burlington, Columbia, MO 65202**



ACT PARTNER EARNS NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AWARD

MBS Textbook Exchange, one of ACT's employment partners, has won a national award for its employment of individuals with disabilities.

The firm won the Large Employer Award from APSE: The Network on Employment. MBS was nominated by Trina Almond, Program Manager for Community Employment.

Receiving the award for MBS are Jerome Rader, vice president of Human Resources and Mark Nistendirk, hiring coordinator. Both work closely with ACT to provide opportunities for job assessment as well as hiring.

"It's a win-win between the employee and MBS," says Rader. "It's definitely a winning situation for the individual that we can hire and their success can continue on."

Current MBS employees who started with support from ACT have worked at MBS up to five years. "It's definitely a benefit for us," says Rader. "We're getting good employees. We're getting longer-term employees as well."

He adds that ACT provides support along the way "to get that person in the mainstream so to speak and be an active individual in the community."

The employees associated with ACT "bring a very positive attitude along with the fact they'll be here every day," says Nistendirk. "They're happy that they're working and are part of the workforce."

One reason ACT placements have been so successful is the role of the job coach, Rader explains. ACT provides "a continuous support effort. It's ongoing support for their clients."

In addition to hiring ACT job candidates, MBS provides as many as 10 job assessments a year. ACT consumers come to the employer to try out one or more position. While some may yield a job, others will find out what they many not be suited for.



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION. MBS Textbook Exchange has received national recognition for its partnership with ACT to assess and place ACT consumers at the Columbia business. Jerome Rader, left, vice president of Human Resources and Mark Nistendirk, hiring coordinator, have worked with ACT for several years in helping place ACT consumers at the business.

Nistendirk says he appreciates the fact ACT screens candidates well and brings to the site ones that may enjoy working for the firm. He also adds that many candidates have a strong desire to work for MBS. "It's amazing how many I've spoken with. This is where they want to go. They want to work at MBS."

"They are a true testament to partnership," says Almond about MBS. "It's a partnership within their own company as well as with the community at large."

LEE STREET DELI *Partnership opens new worlds for many*

Everybody wins when ACT consumers spend time at the Lee Street Deli.

Consumers experience what it's like to operate a cash register, make change as they work with customers, wash dishes and prepare sandwiches.

Sara DeBold, the deli's manager, gets a great experience working with ACT consumers and those assessing the consumer as part of job placement in the Community Employment Program.

"I enjoy having them here," says DeBold of the consumers who spend four hours at her shop located in a dense University of Missouri-Columbia neighborhood. "Hopefully they gain some self esteem knowing they can do certain things. They're welcomed to do everything that everyone else here does."

One of the key activities DeBold encourages is use of the cash register. It's a good experience for each consumer because the machine allows them "to make change in their head or have the machine do it."

Lee Street Deli is one of only two businesses doing Community Employment assessments that allow consumers to use the cash register.

"It's a real value to us," says Trina Almond, Community Employment Manager. "We have people come out knowing what a cashiering

job is like in a food service setting. It's great."

She adds, Lee Street Deli "is definitely deserving of the recognition and we're proud to be working with them. They welcome our consumers like they're an extension of the family."

The deli has worked with ACT for just over a year. During that time as many as 35 assessments have taken place at the shop.

The deli's casual atmosphere is ideal for individuals to try out different jobs, DeBold explains. "We're a pretty open-minded establishment so it makes it easy for people to come in."

She understands the experience can be a nerve-racking one for the consumers. "It's like having a first day. I really admire them to be able to walk in somewhere and not know anything and be expected to work that day."

She says she thinks of things for each consumer to do the day before they arrive...." things that are not just monotonous. I try to find something that's a little more constructive."

For DeBold, she'd like to do as many assessments as possible. "I really enjoy having them and I love the people who assess them. They come in all the time and it's always nice to have them come in."

Consumers who have worked at the deli also return, DeBold says, further proving their



DELI PARTNER. The Lee Street Deli has worked with ACT for more than a year providing numerous job assessments. Sara DeBold, the deli's manager, is unlike many business managers because she encourages job assessment consumers to use the cash register.

time spent there was enjoyable and perhaps profitable.

"I really hope it gives them an opportunity to get a really good job somewhere," says DeBold. "I really hope that it helps them."

COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT BENEFITS MANY

Extra college training is paying big dividends to the consumers and employees of ACT.

A total of 87 employees have taken, or are taking, courses provided by the College of Direct Support. A total of 3,366 hours of training, among ACT employees, have occurred.

For employees like J.R. Robinson-Hunt and Marsha Schafer the biggest benefit has been to the ones they care for.

“The long-term benefit, from my perspective, is for the individuals we serve,” says Robinson-Hunt. “If you improve my quality as a direct care worker, then you improve the quality of their lives.”

Robinson-Hunt is a main relief employee for three gentlemen living at the Pecos home. Larry, Jeff, and John are part of Robinson-Hunt’s life while on and off the job.

He says ACT’s encouragement to develop relationships with consumers is something he believes in strongly. “I can’t emphasize that word enough—relationship, relationship, relationship.”

The College of Direct Support strengthened his relationships, he adds, because of the many topics covered in the 13-module training.

With degrees in social work and psychology, state and ACT training, one would have thought Robinson-Hunt would not need additional training. The College of Direct Support training, however, “was more of a wake-up call,” he says. “I think it’s an excellent program. It brought to the forefront of my mind things that were shoved in the back. It brought me to the point where I could take a more critical view of my environment and the interactions and the dynamics so that I’m being the best caregiver I can be.”

He says he’s already seen new successes among his consumers as a result of his training. Over the years “I’ve watched all three of them have tremendous successes.” But the new training “helps us let them, to use the old Army cliché, ‘be all they can be.’”

Marsha Schafer, now a Direct Support Professional, uses her new training every moment of her job. Overseeing numerous clients in ACT’s Community Integration Program, Schafer says the educational program “has changed my view of everybody.”

She says the comprehensive program offers “just a lot of information. It reached out in a lot of different ways.”

The bottom line? “I’m more patient with them. Now I see what makes them sparkle inside and what they may be thinking.”

Her new perspective has given her a boost in attitude about her job. It’s propelled her to continue to study new courses added to the direct support materials. She’s now taking a class on medications and learning about over-the-counter drugs.

Graduating from the program also has given Schafer, and all graduates, a bonus of \$700 and an increase of 25 cents per hour.

“I think it’s amazing that ACT gave us the opportunity to have some college education and then gave us money on top of that,” she says. “I can’t imagine anyone would turn this down.”

Schafer says she is grateful to have the opportunity to take college courses online. “I’m all for online classes. If they continue with more I’ll take all I can get my hands on. I love to learn.”

Her taste of learning has even spurred her to think about college someday. “It’s made me want to go back to college. I want to take psychology and special education classes.”



NEW PERSPECTIVE. J.R. Robinson-Hunt, right, a Direct Support Professional, has new insights in his care of Larry, left and two other consumers as a result of his training through the College of Direct Support.

PLASTIC RECYCLING EFFORT ADAPTS TO MARKET

The videotape recycling business never stays the same. Today ACT is coming up with new ideas in order to keep the recycling center humming with activity.

The new idea is to develop a grinding operation and sell completely ground plastic to plastic extrusion firms or brokers.

It will take approximately \$100,000 to buy the equipment and build the outside structure to house the operation.

“It’ll provide more jobs,” says Jim Williams, Director of Employment Services. “It’ll be a big change for ACT if we can make it all happen.”

Williams explains that the previous buyer of plastic—China—no longer wants the tapes. Plastic producers or brokers, however, want completely ground-up plastic.

“The Asian market is not buying videotapes,” says Williams. “So we’re wondering what are we going to do with the million tapes we’ve got here that keep coming through the door. We’ve got to find a solution.”

Williams says that “if we find a solution that works, we could be the only place in the U.S. that has a machine that could take apart videotapes.” Such equipment would allow ACT “to get a lot of videotapes. It could help us a great deal if that happens. It would keep people busy.”

The biggest challenge is to attract grant money or donations to fund the project. ACT is exploring grants from the state and private foundations. Funds would purchase a grinder, conveyers, equipment to disassemble the videotapes and a structure outside of the current recycling area to reduce noise.

“To truly recycle a videotape we’ll have to separate all the materials,” Williams explains. One option would be to have ACT clients disassemble them and pull the parts apart as well as remove several metal screws and other pieces. There are three types of plastic and about 10 metal pieces in each videotape. “The metal has to get out of the plastic before anyone wants to recycle the plastic,” says Williams. Also, the videotape has to be removed because it is a contaminant in the plastic recycling process.

Completely clean ground up plastic would bring top dollar, Williams adds. “Either way we should make more money with it ground up rather than whole. There are more avenues to sell it.”

MANY DONATE TO ACT

Over the past several months the following individuals have contributed to ACT:

David and Marcia Machens	Steve Lee
Mr. and Mrs. Willard Haynes in honor of C.J. Furrer	L&I Benefits
Peggy Payne	Guy Schupp
John Pascucci	Anita Hemphill Trust
Mary Gentry	Thomas Dresser

ACT OPENS RESIDENCE PROGRAM TO TEENS

Ricky and Patrick are pioneers at ACT. They are the first teens in over a decade to be part of one of ACT's Community Living homes.

In their southwest Columbia ranch home, Ricky and Patrick get the support needed to lead active teen lives.

According to Community Living Program Manager Carrie Griffith, serving teens with housing, and working with Children's Division Services, is a first for ACT. ACT has "opened our services a little bit and done research about how to better serve a younger population. When you see that you can offer our services to a whole new group of people, it's exciting. It's at a time in their life where they're making choices and they're doing things that will affect their future."

For Ricky and Patrick, ACT is opening a lot of doors. Previously each was home-schooled. Today Patrick, 15, is a freshman enrolled in West Junior High and Ricky, 17, is enrolled at Bearfield School.

The two now also have much more freedom in their housing arrangements. Both came from the same facility which had more than one consumer assigned to a room. Now each has his own room, decorated according to their interests.

"They're typical teenagers," says Griffith. They're into girls; they're into cable. They want to make sure they have MTV," as well as sports.

Griffith says having teens in a Community Living home requires "more structure to give more choices." Coming from a more controlled environment, both teens are gradually understanding what it's like to live more independently and are very excited that Columbia is large enough to offer more entertainment options.

"It's not strict like before," Patrick says of the new home. Soft-spoken, Patrick, "has a strong interest in history and hopes to go to the University of Missouri-Columbia someday."

Ricky has a strong interest in rap music and enjoys listening to and practicing rap. He enjoys playing snowboarding and boxing video games. Patrick, too, is an expert video basketball player and has won



REACHING OUT TO TEENS. Patrick, left, and Ricky are new to ACT. They are the first teenagers in over a decade ACT has served.

\$18 playing the game competitively. Snowboarding and boxing video games also interest him.

Because of the array of services ACT offers, there are many choices as they get older. "There is the possibility they could achieve all their goals within ACT and not have to transfer to other agencies," says Griffith. "You couldn't ask for a better employment program than what we have and because we offer different levels of independent living they can grow and mature without transferring."

Griffith adds she's "really looking forward to see these young men grow and reach their dreams. It's always exciting when you're working with potential

ACT NAMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS, OFFICERS

Named to the board for three-year terms are Bob Conway, M.D.; Pat Eng, attorney with Eng and Woods law firm; and Fred Malicoat, an engineer with the engineering firm of Malicoat-Winslow.

In addition to appointing new board members, ACT recently named new officers. They are: Kat Cunningham, president of Moresource, Inc., named president; Trent Stober, president, MEC Water Resources, named vice-president; and Joel

Jeffries, M.D., named secretary/treasurer.

Also, the Board of Directors recognized retiring board members Bob Scribner and Larry Gross for each providing six years of service.

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