

Dear Friends of ACT,

Every October, NDEAM celebrates individuals with disabilities and their contributions to the workforce. We'll be doing the same right here in Central Missouri.

"Inclusion Drives Innovation" is the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme this year.

Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta said, "Smart employers know that including different perspectives in problem-solving situations leads to better solutions. Hiring employees with diverse abilities strengthens their business, increases competition, and drives innovation."

It seems like a bold claim. Including people with different abilities or who may seem different gives businesses an advantage. How do they know that? Here's what I found when I investigated this question:

A December 2013 study in Harvard Business Review looked at two types of diversity, inherent and acquired. **Inherent** diversity is exhibited by traits such as gender and ethnicity that you're born with. **Acquired** diversity is gained from experience, like working in another country.

The study showed that companies whose leaders exhibit at least three inherent and three acquired diversity traits out-innovate and out-perform those that don't. The

research also showed that nearly 80% of the companies that responded didn't have this type of leadership.

Lacking diversity actually costs companies crucial market opportunities. Having diverse contributors in the workplace allows businesses to understand and address unmet needs in under-leveraged markets.

Donald Fan, Senior Director in the Office of Diversity at Walmart, has observed that diverse teams out-perform those comprised of the best qualified or highly credentialed employees. Diversity of perspectives and problem-solving approaches trumps individual ability.

Diverse teams demonstrate these characteristics:

- Freedom of Thought – they embrace mavericks who challenge the status quo and solve problems in new ways.
- Cross-Pollination – they advocate for collaboration, which enhances the flow of skills and information horizontally across the organization or teams.
- Ingenuity – their willingness to swim upstream, against the dominant pattern of an organization or team, unleashes pleasing surprises and unexpected outcomes.
- Competency – team members become competent in the cultural intelligence (wisdom, information,

values, perspectives, solutions) of cultures other than their own and exploit that competence in the workplace.

- New Outcomes – they create environments in which new ideas/great ideas can emerge and thrive.

Mary Frances-Winters, President and Founder of the Winters Group, Inc., distinguishes diversity from inclusion. She says diversity alone doesn't foster innovation. It's **inclusion** (just like the NDEAM slogan says) that disrupts and drives breakthroughs.

She says organizations will tell you innovation is the key to their success. In practice, they lean toward valuing conformity and standardization.

Hiring is a good example. People are commonly hired based on "good fit". "If they're like us, they won't rock the boat."

Innovative companies are hiring people who are not "like us". They don't look like us nor do they see things from the same worldview.

As in an orchestra, she says, the conductor does not want the violin acting like or sounding like a clarinet. Each instrument has a unique sound and contribution to make.

Innovation potential is lost in organizations when they subconsciously force people to act in ways that do not take their unique

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Mark Hassemer
Executive Director

capabilities into account. Creating a "melting pot" team for the optics or to achieve a diversity metric falls short of what can be gained by actually using those unusual or atypical attributes in the workplace. It's like hiring an oboe player, giving

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her music, seating her on the stage with the rest of orchestra, but not letting her play because she sounds different from the cello.

Innovation blossoms when culturally competent leaders (like an orchestra conductor) know how to manage and leverage the unique talents each person (instrument) brings. The result is far superior to what would otherwise be attained.

I think Steve Jobs was right when he said, "The source of wealth and capital in this new era is not material

things... It is the human mind, the human spirit, the human imagination and our faith in the future."

As soon as I read the theme "Inclusion Drives Innovation" I knew it rang true for me. I believe it. Now I have evidence to support it. Join me this month, and whenever the opportunity arises, as we help others know and think about the facts of workplace inclusion. Businesses that include excel.

Until next month,



The 2016-17 STEP graduates.

STEP REACHES SIXTH YEAR, EMERGES AS MODEL FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES

Seamless Transition through Enhanced Partnership (STEP) turned six years old this year. In the first five years, program has worked with 30 students and seen many successes. It is now a model for other school districts.

STEP is a multi-agency collaboration designed to provide intensive work skills training and development to Columbia Public School Seniors with developmental disabilities.

The primary agencies participating in the STEP collaboration team are: Boone Hospital Center (BHC), Columbia Public Schools (CPS), Alternative Community Training (ACT), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Boone County Family Resources (BCFR), and the Central Missouri Regional Office (CMRO) (Missouri Department of Mental Health). Other agencies are invited to participate as appropriate based on individual intern needs.

Students are referred to the STEP program during their junior year by their Support Coordinator at Boone County Family Resources or by Columbia Public Schools staff.

Students are screened and selected for the program by the STEP Support team. Incoming interns and parents attend an orientation at the end of the student's junior year. During the summer, interns participate in career planning activities with the STEP Career Specialist. This helps with appropriate internship placements once they begin the STEP program and with identifying the general employment skills that need to be developed.

Interns attend the STEP program at Boone Hospital full-time during their senior year. Each student works on individualized goals designed to help them progress towards successful competitive employment.

Columbia Public Schools Special Education staff, Vocational Rehabilitation Career Counselor, and ACT Career Specialist work with interns during the first six weeks of the program in the STEP Transition Center on the Boone Hospital campus. During this time, interns learn job readiness skills, interview for internships, and complete Boone Beginnings training.

Beginning with week seven of the program, interns spend a maximum of five hours per day at their internship sites with job supports from ACT, BCFR, CPS staff, and their BHC department mentor.

As interns gain competencies and natural supports are developed, supports are faded out gradually. Weekly meetings are held with BCFR, CPS, VR, and ACT staff to discuss intern progress and concerns. Additional individual team meetings are organized as needed

to ensure each intern receives the support and services needed to help him/her reach his/her goals.

Once the intern and the intern's team determine s/he is ready to pursue competitive employment, an application for Vocational Rehabilitation is completed, a team-planning meeting occurs, and job development activities begin with the ACT Career Specialist. This usually occurs in the second semester of the program.

The goal for all interns is to obtain competitive employment with appropriate levels of support in a job that matches their interests and abilities.

Interns graduating from the STEP program have a good rate of employment, exceeding the national average of employment for persons with disabilities.

Interns have been employed in a variety of businesses including Wal-Mart, Hy-Vee, University of Missouri food services, MU Athletic Center, and Lenoir Woods. Two interns were been hired at BHC and continue their employment in the departments in which they interned.

Several school districts have toured the program as they consider similar approaches in their communities. They include Southern Boone, Waynesville, and Hannibal, which brought school and community team members to discuss the STEP in depth. They hope to begin the planning process to implement a similar program in the near future.



Norma accepting her 30 year tenure award from Executive Director Mark Hassemer

NORMA, SHE GAVE HER ENTIRE LIFE TO OTHERS

We said goodbye to a friend and longtime ACT employee recently. Norma Jean Henson worked at ACT for 35 years, the second longest tenure of anyone in the company.

Norma loved her work. She always smiled. She will certainly be remembered for her lifetime of dedication to persons with developmental disabilities. (Norma also worked at Woodhaven for more than 35 years!).

Norma's legacy is well established. She was kind, compassionate, and generous.

When ACT opened the first individualized supported living home in Columbia, she was there, providing support to Mila and Chris.

For the past 25 years she has been a permanent fixture at the Blue Cedar house working with Joey, Perry, and Richard.

Community Living Assistant Program Director Terri Kruger says, "Norma was genuine. You don't find too many people in this world who give their entire lives to others. Norma did that."

Describing Norma as her "rock", Kruger recalls many times when Norma would pick up extra shifts and lend a helping hand.

Four times when Norma's Manager was deployed overseas, she took on extra permanent hours to ensure that individuals had the support they needed.

She was so in tune with the individuals she supported, she knew when something just wasn't right. "When Norma said something was wrong with one of the guy's health, you knew something was wrong," Kruger says.

Norma also made sure that not a single special occasion for their families went unnoticed or unacknowledged. She helped them purchase cards and gifts. She worked hard to ensure each of them maintained an active role in their families.

Norma was a joy to work with. She always kept you laughing and smiling. You would often find her playing music while working, encouraging the guys to dance, sing, and enjoy life.

Kruger recalls one of her favorite Norma stories:

"One of the people Norma supported couldn't say my name properly. When he tried, he called me Tangarae. So Norma started calling me Tangarae.



Norma chatting with Albert, an individual served in ACT's Community Living program.

She didn't do this to make fun of him but to let him know that it was okay that he couldn't say my name correctly, that I would be okay with it, and that I would answer any time my name was said that way. He also referred to Norma as Moma. For the time I was blessed to be a part of Norma's life, that is how we greeted each other."

She continued this work she loved until her health no longer allowed her to.

It's hard to imagine that a replacement for someone who is so committed to the well-being of others could ever be found. But we know that person is among us. Maybe 35 years from now we'll be acknowledging his or her amazing contribution.

Good bye, Norma Jean.
We will miss you.

LISA AND DON, VALUED BOARD MEMBERS



In August, Don Howser and Lisa Tye's terms expired on our Board of Directors.

Both served as President during their tenure through an era that was transformative.

Their outstanding leadership was a guiding light. ACT is now stronger than ever. Thank you both for your dedicated service to ACT.

CONSTRUCTION AT ACT NEARLY COMPLETE



Dennis Collier painting a wall.

For the past several months the ACT building at 2200 Burlington Street has been under construction.

When the work is done we'll have new and improved program areas for Day Program, more office space, and a new training center.

Space that was used for the recycling program was converted into a program room and a media center. The media center will be equipped with exercise equipment, computers, a large screen TV, and seating.

The construction will also create a new program room for the Purple Team. The new training center is going in where the Purple Team program room was located before.

Also, every room in the building is getting a new coat of paint. Old wall coverings are being removed or replaced. Each program room will be equipped with real-time electronic schedules that are updated as changes occur throughout the day.

This updated environment for the Day Program is a much-needed improvement, but the focus of the program will remain on active participation in the community (not inside the building).

Day Program Director Craig Valone says, "Over the last two months, 60% of Day Program activity groups are scheduled in the community. We are excited about having a building that more efficiently meets the functional needs of the program, while we continue to look at new and expanding opportunities to be in and a part of the community."

The new training center will be used for block training (new employee training) and will allow us to conduct more frequent trainings needed to bring on new employees.

"Directly connecting the training center to the HR Training Specialist's office will greatly enhance our ability to conduct trainings and provide high quality experiences for new and existing employees," said Human Resources Director, Brian Tveitnes.

The training center will also be used for meetings (e.g., board meetings), conducting employment interviews, and for completing online employee trainings.

The space will be set up with tables and chairs that can be moved to suit the needs of users.

Valone continues, "There are a few items left on the list before we can say the project is done. But most of the large disruptions are behind us. I expect to be completely finished with the project by the end of the year."

And we can't wait to share the finished product with you!

ACT WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE 2017 COMOGIVES CAMPAIGN IN DECEMBER

During the last three years ACT has raised over \$50,000 through CoMoGives for people with disabilities.

Medical needs were met, lifelong memories were created, and first time experiences were made possible through this campaign.

Funds from last year have continued to be a lifeline for many people who receive ACT's services.

CoMoGives donations helped Gary, Dennis, Derrick and Kelly go to Camp Wonderland, an unforgettable experience for people with disabilities.

Josh, who struggles with his weight, bought a new kitchen table, chairs, and a pedometer. A behavior therapist suggested these items to aid him on his road to health. He is now down more than 11 pounds!

Gabrielle needs a particular vitamin not covered by insurance. She has it every day now thanks to CoMoGives.

Veronica bought a new mattress; Allan, new bedding.

And we are just halfway through the year!

Thank you! Thank you to everyone who has supported ACT through the years. None of this would have happened without your generosity.

Beginning December 1 and extending through the end of the month the CoMoGives campaign will be active and accepting donations once again. We are excited to be a part the 2017 campaign. We are anticipating tremendous community support, and, of course, the good work that will be done.

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!



Inclusion *drives* Innovation



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	<i>Columbus Day</i>	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	<i>Mid-MO Business Leadership Network Launch Party at CCMO from 8a-10a</i>		26	27
29	30	<i>Halloween</i>	31	National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is a national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the countless contributions of America's workers with disabilities. The theme for 2017 is "Inclusion Drives Innovation."		



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

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