Famous for her cheddar bay biscuits
Red Lobster employee celebrates 20 years of service

Red Lobster general manager Chris Swenson is glad ACT consumer Jan comes to work three days a week. He knows he’ll be seeing some of the best cheddar bay biscuits ever made.

It’s Jan who makes dozens of the famous biscuits, sometimes as many as 700 on a busy day. And those biscuits “are some of the best I’ve ever seen and I’ve worked for the company for a long time,” Swenson says.

Fortunately for the restaurant, Jan has worked there for 20 years. Over the years she’s done cleaning, split shrimp and baked rolls and potatoes.

“For every guest that comes into Red Lobster there is one signature item that every guest is served—our cheddar bay biscuits,” says Swenson. “People always asks for those and that’s Jan’s primary job right now.”

“I bet you’ve made hundreds of thousands of biscuits in your career,” says Swenson to Jan while she takes a brief break following a busy lunch.

The cheddar bay biscuits are a signature item at Red Lobster. Jan makes them from scratch adding just the right amount of moisture and cheese.

Swenson is quick to point out that Jan always looks for other work to do if she gets done with her baking chores. “She’ll do whatever she’s asked to do and find things to keep busy. We’re happy to have her here.”

He adds, too, that Jan has never been late to work in her 20 years and she’s never missed a shift. “I would love to have more employees like Jan,” he says as a manager of 90 to 100 people. “She’s a great employee.”

Jan, too, says she feels lucky to have a job at Red Lobster. She feels she’s at a place that understands her and does not have unrealistic expectations.

She says some managers “are so indifferent with handicapped people. They think you can do everything all the time and you can’t always do it.” Jan, however, keeps up with the challenge when the restaurant is busy.

Swenson says “she keeps up really well. You wouldn’t work for a company this long without having great quality and you can see that everyday.”

“I try to make them the best I can,” says Jan. “I like to do my work.”
A ngela didn’t know it but she’s the main reason her employer, Tiger Place, was named Employer of the Year by the Services for Independent Living.

Angela, part of ACT’s Community Employment Program, has proven that work is valuable and rewarding for all individuals. The senior living facility was nominated for the award by ACT staff.

Now an employee at the retirement center for five months, Angela has a special connection to the facility. Her grandfather George lives there. Because Angela’s employment has gone so well, the Services for Independent Living awarded their high honor to the facility.

“It was a great honor,” says Brian Donner, Tiger Place Operational Director. “We were very honored to receive the award.”

He says a big part of the credit goes to the quality relationship between Angela and her supervisor, Mary Kaye Swanson.

“I think the working relationship we have between Mary Kaye and Angela and the coordination with them has been very successful.”

Early into Angela’s employment Mary Kaye developed a printed list of 20 or so cleaning-related activities. Each of the four mornings per week Angela works, is mapped out by Mary Kaye. “It gives her a heads up,” she says. “If there’s anything she needs to tend to right away she can go ahead and do that on her own. That list is ready for her.”

Mary Kaye adds that Angela has her own cleaning cart stocked full with supplies. When cleaning products or materials get low Angela readily tells Mary Kaye and the cart is restocked.

In addition to the supervision Angela receives from Mary Kaye, she also takes part in training sessions provided by the facility’s owner, Americare. Angela’s ACT job coach assists her in the training program.

The facility, which has 60 residents, is located in east Columbia. A total of 56 residents have individual apartments. Angela cleans the expansive common areas. She vacuums, dusts, cleans bathrooms and bar areas and dusts draperies. She also helps clean apartments when a vacancy occurs.

While Angela likes all the cleaning tasks, her favorite is cleaning the office of Manager Donner. “I like cleaning Brian's office,” she says. “My office has never been so clean,” he adds. Regarding her strong ethic, he adds that “Angela is always here and always on time.”

And for Mary Kaye, “it’s worked out really well.”

Thank you

ACT would like to thank Columbia’s Voluntary Action Center for providing a Christmas gift to every ACT consumer in the Community Living Program.

For many years now, the Center has provided gifts to many ACT consumers.

Thank you for your years of kindness.

It was a great honor. We were very honored to receive the award.

A big part of the credit goes to the quality relationship between Angela and her supervisor, Mary Kaye Swanson.

Brian Donner, Tiger Place Operational Director
Independence is what Seth’s move is all about. He recently moved from his parents’ home to an ACT Individualized Supported Living home.

He’s 20 years old now and “it was time to live in the community with roommates,” says Tara Shade, Seth’s behavior therapist. Seth, who also works at Central Missouri Subcontracting Enterprises, is an individual with autism.

Friendly and animated, Seth has made friends with his Briarwood home roommates, Chris and Kelly.

He and Kelly, particularly, have hit it off well, adds Mark Pickett, Program Supervisor for the home.

“He’s very talkative and something is always new,” says Pickett about Seth. “He fits in with his roommates well.”

Pickett adds that Seth has adjusted well to his new surroundings, a ranch-style home in southwest Columbia.

“He’s kind of moved on and he now considers Briarwood his home. He respects his room, takes care of it and refers to it as his own. He’s taking on additional responsibilities and is gaining independence such as grocery shopping and use of his own allowance.”

Seth graduated from Hickman High School at age 18 and has been working at CMSE since then.

Reaching age 20 this year triggered the plan to move to a home supported by ACT. “He’s a young adult now,” says Shade. “It’s a natural time for him to move from home to the community. It’s the time and the place for him to do that. He’s still very involved with his family.”

In addition, he’s getting involved with more activities, Pickett says. He’s planning a trip to St. Louis and he takes many trips to the Columbia Mall where he spends some of his earnings.

He also will get involved in the Special Olympics where he’ll compete in track and field events, particularly running. Staff has done really well getting him involved in activities in the community. “We’re going to keep things busy for the wintertime.”

Soon Pickett hopes to introduce Seth to a dance and he hopes to have a pizza party for Seth’s birthday.

“Overall Seth is a great gentleman,” Pickett says “We’re very glad that he’s fitting in well.”

New digs.

Friendly and animated, Seth has made friends with his new Briarwood home roommates. Here he spends time on his deck with Behavior Therapist Tara Shade.
Dennis Collier keeps ACT running
New Maintenance Supervisor likes variety

New Maintenance Supervisor Dennis Collier likes variety in his job. And with the wide variety of properties, vehicles and other items with ACT, he always keeps busy.

Dennis keeps ACT running by helping maintain three buildings at the main facility. In addition to that, he keeps 15 vehicles running and helps maintain several consumers’ homes that are part of the Community Living Program.

Collier enjoys the many challenges of keeping things running at ACT. He also gets satisfaction knowing his work helps save money.

For example, he’s just beginning to service brakes on the 15 vehicles ACT uses. “It’s saving money to do it ourselves,” he says. “Do the job right and save money at the same time. I always keep my eye out for ways to do that.”

In addition to his role as Maintenance Supervisor, Collier also oversees the cleaning crew that works from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. every weekday. Working to 6 p.m. allows him to start his day at 9:30 a.m. which gives him extra time to spend with his one-year-old daughter, Brinley.

Collier, originally from St. Louis, came to Columbia when his wife Lorie took a job as an apartment manager. It was in St. Louis where he learned the heating and cooling trade at a heating and cooling school, and most of all, as maintenance person for an aging apartment complex.

He says heating and cooling remains the favorite part of his job. “What I like most about this job is how fresh it stays,” he says. “It keeps you going and keeps you interested in your job.”

Fundraising effort underway
Expert bowler heads to national competition

ACT consumer Jodie is headed to Special Olympics national competition in Indianapolis this July. She’s already qualified for their bowling competition and now is raising $1,000 to meet the expenses of the trip.

She’s already raised over $330 through contributions made through her Web site: somo.org/jodieholbert

“I’m so proud to be a member of Team Missouri, also known as MO Magic!, she writes on her Web site. “It is an honor to be on this team where we will compete against athletes from the United States. I need your help to make my dream come true. I promise to try my best and make you proud!”

Jodie, 37, has been bowling since age five. She now averages a score of 166 and has had a high score of 199.

“I like to bowl,” she says. And she also likes to play softball, basketball and field and track with Special Olympics.

For the upcoming bowling competition she’s practicing once a week while also practicing basketball.

“I think Special Olympics benefits many of our consumers socially and it’s good exercise,” adds Alanta Free, Program Supervisor in the Community Living Program, which Jodie participates in. “Usually they’re busy all year long. And they’ve got friends they’ve made. It’s very positive. They meet people from all over the state.”

In addition to her many athletic activities, Jodie works at a mid-Missouri brake-manufacturing plant. In her free time she enjoys playing on the computer, coloring, and shopping.

Jodie’s hero is Cinderella, and her favorite Special Olympic memory is going to State Games for bowling. She resides in a home with two housemates.

If you’d like to contribute to Jodie’s Special Olympics fund go to her Web site. Donations can be made to Special Olympics through Paypal.
System is a valuable tool
New software increases continuity of care

Keeping up with many ACT consumers is just a keystroke away. ACT is utilizing an online documentation system called Therap across most programs in the agency. Now in place of paper documentation, the computer system will be used to enhance communication and continuity of care.

Staff use Therap to document daily notes, health-tracking information, and accidents/injury reports. Also part of the system is the staff communication log and goal tracking. This is helpful to all involved, as a supervisor or manager can review all information without going to the home to read it from a binder. Thus, information is being reviewed more often.

“The communication aspect alone is going to be amazing, but the tracking of the volumes of paperwork we go through will be very helpful,” says Don Lafferty, Director, Community Living Program. He adds that Therap “is going to be a great resource for direct care staff, the supervisors and families to communicate—to share information and disseminate information. It also will help us in trend analysis. It’s going to be a very valuable tool.”

While many of the more complex features will be developed in the future, ACT now uses the S-Comm feature (aka email) to disseminate information to all employees who support a consumer.

“It’s quicker,” says Zina Horn, a Training Specialist in the Community Integration Program. “You can go easily to anyone you supported on the system. There’s not a whole lot of paperwork that you have to shuffle through.”

In addition to saving time, Therap gets vital information to staff concerning specific consumers. “It’s better communication,” says Monica Ganaway, Production Training Specialist. “When I can’t get a hold of someone I send an S-Comm (email) to them and they know what’s needed. That’s what I really like about Therap.”

ACT is one of the few agencies in the state, and currently the only agency in Columbia, utilizing Therap.

Now she’s greeted each day with a hug
Program supervisor finds challenges, satisfaction

Christina Mattson is glad she found ACT on the Internet. She wanted to get back to a job that she felt was meaningful. She’s joined ACT as a Program Supervisor in the Community Integration Program.

Today when she comes to work she’s often greeted with a hug. “I love it,” she says. “This place puts me in a good mood. You know people are needing your help or wanting your feedback on things. You feel that you’re doing something meaningful for people.”

Immediately before joining ACT, she was a political fundraiser for three years. While that work was exciting, it did not deliver the satisfaction with those with developmental disabilities provides.

In her job she likes the variety of working with a wide range of consumers. “Of course here at ACT we also serve people with challenges other than only developmental disabilities. That’s been interesting to have more variety here than what I was used to formerly.”

She particularly likes the fact the program “is more energetic and busy than the residential program I worked with.”

Mattson has worked in many care-providing programs. She worked in residential care in Arizona and as a homeless advocate through a homeless shelter. She also was a youth worker with AmeriCorps in Minnesota.

With such a wide background, she says she felt “well-suited to go into helping people with developmental disabilities.”

Her broad experience not only helps her work with consumers but also the residential staff that may work with the consumers. “I think I can be compassionate to the home staff, she says. “I can see it from both sides.”

Mattson, who grew up in Illinois and Wisconsin, has a five-year-old son, Sage.
Meet Shauna Baker

New employee has heart of a caregiver

Some people are just born to care for others. Shauna Baker, a new Program Supervisor in the Community Integration Program, is just that kind of person.

She’s a caregiver at ACT and also, with her husband Ben, serves as a foster parent for 15-year-old Megan.

In the near future she and Ben also plan to adopt Megan and accept two additional foster children.

At work “you can’t resist getting all the hugs everyday—that’s always fun.” Working with those who are developmentally disabled is important, she adds, because “they need people that work with them and care about them and treat them like everyone else. The ups are worth the downs.”

Baker has worked in the social services field for three years having served Columbia’s organization for those with autism and the state Children’s Division. Her work with the autistic introduced her to ACT so when a job became available she quickly applied.

Baker followed her instincts into the profession despite her undergraduate degree in anthropology/sociology from Truman State University in Kirksville. She also has completed 30 hours of credit toward a graduate degree in counseling.

Her work at ACT, she says, is satisfying in many different ways and she particularly enjoys the positive attitude shown by ACT employees.

“I’m very impressed with ACT and all that they do and all the services they provide,” she says, “I’m impressed with just how successful and comfortable they are in their jobs.” And while she plans on working at ACT for a long time, someday she would like to complete her master’s degree in counseling and work with families that have an individual with autism.

“There are very few counselors who work with that,” she says. “That’s been my long-term goal – to do therapy for people with autism in their families.”