

# Dear Friends of ACT,

Here's a link to a video I think you'll enjoy. <http://www.espn.com/video/clip?id=11914982> It's about 11 year old Owen Howkins and his rescued Anatolian shepherd dog, Haatchi. They're best friends.

Together, they won the Friends for Life category at the biggest dog show in the U.K., Crufts.

When I played it for staff here at ACT more than a few tears flowed.

Their story, you'll see, is a touching one about survival, acceptance, judgment, and friendship. It's not just about a boy and his dog, it's about the work we do, too.

Because of his rare genetic disorder, Schwartz Jampel syndrome, Owen is in nearly constant excruciating pain.

I marveled at Owen's ability to deal with the never-ending pain of walking, dressing, or any kind of moving. It's always there. As with many of the people with developmental disabilities whom we serve, his struggles will likely remain forever. It's about survival.

You'll also see that when you introduce an aid or device meant to knock down a barrier, you sometimes create a new challenge. For Owen, it was a wheelchair. It was supposed to make it easier for

him to get around. Instead, Owen noticed that people stared at him. "It made me feel alone," he said.

Besides Haatchi's amazing eyes, you'll discover in the video the other qualities that make him unique. When he and Owen first met, there was instant understanding between the two, an immediate connection. Soon Owen realized that when he went out with Haatchi, people stared at his dog, not him. He began looking forward to his walks with Haatchi.

Our mission at ACT is to create opportunities for people with disabilities to become participating members of the community. But we need to be sure the community opens its arms and welcomes them. We think we might have some pretty good ideas. But not everyone is accepting. It's about acceptance.

We're not the ones being stared at. We're not the ones being criticized. Owen felt it. I'm sure some of the people we serve have felt it, too. This video conveys a strong message about the loneliness and isolation that might be felt when you're judged for being different. It's about judgment.

The video also delivers on the transformational power of true relationship.

I welcome the day when the people we work with have lives that are deeply intertwined with those of their friends. These friends share their joys and struggles and serve as bridges into clubs, religious services, social events, and fraternal organizations. When deeply immersed in shared interests, differences dissolve unnoticed into the background. It's about friendship.

Everyone is different. Everyone's unique. But the things we share in common move us past our differences and on to a shared life of greater possibility.

This great video tells that story far better than I can.

Until next month,

**Mark**



## In This Issue

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# BUSINESSES PARTNERING WITH ACS BENEFIT THEMSELVES AND JOB SEEKERS

ACT's Career Services (ACS) helps people with disabilities accomplish their vocational goals, while helping Boone County businesses fill their recruitment needs.

To do this, the program must establish and maintain relationships with local businesses. The businesses provide many opportunities job candidates need to progress in their careers.

Businesses assist job seekers by providing informational interviews, offering job shadowing/job trial experiences, conducting mock interviews, providing volunteer work opportunities, and most importantly by hiring and promoting qualified candidates with disabilities.

"We are always working to establish business partnerships in all areas in which we provide support. Our overall goal is for individuals to obtain and sustain their career objectives," says Program Manager Fontella Jackmon-Jones.

The program has a broad spectrum of business partners. Because of this breadth, they can provide support and opportunities to individuals who have a wide variety of career goals.

ACT's business partners assist job seekers in making informed decisions about career goals and they provided individualized and real-world experiences in areas of greatest interest.

The partnership benefits the businesses, too. The businesses learn along the way. They often report they have gained a clearer understanding of how to best support individuals with different abilities.

Program Director Jessica Mahon says, "We recognize we have two primary customers, job seekers and businesses in the community."

See the table below to find out how your business can partner with ACS and how it benefits from the partnership. If you would like more information, please contact ACT Career Services.



## Career Planning

### Service Description

These services help job seekers plan for their careers. We assist job seekers to identify strengths, interests, contributions, and the support they need to succeed.

### Benefit to Business

Job candidates have explored career options and decided on vocational goals that best fit their interests and strengths. Candidates have a better understanding of the various intricacies of different occupations.

### How your business can be involved

Provide job shadowing, job try-outs, and information interviews.

## Employment Preparation

### Service Description

The emphasis is on skill development needed. Skill training may focus on: attention to task, appropriate response to instruction and supervision, transportation instruction, attendance and punctuality, appropriate workplace interaction, work quality, production speed, problem solving, and others.

### Benefit to Business

Candidates have experience volunteering, and participating in internships. They have a more complete understanding of the expectations of potential employers.

### How your business can be involved

Provide volunteering opportunities and internships.

## Job Search

### Service Description

Assist job seekers with obtaining employment. Support can include: job lead discovery, application assistance, interview support, job site analysis, and job offer negotiation.

### Benefit to Business

Candidates apply for positions that highlight their strengths as determined through their comprehensive career development. Career Specialists are available to assist with matching the businesses' needs to the job seeker's skills.

### How your business can be involved

Conduct mock interviews, review and critique resumes, interview candidates, and hire qualified candidates with disabilities

## Job Training and Retention

### Service Description

Employees and businesses can receive support from an ACT Career Specialist once candidate is hired. Support may be provided at the business or away from the business. Support focuses on learning new job tasks and expectations, assisting with relationship development, establishment of task schedules, or other success factors.

### Benefit to Business

ACT supplements training provided by the business to help the new employee become acclimated to his/her position and work place. This promotes employment retention.

### How your business can be involved

Hire, retain, and promote job candidates with disabilities.

## CL LEARNS AND CHANGES AS THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE AGE

Community Living (CL) has been affected by the several trends we see as the large baby boomer population ages. As a result, CL is shifting the way it provides services to some of the individuals in the program.

As this group ages, health concerns increase and mobility may decline. But the focus for ACT remains the same: providing person-centered planning that allows the people we serve to live as independently as possible.

Person-centered planning is an ongoing process that lays out goals and milestones for a person with a disability. The plan makes it possible for the person to improve her or his own independence and increase self-determination.

For most of his adult life (25 years), Larry has received services from ACT. He is also one of two of the oldest adults at ACT.

He's experiencing many changes to his health. Staff has had to adjust by keeping up with his medical needs – doctors' appointments are more frequent as his age makes him more susceptible to illness.

Ruth is also experiencing some of the affects of more advanced age. She has received services from ACT for nearly 10 years. Ruth came to ACT while grieving the loss of her significant other. That's entirely new territory for CL employees.

Chris and Mila outside their home in the 90's.

Chris and Mila have been with CL since ACT's beginnings, breaking barriers in the way people with disabilities live. Moving into an ACT supported home in the early 1990's, they were the first two to receive CL services and the first in Missouri to live in an Independent Supported Living (<http://www.actservices.org/chris-and-mila-missouris-first-in-isl>).

As time goes on, our knowledge and understanding improve, and with them, our services improve too. Providing sign language and trust trainings have helped Direct Support Professionals offer better care while working with Mila, who is blind and deaf.

Perry has been with ACT for ?? years. His health has diminished during the last several years. But he and his family believe it is important for him to stay in his home. Perry's family and CL employees made improvements to his house so it was possible. His aging roommates also benefited from the renovations. Perry is still in his home today.

Both Veronica and Allan have been medical marvels, facing illnesses that threatened their lives. CL employees were diligent in their care, sitting bedside at the hospital for countless hours and rushing them from one doctor appointment to another. Staff even received additional medical training so Allan and Veronica could return home.



These illnesses changed the way they received services, but the plan has remained the same: do what's best for them, according to them.

Whether a person CL supports is young, old, or somewhere in between, his or her life course will likely change. It is the program's goal to provide the best care to each individual through person-centered planning throughout the full range of each one's life.



## DAY PROGRAM SHARES SCHEDULE

# WITH OTHER PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES



The Day Program is on a mission to see more people with disabilities get out into the community.

In addition to offering weekend, evening, and Medical Exception services, the program started sharing its activity calendar with other ACT programs and smaller provider agencies. The Program hopes other people who aren't regular participants in the program will join in the activities it offers.

"We put a lot of hard work into creating the activity calendar. We might as well share the wealth," says Rachael Jackson, Day Program Activities Supervisor.

This calendar is chock full of community activities from coffee outings to trips to the St. Louis Zoo and everything in between.

The program sees 28 groups pull out of the parking lot daily, 14 in the morning and 14 in the afternoon.

Now, other people with disabilities can start enjoying all the community has to offer, even though they aren't in the Program.

And it's working! Michelle Bledsoe, a BCBA, who is working with Steven, supported in ACT's Community Living (CL) program, has met a Day Program group out several times for Coffee and Current Events.

Steven is able to make social strides meeting in a public setting with Bledsoe. For Bledsoe, having access to this calendar makes finding activities for Steven a breeze.

A handful of others from CL have also utilized this schedule to meet Day Program groups to go exploring the mall, walking at the park... whatever sparks their interest.

Day Program Manager Michelle Bell says, "Connecting people with their community is beneficial not only by fulfilling social needs but in accomplishing personal goals. And, it's fun!"

## SHOP AND DONATE

You can now donate to ACT by shopping at Gerbes, Schnucks, and AmazonSmile and JustGive.org!

At Gerbes and Schnucks, simply apply for their community/rewards program, pick ACT as your designated charity, and shop away!

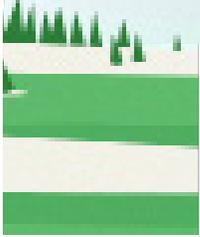
When shopping at AmazonSmile, create an account, pick ACT as your charity, and again, shop away!

JustGive makes donating to charitable organizations easy. Go to their website and search Alternative Community Training to donate. You can even pick to give one time, monthly, or to put on a registry.

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ACT!

The AmazonSmile logo features the word "amazon" in black and "smile" in orange, with the orange arrow from the Amazon logo pointing from the 'a' to the 'e'. Below the logo is the tagline "You shop. Amazon gives." in a smaller, black font.

MAY



	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	STEP graduation, Boone Hospital Center, 2pm	13	
Mother's Day	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	Last Day of School for Columbia Public Schools	25	26	27
28	Memorial Day, ACT facility based offices closed	29	30	31			

JUNE



				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Check our Twitter @ACTofCoMo and our Facebook fb.com/ACTofCoMo for more details

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