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inter **ACT** ion

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Alternative Community Training

Dream home built on full accessibility

It's a dream come true for ACT consumers Ashley, Abby and Jessica. This fall the three moved into a new home specifically designed for persons with disabilities.

Accessibility is the key to the home located on the outskirts of east Columbia in a new subdivision. The 1,850-square-foot home, located on Pebble Beach, was built by Abby's father, Steve Lee.

"It's a thought I've had for many years," he says. "Long before Abby moved out of our home I knew I would eventually have to build a specially designed home."

Lee, who has more than 30 years in the construction business, says he was motivated to build the best house possible because of his personal involvement with individuals with disabilities.

For Ashley, her mother Jill Stedem says the home meets Ashley's needs. "The layout and design is good for Ashley, who is in a wheelchair." She adds that Ashley is now among two other consumers near her age. "We're really pleased the way it's turned out in a home that is more age appropriate."

One of the key features is a full-sized living area for live-in staff member Jill Grace. The single story home allows Grace to live on the floor with the young ladies. The spacious area, includes a bedroom, sitting area, walk-in closet and large bathroom.

The house is built according to Universal Design and ADA requirements. That means every aspect of the house must be accessible.

Features include four-foot hallways, a raised dishwasher for persons using a wheelchair, lowered cabinets and countertops and removed toe kicks to allow a wheelchair to scoot closer to the counters. Throughout the house there is enough space to allow a wheelchair to turn around. Another key feature is a bathroom shower that is wheelchair accessible.

One feature Lee added because of his own personal experience was carpet padding. "The people that are going to live in these homes have issues with stumbling and falling on their knees. I decided to go ahead and put it in."

When residents feel like going outside



CUSTOM HOME. Steve Lee has built a home perfectly suited for individuals with disabilities. The new home's design meets the requirements of Universal Design and ADA standards

there also is a large, covered patio area facing wooded acreage.

For his daughter, the new house is something she loves, he says. "As far as I know they all like it."

The house is a prototype for Lee who hopes to build many more. One of the obstacles was finding funding from the Missouri Housing Development Corporation. He cites problems for organizations like ACT to use specially designed homes. "One of the problems is just finding houses that work because they have to have three bedrooms and to a certain extent good facilities for the staff."

Without funding the homes, which are more costly to build than conventional homes, a home would be too expensive to rent to organizations like ACT. "Hopefully I'll be able to produce enough of these that it'll produce a solution to some of those problems."

With experience building all over the state, Lee adds he could build accessible homes throughout Missouri if funding comes through. For now he's seeking funding to build two or three more in Columbia. "There's no limit to it. There's a huge demand."

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 directly helps ACT consumers or programs. This time of year your contributions can be designated for: such things as holiday gifts, ACT's annual holiday party or various other needs

With your contributions you'll be Santa to many. 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:

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MEET YOUR BOARD

GOLF PRO ADDS SERVICE ORIENTATION TO BOARD



JONATHAN TIPS

Jonathan Tips has insight into ACT's service mission. The new Board of Directors' member has been in the service business since graduating from the University of Oklahoma in 1993.

Tips' service perspective comes into play everyday he serves as head golf professional at Columbia's Missouri Country Club.

"Mainly my job is a service job," he says. He adds that his job is to "help in anyway that I can to make the club as good as it can be. I provide service to people and try to make their days better when they come to the club." The same service orientation drives ACT, he adds.

Tips says his initial view of ACT was that of a workplace for individuals with disabilities. He says he now sees that ACT provides many more services from Community Integration to Community Employment.

"My knowledge of it will grow but the thing that's most important is that I care. I care about people and have a service type of attitude." He adds that "it's a worthy thing that ACT does. It's a lot more than what I thought it was and what I still think it is."

He mentions that the Community Employment Program particularly strikes him as one with many challenges. "Placement in the community is very difficult. It's not an easy job. ACT's employees work very hard to help people out that wouldn't get the help otherwise. There are people with all sorts of disabilities

and not just outward disabilities."

He also adds that he is impressed with ACT's new arrangement to have consumers live in a four-plex with a staff person on site.

In addition to his service perspective, Tips hopes to add his business background to the board.

He currently manages about 25 people for the club which has 350 golfing members. "I have a lot of experience budgeting and reading financial statements." Tips has had extensive golf pro experience to sharpen those skills. His background includes working for Southern Hills Country Club in Oklahoma as an assistant golf pro. He worked at the club when it hosted the U.S. Open in 2001. Four years ago he came to his current position.

"I think my knowledge would be basic business knowledge and common sense," he says. "I hope to apply common sense and really try to help Executive Director Mark Hassemmer out as much as I can."

Tips and his wife Jayme have two children—Zachary, 6 and Emma, 3.

NEW BOARD MEMBER BRINGS PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE



BECKY CLEARWATER

Becky Clearwater brings a parent's perspective to the Board of Directors. One of the latest to join the board, Clearwater is the parent of Lindsey, who has been part of ACT for seven years.

Lindsey participates in the Affirmative Industries Program and the Community Integration Program.

"She loves getting paid," Clearwater says of Lindsey. "She gets a check and she loves to shop. Right now everything is working out

real well for us."

Lindsey was a pioneer for ACT seven years ago when ACT started working with Columbia's public schools to offer job services to high school students with disabilities. Since then Clearwater and her husband, Lance, have been grateful that ACT offers a full eight hours of care for their daughter.

"If it weren't available to her I'm not sure what we would have available to us," Clearwater says. "The eight-hour program is the reason."

Finding work opportunities and care for Lindsey has allowed Clearwater to pursue a degree in computer information technology as well as work with the federal government. Previously she and her husband founded a day care serving approximately 100 children.

"We're really fortunate to have ACT here in Columbia," she says. "When Lindsey started they probably had less than 100 clients. It's really exploded." She adds that "the people have found out. It's growing and we have to make sure that the quality of service that's provided is maintained. I hope to help with that. I'm sure it's hard because funds are tight. They're doing a wonderful job keeping the programs going."

In addition to a parent's perspective, Clearwater also may contribute her professional insight. Clearwater is the administrative officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Columbia office where she has been for 16 years. She also serves as administrative officer for the Missouri Private Lands Office. The focus of the ecological services division, which she serves, is to oversee endangered species.

Now she plans to serve ACT by being a part of the Board of Directors. "If you're going to participate in something like this you have to be proactive. I like to use my time well and because I have a daughter there I want to be sure that ACT is secure for her in the coming years."

One priority for Clearwater is to make ACT more visible to the community. "I'd like to see the community be more aware of what ACT does," she says. "I know it's a small percentage of population that needs ACT, but if they didn't have ACT, what would they do? Where would they go? It would be sad."

She adds that "we've got to get the information out to the community. That's my goal—to work on that with the board and see if we can find a way to broaden the knowledge of what ACT does for Boone County."

ONE-ON-ONE CARE MOTIVATES NEW SUPERVISOR

Going to the doctor is fun for the consumers under the care of Program Supervisor Kelly Williams.

Williams, who joined ACT in August, picks clients' favorite music to listen to along the way to doctors' offices. She also keeps conversation upbeat by talking about favorite activities coming up during the week for her five consumers.

"I try to make it a little more fun for them," she says. "I think they're all such wonderful and interesting people that I can't imagine staying in an office doing all their paperwork and not getting to meet them and hang out with them."

Williams also is a frequent visitor to the two Community Living Program homes she supervises. She coordinates many activities including making collages from magazine pictures, a type of therapy ACT staff was able to receive training on. The project helps "build cohesiveness in the home" plus it's an activity everyone looks forward to.

"It's worked out well," the Mexico, Missouri native says. "They all seem to enjoy it and request that we do it the next week."

Her involvement with her consumers also has led to writing a fan letter for one consumer to Burt Reynolds. The first letter was returned but a second letter has been sent.

The many activities help balance Williams' job between client contact and the paperwork the job requires.

"What really drew me into this position is that I would have contact with the clients. And it's also an office position. It's sort of in between an office position and direct care."

"I've always been in the care and nurturing role," she adds. Even as a high school student she worked in a hospital. Future work as a



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS. New Community Living Program Manager Kelly Williams finds the best of both worlds in her job. In addition to handling the many details for the consumers she serves, she gets to see them several times a week.

student at Columbia College led her to an after-school program for young children. Her college internship also exposed her to direct care for individuals with developmental disabilities. Following her internship she provided—and continues to provide—respite care to an individual.

She enjoys her work now which involves overseeing six staff members and five consumers. "I enjoy it very much. I've gotten along well with all of my staff. They're so organized and easy to work with."

"I love the staff that I work with," she says. "The atmosphere of the agency is nice to be around every day. It's not an easy job. It makes it so much better when you have an agency full of people that are so concerned with how you are doing. It's a very warm agency."

Training program attracts 61 employees

A lot of learning is going on at ACT. Sixty-one employees are taking part in the online education program offered by the national College of Direct Support.

Individuals from all departments are learning on their own time. All types of positions also are represented.

"A lot of people are very excited," says Michelle Saunders, Community Integration Program Manager, and the ACT administrator contact for the training program.

There are several incentives for those taking the courses. Divided in two modules, finishing each module offers a \$350 bonus. Only those in direct care roles receive each \$350 bonus. For direct care staff who complete both the modules there also is a 25-cent per hour increase in pay and Direct Support Professional (DSP) designation behind their title.

The money, however, is not the motivation to complete the studies. The goal is to provide higher quality care to all consumers. "The bottom line is that we support better the people that we provide services to," says Saunders.

A major benefit for agencies such as ACT is employee retention. "We want to retain direct support professionals. They're expanding their knowledge of the system."

Module I has seven specific courses and Module II has six. A total of 954 lessons have been completed.

Already two ACT staff members have completed both modules of the training. Completing the course are Nerissa Seielstad, part of the Community Living Program and Carrie Lamberti, part of the Community Living Program. An on-the-job review will be conducted to review all the information in the training.

EMPLOYEES TRAINED TO SERVE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Seventeen ACT employees now have a better idea what it means to be visually impaired. The employees were trained by the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

Employees wore complete blinders or blinders simulating tunnel vision. With cane in hand, each was verbally coached or guided by someone from the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

The goal was to acquaint the employees with the effects of visual impairment so ACT may better serve the visually impaired. One initial goal is for ACT to help place more visually impaired in jobs through the Community Employment Program.

Other ACT consumers who are visually impaired will also be better served following

the training. The training was provided to ACT's Community Employment, Community Integration and Community Living programs.

"I think it's great because this reminded everyone to treat people the way they need to be treated and that this is what it feels like," says Community Integration Program Manager Michelle Saunders.

"We had very positive feedback from our employees," she adds. "It worked out really well."

In addition to the training, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind provided handouts to serve those with visual or hearing impairments.



EXPERIENCING BLINDNESS. Brett Glass learns what it's like to be visually impaired during training.

PROGRAM MANAGER HAS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE

Terri Kruger knows a lot about the daily needs of the consumers that ACT supports. For 16 years she's had contact with consumers learning every need and desire they may have.

Now she applies that knowledge every day while she oversees 24 consumers as a Program Manager in the Community Living Program.

She keeps her focus on the needs of each consumer explaining that her job "is to ensure that the consumers we support are receiving the care we're providing and ensure their medical, health and safety needs are met."

Her work involves overseeing four Program Supervisors that have two Independent Supported Living (ISL) homes each. There are from two to three consumers in each ISL placement.

She worked in a position similar to a Program Supervisor for many years. She also served in Community Living at ACT for 16 years at one ISL and served as a Job Developer in the Community Employment Program for five years.

"I've been everywhere," she says. Throughout her experience she's enjoyed consumer direct care. "I truly like the direct care—working with the consumers one on one."

With that experience she adds that she now has a better chance of understanding Program Supervisors and staff regarding their concerns for their consumers. "I can say I've been there. And I listen and try to understand where they're coming from."

Her coworkers and the consumers make an ideal situation for Kruger, she says. "I just like



FOCUSED. Terri Kruger, recently named Program Manager for the Community Living Program, is focused on the needs of each consumer in the program.

this place. The people that work here are nice and the consumers are good to work for. I just like my job."

ACT LAUNCHES BUTTON PROJECT

BUTTON BOUNTY. Claire, left, and Dechelle Richardson, Production Training Supervisor, sort out dozens of buttons as part of a new effort to sell buttons to the craft community.



Are you a button collector or a "crafter" looking for unique buttons? If so, ACT has exactly what you want.

ACT's Affirmative Industries Program is marketing unique buttons now. Thousands of buttons were provided by an antique clothing store. The large barrel of buttons is now being sorted by several ACT consumers.

The consumers "just love it," says Deanie McClain, who works with the Affirmative Industries Program and is helping the consumers sort all the buttons by color. After sorting by color, artistic buttons are separated to form sets. "It's a new adventure for us," McClain says. "I want to be assured there are jobs for these guys."

A variety of buttons is placed in a plastic bag and stapled shut with a special-designed ACT label. The variety packs are aimed at the

craft market where individuals use buttons in quilts, quilted vests, T-shirts and jewelry.

Two button collectors have visited ACT to advise how to sell the buttons. One idea is to market highly specialized buttons on the Internet.

"Buttons are really expensive," says McClain. By buying ACT's buttons, "people are going to save a lot of money." The ACT consumers have found groups of four or more artistic buttons. Just a few of the sets include miniature snowmen, tomatoes, school buses, scissors, bears, pop art, hearts and wooden buttons. There are also jewel-like buttons that sell for as much as \$15 each on the Internet, McClain says. "The crafters love them," she adds.

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