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inter **ACT** ion

Fall 2006

Alternative Community Training

ACT, Kohl's have solid relationship

Matt is the kind of employee every employer wants to hire. He's on task 100 percent of the time and always asks what else he could do after finishing a task.

Matt got his job at Columbia's newest department store, Kohl's, six months ago. ACT's Community Employment Program helped him find the job and accompanied him on his job interview. A small amount of job coaching also was provided by ACT.

"It's a nice place to work," says Matt who worked two years in the fast-food industry before starting at Kohl's this February. "I like working here. You meet nice people and I'm nice to the customers."

"He's the sweetest guy," adds Jejuana Pittman, assistant manager for the Softline Department. Most of all, "he's driven," she says. Pittman says Matt goes straight to the place for a list of things to do when he comes to work around 5:30 p.m. He touches base with her or another manager and then begins to work with vacuuming or cleaning restrooms.

And he never slows down while working.

"He's very task driven," Pittman says. "He's always asking, 'Jejuana what do you want me to do next.'"

Matt works about 15 hours a week at the store, from 5:30 p.m. to about 10 p.m. each day he works. "Fifteen hours is pretty good so far," he says.

Pittman says that in addition to his work ethic he's good with customers who might ask a question. "He's very good," she says. "He's really nice, too. He helps customers. If they ask him questions he either answers their question or finds someone that can."

Matt's good personality and strong work ethic make him the model for more ACT consumers to hire, Pittman adds. "I would hire employees like Matt if they were available. I'm sure we could find a spot for them here. We would definitely do it again in a heartbeat."

"We have a good relationship with ACT," she says.



PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP. ACT's relationship with Kohl's department store has helped bring about employment for Matt, right. "He's very task driven," says Jejuana Pittmann, left, Matt's supervisor.

PROACTIVE APPROACH DRIVES EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

More people are working in the Columbia area as a result of many changes in ACT's Community Employment program.

In a year and one-half the program has grown by one third where 85 individuals now are working as the result of ACT's proactive employment approach.

The program has grown steadily under the guidance of Program Manager Trina Almond. The biggest change to the program has been to broaden the scope of who ACT hopes to serve.

"Our consumer base is extremely diverse these days," says Almond. When she first began, ACT primarily served individuals with the MR/DD System. Now ACT also serves

persons with mental illnesses or medical disabilities. About one third of the client base now represents these types of disabilities. ACT also recently developed a relationship with Rehab Services for the Blind. The change in client base has necessitated a change how ACT presents its services to employers. It is better to present ACT as an employment service with a broad spectrum of available employees, rather than as a provider only working with persons with specific types of disabilities.

"We're looking at new ways to market our program," says Almond. "We'll say we are an employment agency. We just let people know we're a resource for them to find people ready to work tomorrow and that they've been

prescreened. Our consumers are qualified, able to work, and are motivated."

With a larger client base, ACT also is looking for more efficient ways to provide services to individuals. Instead of attempting to match one individual to a job advertised in the newspaper, ACT is cultivating relationships with employers. ACT makes presentations to employers explaining the full range of services offered. When a job opening occurs, ACT then would offer five or so names of individuals prescreened for the job. "They have a choice in the matter," says Almond. "It's not us selling one person at a time."

(Continued on Page 2)

MEET YOUR BOARD

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR ACT BOARD OF DIRECTORS



TRENT STOBER

Trent Stober believes in helping those often overlooked by society. That's why he's now a member of ACT's Board of Directors. He is serving a three-year term.

"It's really a segment of our society that nobody thinks about," he says about many of ACT's consumers. "It's great to have someone like ACT thinking about those folks because we look right past it."

He says he was impressed by the commitment of ACT's staff when he toured the facilities.

"It amazed me after walking around and talking to some of the managers there what level of service and commitment that it really takes. I was just amazed that there are folks out there who are committed like that."

Stober is the president of MEC Water Resources. It is an environmental consulting firm that addresses water quality issues. The firm has operated independently from its parent company—Missouri Environmental Consultants—for the past three years.

The firm consults with municipalities and other entities on wastewater treatment discharges.

MEC serves sewage facilities in many cities including Kansas City, St. Louis, Macon, Jefferson City, Blue Springs and Independence.

Stober and his wife, Jennifer, have three daughters—Megan, 8; Mary Kate, 6; and Sophie, 1.



JOEL JEFFRIES, M.D

Joel Jeffries, M.D. finds the mission of ACT right in sync with his own philosophy and beliefs.

"Philosophically, and also as a person of faith, the basic mission of ACT is very consistent with my own philosophy—helping people who might otherwise be institutionalized or not have opportunities to be in the workplace."

He adds that ACT's emphasis on recycling also is a positive. "I think it would be hard to argue against the recycling activities that ACT performs. We've now recycled more than a million pounds of plastic. I think that's an incredible goal."

Jeffries, an orthopedic surgeon, assistant professor and consultant, joined the board after an invitation from board member Rick Bartelt. Jeffries also is acquainted with Executive Director Mark Hassemmer.

He brings to the board experience and leadership roles with many organizations including Olivet Christian Church, and Medical Assurance, the largest provider of malpractice professional liability insurance in the state. He says that his medical experience, perhaps, may some day come into play as a board member.

Now, however, Jeffries sees ACT as a solid organization with great prospects for growth. He says that ACT is "absolutely on the right track. I don't know of any other organization that is so financially sound—certainly no service organization."



CATHY ATKINS

Board member Cathy Atkins has her eyes wide open when she visits ACT. The sales management specialist knows she can learn from everyone she meets.

"I can walk in and talk to anybody in ACT—it doesn't matter if they're in a wheelchair or not—they have something they can teach me. I'm a better person for paying attention to whatever it is they can offer me even if it's perspective."

The people she'll meet "have something to teach us if our eyes are only open enough to see it and hear it and understand it."

Atkins has five years of experience as a sales management specialist with Awareness Management Systems, LLC. The group has successfully helped Mid-Missouri companies and individuals manage and increase their sales and profitability.

Atkins was asked to join the ACT board from board member Bob Scribner, a management consultant. She also was familiar with ACT through Executive Director Mark Hassemmer, a fellow Rotary Club member.

Atkins is open to helping ACT in any way that arises. "I don't go in with a specific agenda," she says. "Our company has a philosophy that I embrace and it's simple — my goal is just to help you reach yours. So whatever ACT wants to accomplish, however they want to grow — if I can step in and support that, I'm all about that."

PROACTIVE APPROACH *(Continued from Page 1)*

Another change involves group job-hunting sessions where a group of consumers gets together and talks about their job-search experiences. "That's helping grow the program," says Almond.

A major goal is to lessen the number of weeks it takes a consumer to get a job. One way to reduce the time is to call numerous employers in a particular business to increase the likelihood of a job placement for an individual. "If someone's interested in food ser-

vice we're calling a list of restaurants and just asking if they have openings. Hopefully we'll know of openings and have a relationship and that way it's not as competitive of a process as if you rely on newspaper ads."

The many changes have cut the amount of time in getting a job from 13 weeks to 10 1/2 weeks. "We're trying to get people jobs much more quickly," says Almond. "It seems to be working."

In addition to the many internal changes,

the program hopes to expand in the Mid-Missouri area. A likely area will be Callaway County, or Fulton, where two Community Employment employees live and have connections.

"This proactive approach is an investment that will result in improved outcomes for the consumers served today as well as those to be served in the months to come," says Almond. Employers "see we have a vested interest in being successful. They see we're interested in their satisfaction and they will call us again."

Spotlight Dorieann O'Brien

BEHAVIOR THERAPIST JOINS TEAM

A behavior specialist has been hired by ACT. Doireann O'Brien is the full-time behavior therapist skilled in helping individuals with behavior problems.

"This is really a positive step for the agency," says Michelle Saunders, Program Manager for Community Integration and supervisor of the new therapist position. "We're very excited to get someone on board."

She and Jim Williams, director of Operations and Community Employment Programs, simultaneously developed the idea for the behavior therapist. The plan was supported by the Central Missouri Regional Center and Boone County Family Resources. It also was approved by the ACT Board of Directors.

The key benefit will be a continuity of care for ACT consumers, Saunders says. "We deal with a lot of different people with a lot of different needs and challenges. From the referrals we are getting nowadays, the individuals are just more challenging overall," she says.

"We thought having someone in house would provide continuity to the people we serve because at this point we're contracting out any behavior therapy services." She says that "it made more sense that if the consumer was with us residentially as well as in our Day Program why not have the behavior specialist in house to deal with those types of things."

The new therapist will write behavior plans for selected individuals. Another facet of the job will be training staff members. Training would be in Positive Behavior Support as well as Nonviolent Crisis Intervention.

The ultimate goal would be to reduce the number of behavior incidents and focus on more positive aspects of ACT's programs. "We want to take a proactive approach with this," says Saunders. She expects a caseload of 30-35 consumers initially for the new position.



BINGO BUDDIES. Abby pairs up with Doireann O'Brien, ACT's first behavior therapist, in a game of bingo.

"This is a really positive step for the agency. I think we'll just continue to grow with the person on board."

O'Brien's experience involves many types of consumers and needs. She's worked within a 10-county region of Columbia serving a wide range of needs.

No matter what the task, "I love people and they know it. They can tell. They know that I care about them. I think they respond well to that."

For the parents or guardians of ACT consumers, O'Brien invites input. You can contact her through a case worker or staff member or e-mail her at dorieann4act@socket.net.

NEWSbriefs

IN MEMORY

The Board of Directors and staff of ACT would like to extend condolences to the families of several individuals involved with ACT who passed away recently.

Maria Pinckney was a parent of a young lady who was one of the first two persons to live in a home in the community supported by the Medicaid Waiver in Missouri. Maria was a strong advocate for her daughter and of other persons with disabilities, regularly speaking at conferences and to parent groups.

C.J. Furrer was very active in legislative issues that impacted ACT, and remained in close contact with legislators regarding current or pending legislation that would affect persons with disabilities. C.J. and his wife Marie bought a house in Columbia for their son (and two other persons) a number of years ago.

Neil Levinson was a longtime participant in the Community Integration Program who loved to start his day with the daily newspaper at ACT. Neil loved to go out for lunch and various other community activities, including going along on the Meals-on-Wheels route. He had many friends at ACT who are sure going to miss him.

We celebrate the gifts that each of these people brought to ACT, and will always remember their uniqueness. Deepest sympa-

thies are extended to their families and friends.

The following individuals made donations in memory of C.J. Furrer: Al, Ann, and Brigid Flynn; Jeffrey L. Lance, CPCU, AIC Treasurer CPCU Society of St. Paul Travelers; James Seidler; Tina Patel; David and Cheryl Bowman; Norman and Josephine Merlo; Peggy Pelikan; Pamela Jacobson; Alan and Elna Trost; Ron and Shirley Betz; Edward and Shannon Plowey; David Cissell; Jack and Vicki Challis; William and Mary Baer; Robert and Jene O'Blennis; Katherine Frank; Joseph and Elizabeth Long; Michael and Lisa Orlet; Midwest Club Dance, Nancy Gudiswitz; Robert and Jane Heinrich; James and Angela Suellentrop; Heinz Corporation; Jeffrey and Megan Pribyl; Erin Tansey; Sara Hoffman; Jane and John Goeke; and Mark Hassemer.

The following individuals made donations in memory of Neil Levinson: Sheila Schwartz, Ethel Shanker, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Leinberger, Helen Stolar, Helen Hyatt, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Chod, Stanford and Andrea Shanker, Mr. and Mrs. N.A. Eisenberg, David and Mildred Honigberg, and William Levinson.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

Three new members were elected to the Board of Directors for three year terms this September. Joining the board are Becky

Clearwater, Administrative Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Glen Ehrhardt, Attorney and Partner, Rogers, Ehrhardt, and Weber, L.L.C.; and Jonathon Tips, Head Golf Professional, Country Club of Missouri.

In addition to electing new members, the September meeting also included the election of board officers. President is Susan Hart, Vice President, Huebert Builders, Inc.; Vice President, Kat Cunningham, President, Moresource, Inc.; and Secretary/Treasurer, Trent Stober, President, MEC Water Resources, Inc.

NEW WEB SITES LIST PRODUCTS

ACT is broadening its marketing effort by using new Web sites to sell products. Donated items like videotapes, plastic jewel cases and DVD cases have been sold on eBay. New avenues for ACT's recycled products now include Bidville.com, Epier.com and Amazon.com's auction section. None of the new sites charge for listing products. They do, however, charge a small fee for the final value of the product sold.

NEWSLETTERS NOW ONLINE

You can now look at current or past issues of InterACTION on ACT's Web site. Just go to www.actservices.org and click on an icon of the newsletter you'd like to see.

APARTMENT MADE AVAILABLE TO ACT CONSUMERS

Two ACT consumers now are living in an apartment four-plex where 24/7 care and support from ACT staff is available on site.

The consumers, Miranda and Tracy, are each living in their own apartment in a four-plex in southwest Columbia. Live-in staff member Pam Spellmeyer lives in the third apartment. Plans eventually are to make the fourth apartment available to an ACT consumer.

The arrangement is the first apartment building dedicated to ACT consumers and staff.

The goal is to give independence and support to each consumer says Terri Kruger, program manager for the Community Living Program.

"The ladies living there will have that freedom and independence of having their own apartment," says Kruger. They'll have "no roommates to share it with if they chose to not have roommates. At this moment they want to live by themselves." Each of the apartments has two bedrooms which gives the option of a roommate should a consumer want one.

The concept is a new one for ACT. Many in the Community Living Program live in Independent Supported Living homes, or ISLs, along with one or two housemates and a live-in staff. Others live in their own apartment and receive a varied number of hours of support each week. This is the first time individuals can live independently and receive full-time support.

"We're just trying to expand and broaden our horizons," Kruger says. She adds that the apartment owner offered to do everything he could to make available the entire building to ACT. The task was nearly impossible, she says, "but he worked really hard with us and was able to make it happen."

Fashion Show

HIGHLIGHTS FLAIR FOR FUN

It's all about coordinating and having fun.

The lights were dimmed and the runway was lit waiting for the well-dressed to strike a pose. The Community Integration Program hosted the "Just for Fun" Fashion Show in late June. Directed by Nancy Beatty with assistance from Marsha Schafer, Nancy Jones, Dee-Dee Jackson and Michelle Saunders, the concept came into being during a beauty day at ACT. The ladies and gentlemen exhibited grace and poise as they strutted their stuff amid cheering and applause.

Jessica dazzled the crowd with her fast-paced baton twirling, Susan waved to her admirers, and Josh took a bow as they completed their walk.

Sophie reminded us all that no outfit is complete with the accompaniment of a purple boa, and Mila shined as she was escorted in her formal wear.

A few staff also participated and represented some colorful past fashions.

With the Fourth of July rapidly approaching, the fashion show ended on a patriotic note. Flags waved and the audience cheered for Sgt. First Class Larry Barnette, a Program Supervisor for Community Living who returned home safely after serving in Iraq last year.

Everyone who participated shined as the spotlight highlighted their fashion flair.

INTERNET IS A MARKETPLACE FOR SALES COORDINATOR

The new way of selling—on the Internet—is something Tara Smith knows a lot about.

Smith is the new sales coordinator for ACT. As such, she handles all aspects of selling ACT products on the Internet.

While her main Internet site to sell is eBay, she's also exploring other Web sites to bring more exposure to ACT's videotapes, tape cases, DVD cases and CD jewel cases.

"We're looking for other places to sell in addition to eBay," she explains.

Smith, who began the job as sales coordinator a few months ago, previously was the Warehouse Specialist at ACT. She's worked two years for ACT. "I love ACT," she adds.

As part of her job she takes digital photos

of products, lists them on eBay and then handles the invoicing and shipping once they sell.

Her job also involves processing all computer diskette orders for ACT's longtime customer, GreenDisk.

She also manages ACT's fulfillment customer, PNP Outdoors. The NRA hunting and fishing gear business pays ACT to process orders as they come in. Some of their inventory is shelved at ACT in a large secure area of the warehouse.

Part of Smith's job also is to help find other ways to increase revenue for ACT. Right now she's involved with finding ways to market an enormous amount of donated buttons. "I'd just like to see us get a little bit busier and sell a little more," she says. "That's our goal."



FASHION HIGHLIGHT.
Mila models formal wear at the successful fashion show.

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