

# INTERACTION

Alternative Community Training

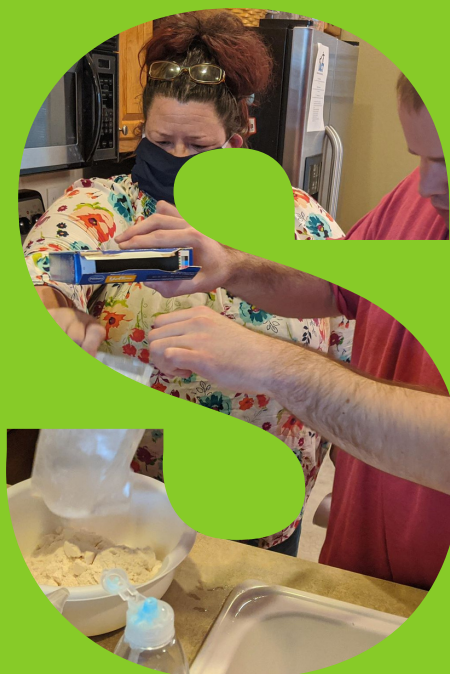
*"An inclusive community where everyone belongs, participates, and is valued."*

*"My job is not a job: it is a chance to see a life changed for the better."*

**DEDICATED.**

**SUPPORTIVE.**

**PATIENT.**



**-PAGE 3**

## DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

*"Being a DSP means taking the time to think more about others instead of just yourself."*

**Star Wars Day with  
Day Services**

**HR Holds Open  
Interview Event**

**Vacation Opportunities  
Resume for CL's Heath**

**Don's Skydiving  
Challenge Update**

# DEAR ACT ADVOCATES,

In the previous newsletter, I came to you for help—a call to action. I am deeply grateful for your immediate response. Your phone calls, emails, and social media messages to your state representatives made significant progress. Thank you for your strong advocacy efforts. We were successful!

Well, *almost*.

Today we wait to hear Missouri's plan to use one-time money issued from the American Rescue Plan for our rate increases. However, as the state has chosen to use these one-time funds only to increase rates (if approved by the feds), I will need your help once again. If these approved funds go through, they will be valid for this year only. Meaning, we might return to our current rates next year. So, please stay tuned.

Now, perhaps you're asking the question, "Why are higher reimbursement rates important?" Well, the answer is simple. These rates are how we pay our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

In 2008, I had the privilege of attending a governmental activities seminar in Washington, D.C. There I listened to a DSP deliver an impactful speech at the Capitol Building. Her words still resonate with me today. She said, *"When someone says they are a veterinarian or an accountant, it's fairly clear what they do. But tell someone you are a DSP, and they don't have a clue."*

It's a sad truth to swallow. But that's the reality.

A DSP performs numerous professions within their role. They are chefs, secretaries, health administrators, teachers, housekeepers, job coaches, friends, family, cheerleaders, personal coaches, financial planners, and so much more! The list may be extensive, but they perform each with the utmost respect. DSPs work around the clock 24/7, 365 days—weekends and holidays.

DSPs are genuinely essential to the success of the disability community. They are the heart and soul of ACT's operation. Without every one of our DSPs, we wouldn't be the organization we are today. Nor would individuals with disabilities live independently and achieve their life goals—additionally, these individuals without adequate direct care staff lead to disability suffrage. They depend on compassionate and quality staff.

Since 2001, the DSP Crisis has disrupted service providers nationwide. Twenty years later, ACT and other providers continue to experience a high turnover and low DSP retention. With little funds on the state and federal level, it's now become the "DSP Catastrophe." The primary cause is the low wages DSPs experience. Without reasonable rates, providers cannot pay DSPs their deserved wages. As a result, many DSPs work two to three jobs to make an affordable living.

Your voice is incredibly vital for ACT and the individuals. We need healthier rates to pay DSPs accordingly for their incredible efforts and improve our recruitment and retention.

Be sure to follow ACT on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for the latest news and advocacy updates! Let's work together to voice concerns—voice change and hope for DSPs and the individuals they support.

**Wishing you a wonderful summer,**




## STAR WARS DAY

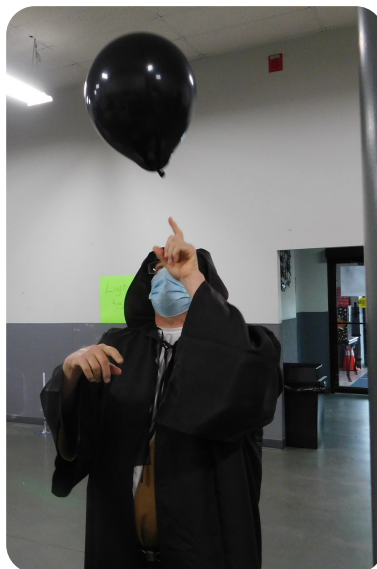
In a galaxy not so far away, Day Services celebrated May 4th, better known as "Star Wars Day." The relatively new holiday first launched in 2011— a commemoration of the cultural impact of this movie franchise.



The individuals in Day Services participated in many Star Wars-related activities. First, they streamed the newest *Star Wars* animated series "The Bad Batch," on Disney+ to kick off the holiday. Next, they stopped at the Darth Vader photo booth and transformed into their favorite Star Wars character. They then showed off their creative skills through Star Wars-themed coloring pages, word searches, Ipsy games, and Mad Libs. Then came time to find everyone's favorite droid, R2-D2.

After the first bout of fun, the individuals refueled with themed snacks. Storm Trooper and Light Saber cupcakes, Wookiee Cookies, Han Rolos, and adorable Ewoks (Teddy Grahams).

But perhaps their most exciting and challenging event was the Jedi Knight Training Academy. This event housed four distinct areas: Levitating over Lava, Light Saber ring toss, Storm Trooper shooting range, and finally, an opportunity to "Use the Force." Each individual (Padawan) that triumphed in this obstacle course graduated to Jedi Knights. In addition, each received a certificate and a wristband reminding them to *Use the Force*.





## DSPs: THE HEALTHCARE SUPERHEROES



When we think of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and their essential role in the lives of people with disabilities, what words come to mind? Dedicated? Supportive? Patient? ACT believes so, and so do those they support daily.

But to encapsulate a DSP takes more than three defining words.

There has never been a fiercer challenge for DSPs than upholding their commitment amid a worldwide pandemic. As a new COVID-19 variant called the “Delta Variant” runs rampant, DSPs tread dangerous waters to keep the disability community healthy and safe, at the risk of their health. These are challenging conditions, but DSPs remain vigilant in their supportive efforts.

To an individual with disabilities, a DSP is their lifeline. The services and support they provide give these individuals opportunities to live and thrive independently. In addition, you could argue that DSPs are among the most skilled people in the world.

DSPs wear many hats and interchange them at any given moment. Yet, DSPs execute each job readily and efficiently, whether individuals need assistance with cleaning, cooking, personal hygiene, or administering medication.

We understand how vital DSPs are to individuals with disabilities. But what does it mean to be a DSP?





Lindsey Chitwood, a Community Living DSP, responded, “Being a DSP means taking the time to think more about others instead of just yourself. I chose this path because helping people has always been something I’ve wanted to do. There is a lot of bad out in the world, but I like to show that there are still some amazing people out there who genuinely care.”

Bruce Ross, a Day Services DSP, also chimed in, “My job is not a job; it is a chance to see a life changed for the better. I love what I do and hope I am able to make a little change in someone’s life every day.”

Direct Support Professionals are the backbone of ACT.

We recently raised our DSPs wages—an achievement we hope to accomplish each year (state willing); as we commend DSPs for being superheroes through and through—pandemic aside—we will continue advocating to give DSPs the visibility and wages they deserve.

Help ACT advocate for DSPs on social media!

Be sure to include hashtags:  
**#DSPsAreEssential,**  
**#NoMOdspCrisis,** and **#MOLeg.**



## DON'S SKYDIVING CHALLENGE (UPDATE)



Mark your calendars! ACT's Executive Director, Don Lafferty, is set to take flight on **October 23rd**.

During ACT's CoMoGives 2020 participation, Don agreed to make his Peer-2-Peer (P2P) challenge an "adventurous" one. The agreement was this. If ACT exceeded its CoMoGives 2019 donations, Don would skydive for the first time.

ACT eclipsed its 2019 donations by over \$5,000! This was a considerable accomplishment--thanks to ACT's giving donors. Thank you.

As Don gears up for his upcoming flight, preparations are underway for the annual online fundraiser, CoMoGives 2021. Stay tuned for more updates.

## HR HOLDS OPEN INTERVIEW EVENT

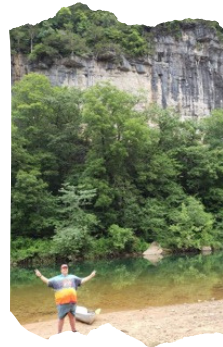


On June 3rd, HR held an Open Interview event to attract prospective employees. It was ACT's first public event since pre-COVID days. As the organization slowly reopens its services to a fuller capacity, the need for direct care staff is immediate. KOMU8 reached out to ACT to do a feature story on the event and organization to encourage attendees to the event.

ACT's Communication Coordinator, Mary Arnold, spoke with KOMU8. "The organization suffered many challenges during the pandemic. And as we work to get fully operational again, we need compassionate and quality Direct Support Professionals."

Since the event, HR has seen a substantial increase in online job applications. In addition, with its recent company-wide wage increase for DSPs, ACT hopes to grow in its recruitment and retention efforts.

## HEATH TAKES A SUMMER VACATION



Nothing speaks of summer quite like vacationing. And when we think of summer vacation, water always comes to mind.

Community Living individual Heath, along with staff, ventured south to Eminence, Missouri. They canoed the “the wildest and most scenic” Missouri Ozark streams, the Jacks Fork River – a 44.6-mile run. The group lodged in a cabin at the Bunker Hill Retreat, right on the river, where they recovered from their water adventures.

This retreat is the ideal getaway for canoe and float trip enthusiasts!

During their stay, Heath visited many tourist hot spots in the area, including Ally Spring & Mill. He enjoyed sightseeing, playing a game of mini-golf, and posing alongside a gigantic skeleton at a local museum.







## NBC CELEBRATES ARMED FORCES DAY

In honor of Armed Forces Day, celebrated on May 15th, the individuals at ACT's Northern Boone County (NBC) Day Services location in Centralia showcased their appreciation through artistry. Each individual painted and personalized a picture of an American hero and the US flag.

Way to go, NBC team!

## "CLEAR THE CLUTTER" RUMMAGE SALE

There's no better way to clear the mind than to clear the clutter. So Day Services Program Director, Carrie Griffith, organized a voluntary rummage sale for ACT employees to do just that!

During the early morning hours one Saturday in June, staff set up shop in ACT's parking lot. Items for sale included assorted clothes, quilts, kitchenware, and artwork – only to name a few! Many customers scoured the tables, searching for new treasures. And many of them walked away, arms loaded.

Carrie stated, "After spending 2020 isolated at home, we learned how much stuff we really have. And for some of us, we ordered a **WHOLE** lot more! These days it's all about simplifying!"





Be sure to follow us on social media for all the latest news and agency updates!

Also, subscribe to our newsletter at  
**[newsletter@actservices.org](mailto:newsletter@actservices.org)**.

**@ACTOFCOMO**





**InterACTion** is published by Alternative Community Training as a service to the consumers, families, employers, suppliers, and organization contributors. ACT does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex in its programs, activities, or employment. ACT is an equal opportunity employer.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>President</b>	Mara Woody
<b>Vice President</b>	Jennifer Eng
<b>Secretary/Treasurer</b>	Brooke Orscheln
<b>Members</b>	Chuck Collins
	Myles Hinkel
	Andrew Popplewell
	Jennifer Rukstad
	Dan Kellar
	Vovanti Jones
	Steve Lee
	John Nemec
<b>Executive Director</b>	Don Lafferty
<b>Editor</b>	Mary Arnold

*"ACT provides opportunities to individuals with disabilities as participating members of the community."*