

Dear Friends of ACT,

When I wrote here last, I mentioned we'd have some exciting new changes to announce soon. But I offered few clues about what was going to happen.

Now it's time to pull back the curtain on two new developments. I expect more to follow.

First, ACT has established a new after-school program that, for now, serves middle schoolers. We're providing services during the local school year. The program, ASYP (After School Youth Program), offers individualized, goal-oriented services to students with disabilities who want and benefit from structured after-school activities.

Participants have been trying new community activities, working on individual outcomes, and having fun. They like the MAC (Missouri Athletic Center), Going Bonkers (www.goingbonkers.com), exploring Columbia's parks, and the arcade. They've toured a movie theater, a fire station, KOMU radio, and will soon be checking out Clear 99 radio and a local bank.

A variety of volunteer opportunities will soon be an option for participants, too.

Glenn recently told us that what he'd experienced in ASYP was "the best day ever." One parent commented, "It is such a relief to finally have an after

school program made for my child."

This program has been well-received by families. We are assisting young people as they work to accomplish their personal goals. Participants are out in the community belonging and participating.

This is just one example of changes, exciting changes that are unfolding here. There's a palpable positive energy happening right now at ACT. It's fueling a lot of activity.

The team working here is terrific. When I listen to these talented people and the stakeholders we serve, and then stay out of their way, some pretty great things happen.

That leads to another announcement.

I will be retiring at the end of the fiscal year. My last day at ACT will be June 29th, 2018.

Forty years at ACT, 34 as Executive Director, have been a great run. It's time to hand the reins over to someone else.

The Board of Directors has formed a search committee. The goal is to have a new Executive Director in place before the end of the fiscal year.

ACT is in a great place. The timing could not be better for someone else to step in to this role.

We are led by a strong administrative team. We have management and supervisory staff who put it all on the line every day. And we have direct support professionals who provide services with a level of passion and commitment that is truly remarkable.

(If you're curious, there's no bucket list to chase after. I feel great. I'm just looking forward to spending more time with family and friends, and having more availability to pursue other interests.)

To everyone I've had the opportunity to work with: thank you. I have been blessed to pursue my life's work, my passion. Looking back, I am content. I have no regrets. It has been a high privilege to share these days, years, and decades with such remarkable people.

With much gratitude,



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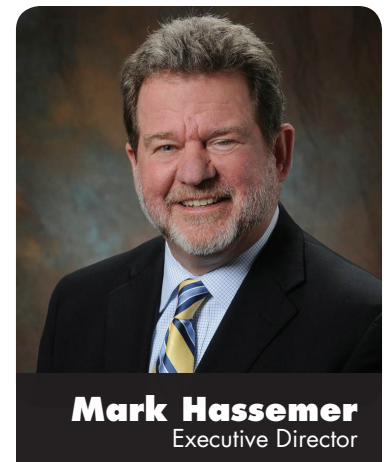
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Mark Hassemer
Executive Director

ACT OFFERS MORE SERVICES & SUPPORTS WITH THE NEW AFTER SCHOOL YOUTH PROGRAM



The After School Youth Program (ASYP), a new program, is now underway at ACT. It was created to provide young people with more opportunities to develop socialization and adaptive skills they need to participate in their communities.

Finding the right after school programming for middle and high school-aged youth with developmental disabilities is challenging for many families. The After School Youth Program combines recreational and community-based activities with well-trained staff. Already, many families are finding it to be the solution they need.

“It started because there’s a need for consistent after school programming for the ages of the individuals that we serve,” says Tara Shade, Program Manager for In-Home Services. “Many after school programs stop after elementary school.”

ASYP is offered five days a week from 3:00 to 6:00 pm, when students have just finished their day at school. It’s

a great opportunity to build on the social skills learned in the classroom.

So far, the students have been active volunteering at local non-profits, burning off energy at Going Bonkers, experimenting with Pinterest crafts, and touring a local fire station.

The students are beginning to feel a strong sense of connection with their peers. Parents are raving about improved outcomes and behavior at home.

Young individuals and adults can still access In-Home Services through ACT. This program adds another option for individuals to have a meaningful day. By focusing on the personal outcomes of each individual, we’re able to customize the services we offer in order to better fit their needs.

The program is new. But we intend to expand as much as the need for quality after school programming grows.



CRAIG VALONE TEACHES AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE

Since the start of the spring semester, Craig Valone, Director of Day Program, has been teaching a course at Columbia College. The junior level class, Disabilities, is aimed at students majoring in Human Services. Topics such as mobility, cognitive, developmental, and psychological disabilities are covered.

Several speakers have given presentations to the class, including staff from the Department of Mental Health and a family member of a person with a disability. Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri will visit soon to speak about immigration work.

“Teaching this class has been a great learning opportunity. The students have a chance to learn first-hand about disabilities, while I have the chance to learn about and spend time with the next generation of workers in the Human Services field.”

“It has been very reassuring to work with a group of students so willing to help others and eager to learn.”

Craig’s students recently visited ACT and spent time with individuals in the Day Program.

They were able to gain perspectives of current practices in the field and understand the realities of the types of jobs they will be seeking. That is important to Craig.

For his students to flourish in their fields of interest, they must have relatable experience.



NIGHT TO SHINE WOWS PROM GOERS



On February 9th, in more than 500 churches across the nation and in 16 countries, the Tim Tebow Foundation once again created a spectacular evening of glamour and unforgettable moments through Night to Shine. The Compass Church was generous in hosting this event for Columbia and recruiting volunteers to set up and ensure a night of magic.

An annual prom night experience for individuals with disabilities, Night to Shine delivers and exceeds expectations. It leaves an impression every year on Hannah Prince, Program Manager for Community Living.

"The Night to Shine Prom is such an awesome event. It made my heart so happy to see all of

our individuals dressed up and having a ball! For many, it's the first time they've been able to go to prom. You can feel the excitement and joy as soon as you walk into the building. It's certainly an event that even we, as managers, look forward to!"

Walking up to the building on a red carpet, the paparazzi snapped pictures. Everyone had a beaming smile. The mood was contagious. You checked your coat and met up with your buddy. Local volunteers paired up with guests so parents, guardians, and caregivers could relax in the respite room downstairs.

A corsage or boutonniere was provided for every attendee. Jimmy

showed off his boutonniere and waited for his picture to be taken.

Hair, makeup, and shoe shine stations were available. Kaia, Brandi, and Abby were getting their hair and makeup done professionally while Drew wasn't shy about the quality of his shoe shine before he hit the dance floor.

Entering the main auditorium under a large balloon arch, the magic of the night continued. The walls of the room were lined with tables of snacks, candy, and refreshments. Life-sized letters spelled out "prom" near the stage. A DJ was poised to cue up the next dance hit.

Jason smiled the entire time he danced with his buddy. Ruth waved to the onlookers from the dance floor

like proper royalty. At one point, a dance train was started and the crowd attached to the end, one by one.

If dancing wasn't your thing, you wandered into the karaoke room complete with a stage, audio equipment, and lyrics projected on a large screen so everyone could sing along. Mark sang along with a group, and Ruth saw an opportunity to create a new dance floor. Larry waited for his turn to hit the high notes and Minna sat comfortably with her buddy, taking in the whole scene.

If you preferred the thrill of a ride, you got in line with the others. "We're waiting for the limo," said Alisa as she chatted with the people around her. Blake smiled for his picture, but was sure not to lose his place in line.

Toward the end of the night, everyone made her or his way to the main auditorium. Volunteers crowned each guest king or queen of the night with a sparkling crown. A video message from Tim Tebow played on projector screens telling them they're special and loved.

A gigantic net gave way to a shower of silver and blue balloons. The night ended with more dancing and smiling. This event is highly anticipated and thoroughly enjoyed each year.

Wouldn't you love to experience a night like this, a Night to Shine?



NATIONAL CAREGIVERS DAY WITH ANDREA HULVER



We wouldn't be where we are today without our professional, compassionate staff. February 16th was National Caregivers Day so we talked with Andrea Hulver about her experience at ACT.

How long have you worked at ACT? What is your role here?

If you count my internship, I have been at ACT for a little more than a year. I started as an intern for Tara Shade, and then after I graduated from MU, around June, I started as a Personal Assistant. I am currently a Personal Assistant for a few individuals. I also help out with the new After School Youth Program.

What influenced you to choose this field?

The main reason I chose this field is my 4 year old nephew Grayson. When he was born, he was diagnosed with Prader-Willi Syndrome, a genetic disability that affects his daily life. His diagnosis changed my outlook on several aspects of my own life, one of which was my career path. Since then, I have taken every opportunity to learn how to help him develop the tools he needs to become the best version of himself.

You also work in our new After School Youth Program. Tell us about your favorite moments or experiences working in that program.

Everything in the After School Youth Program has been so much fun. We've attempted a fun food item from Pinterest (that failed) and played around at Going Bonkers and Bowling (which the individuals loved). But my favorite was touring the Fire House. The individuals loved climbing in the fire engine and exploring the different vehicles the firefighters showed them. I couldn't stop smiling at their smiles and at how much fun they were having.

What challenges have you faced at ACT?

The biggest challenge I have faced at ACT is learning how to connect with each and every individual. Everyone is unique. The way to connect with one person could be completely different from another.

What advice would you give to someone considering working in this industry?

Be patient with the individuals you work with and get to know them. Learning their likes and dislikes, what sparks their interest, or what makes them uncomfortable can really help in suggesting activities or finding activities they are interested in.

Any random facts you could share with us?

I recently got a puppy. Her name is Nova. She is in the process of being trained as a Therapy Dog.

Recently, Andrea was promoted to Program Supervisor for the After School Youth Program. Thank you for sharing with us, Andrea. Congratulations!

HELP ACT WIN \$500

During the month of May, ACT will participate in the MasterTech Answers the Call donation campaign.

MasterTech will give away \$500 to the charity that receives the most votes. It's their way of doing more to answer the call for help, in every way they can.

Want to help ACT win \$500? It's simple. During May, go to MasterTech's website and choose ACT. There's no need to enter any information.

You may vote once every 24 hours. So be sure to return daily and vote for ACT. Voting is available only during May! The winner will be announced at the end of May.



ACT'S CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS



ACT facilities have been under construction since fall 2017. Since then, we've made major progress. The big renovations are



behind us. The training center is complete. Every wall received a new coat of paint. The Day Program areas are nearly finished.



Now we're putting the finishing touches on the rooms and offices.

Above is the work floor (a nickname left over from our recycling program)

which is now occupied by the Day Program cubicles. We stripped the pink carpeting from the walls and installed a washable, durable surface.

BINGO NIGHT AT ACT WAS A WIN!



"I need an O!" "I need a B" "I need a miracle!"

People were praying and doing every lucky thing they could do. Tammy sat down and said she was ready. "I'm going to win all the prizes!"

Carrie Griffith, Assistant Program Director of Community Living, was

looking for a fun, free activity where everyone could participate, visit with friends, and enjoy snacks. It's important to get out and spend some time in the community, but that usually means spending money.

This time of the year when it's too cold to visit parks and trails, she arranged for Bingo and Potluck night.

There was great turnout. Around 42 people filled the training center. We used the SMART Board to play. Everyone participated in regular bingo, blackout bingo, and eating their fill of snacks. This is definitely an event we'll host again!

FROM 1987 TO 2018: DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS

If you follow ACT on social media, you know March was Developmental Disabilities Awareness month. On February 26, 1987, President Ronald Reagan started this month of observation with this proclamation.

“Now, Therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of March 1987 as National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

I invite all individuals, agencies, and organizations concerned with the problem of developmental disabilities to observe this month with appropriate observances and activities directed toward increasing public awareness of the needs and the potential of Americans with developmental disabilities.

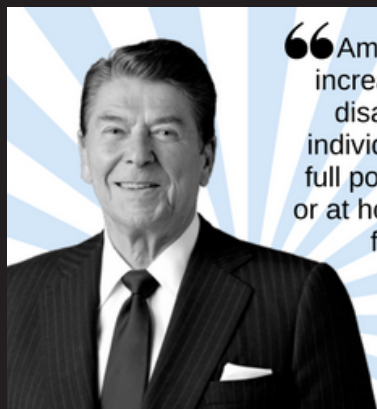
I urge all Americans to join me in according to our fellow citizens with such disabilities both encouragement and the

opportunities they need to lead productive lives and to achieve their full potential.”

Thirty-one years later, we should still appreciate what an incredible moment in history that was.

Today, with great effort, advocacy and education, the attitude surrounding developmental disabilities has shifted toward inclusion and self-determination.

But we still have work to do. If you'd like a look-back at our posts from Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, check out #DDAwareness18 on Facebook and Twitter. We shared our activities, history, and many resources for individuals and families.



“Americans are becoming increasingly aware that such disabilities need not keep individuals from realizing their full potential in school, at work or at home, as members of their families and of their communities.”

-Ronald Reagan,
Proclamation 5613

LIGHT IT UP BLUE IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA

April is World Autism Month.

To spread awareness, ACT will again be partnering with local agencies and organizations to host our local Light It Up Blue event.

Light It Up Blue is global initiative to raise awareness for autism on World Autism Awareness Day and Autism Awareness month. Iconic buildings and landmarks like the Empire

State Building and Willis Tower will be illuminated with blue lights in support of the autism community.

Locally, we participate by asking businesses to display blue lights or a Light It Up Blue banner, and hosting a public event.

Let's

LIGHT IT UP BLUE

for Autism Awareness





MONDAY APRIL 2

4:30- 6:30pm

Boone County Courthouse Plaza
Parking available in 8th and Walnut Plaza Garage

Join the Columbia community
in raising autism awareness as we
light CoMo blue in honor of
World Autism Day at our **community event**
filled with family fun and activities!
Bubbles • Raffle Prizes • Crafts • and much more!

Questions?
Becky Gerdes
gerdesb@health.missouri.edu

To order t-shirts for the event:
teesetctuosystems.com/stores/
thompsoncenter



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 1st – **Easter and April Fools' Day**

April 2nd – **Light It Up Blue CoMo: 4:30-6:30 pm**
Boone County Courthouse

April 25th – **Administrative Professionals Day**

May 1st-31st – **Vote for ACT during the**
MasterTech Answers the Call Campaign

May 13th – **Mother's Day**



May 28th – **ACT facility based offices**
will be closed for Memorial Day

June 17th – **Father's Day**

June 21st – **Summer Begins**



Check our Twitter @ACTofCoMo and our Facebook [fb.com/ACTofCoMo](https://www.facebook.com/ACTofCoMo) for more details

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