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inter **ACT** ion

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Alternative Community Training

eBay auction boosts sales



KEEPING THINGS ROLLING.
eBay sales of ACT's videotapes and other products keep Stacy and many other clients hard at work. 'We have to sell product,' reminds Affirmative Industry Program manager Jim Williams. 'Building that customer base up is what we want to do.'

The Internet is becoming a new way to sell ACT products. Jim Williams, director of the Affirmative Industry Program, recently began listing videotapes, jewel cases and hard-snap videotape covers on eBay, the popular Internet auction site.

So far, "the results are very good," Williams says. In the first week of selling on eBay, four out of five sales went through, that increased to eight out of ten in the second week and nine out of 10 in the third week.

The new way of marketing has led to more than 100 e-mails to ACT from interested customers. That allowed ACT to sell 20 orders directly to the customer instead of through the e-Bay auction.

The success has driven Williams to look for other online auction sites to list ACT products. Success has also triggered the idea to sell once-discarded audio cassette tapes on line. "If somebody will buy them, why throw them away," Williams says.

So far, however, the hottest item has been the jewel case—the clear plastic cases that protect CDs.

Williams lists jewel cases on the Web as blemished or scratched. In all auctions, bidding has been lively. Final prices have far exceeded Williams' initial price. For example he listed a box of 260 blemished CD cases for \$9.

The box brought a final bid of \$26. A second round brought a final bid of \$34 and a third round, \$18. When bids far exceed initial prices, Williams ships "as new" jewel cases to the winning bidder.

Good customer service already has triggered two reorders. Through e-mails, prospects also are directed to access ACT's Web site which allows customers to see what ACT provides in services and products. "Building that customer base up is what we want to do," Williams says.

Another new marketing effort involves marketing videotapes to football coaches. More than 360 high school football coaches in Missouri now know about ACT videotapes. The Affirmative Industry Program recently mailed a marketing letter to the coaches encouraging them to buy tapes.

In addition to high school coaches, other coaches were targeted. College-level coaches are learning the benefits of ACT's short-length and long-length tapes. Tapes running from five to 20 minutes can be used for recruiting. Longer length tapes of 120 or more minutes can be used by booster clubs for season highlights. Already tapes have been sold to the Kansas City Chiefs, the University of Wichita and some high schools around the state. Plans eventually may include expanding the marketing area to include Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas and other states.

NEW HOME GENERATES INDEPENDENCE

Independence is what the Supported Living Program is all about. For two ACT clients, their new home provides independence like never before.



From left, Geraldine, Jana and Christie

Katie and Christie moved into their all-brick family home in southwest Columbia in mid-December and they already have experienced many benefits—the most important being greater independence.

For her daughter Christie, Geraldine says the house "makes Christie feel independent, and I need to have her feel that."

"I like it a lot," Christie says.

Main relief member, Jana, says Christie's new home "has made her more independent. It's brought her out of her shell."

The spacious home has three bedrooms on the first floor and staff living quarters in the basement. It's complete with a large backyard deck and tree-filled back and front yards. Eventually a third roommate will join Katie and Christie.

The house is within walking distance of Katie's mother's home and a nearby park. "It's very nice," says Katie's mom. "It's particularly nice for me because I live just a block from it."

Given the close proximity to her mother's house, Katie, "can get out and exercise," says her mom. "They also can take a walk to the park. It's really important for these girls to get exercise."

Being close to Katie also means drop-in visits to her mom's house or the chance to walk the family dog.

Seeing Katie "doesn't have to be a planned event," Jane says. "She likes the home very much."

Rewarding careers end for Margaret, Charlie



CELEBRATION! The Missouri Department of Conservation's Columbia research facility celebrated Margaret's six years of faithful employment during a recent retirement party. A data entry operator, Margaret, has been 'a real hard worker, on time every day, says survey office supervisor Alan Bowling. 'You have to force her to take a break—even today.' Like Margaret, Charlie, center, recently retired after 13 years of service with Dana Corp. 'They were like a family to him,' says Mandy Richards, Charlie's home coordinator. 'They treated him like family and still do.'



This spring brought to a close 19 years of quality employment for Margaret and Charlie.

For six years Margaret has been a key employee at the Missouri Department of Conservation office in Columbia. Charlie served 13 years at Dana Corporation.

Charlie served Dana Corporation in many ways during his career. He began on an assembly line, then moved to a position where he broke down boxes and baled them. Most recently he served as a janitor for the manufacturer of vehicle axles.

Charlie worked from 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday, seldom missing a day. "We had to make him take his vacation," says Ray Handy, Supported Employment director. He adds that Charlie rarely called in sick.

"I liked working there very much," says Charlie, "especially breaking down the boxes."

At the plant, Charlie was always a cheerful presence and full of humor. "Everybody at the plant enjoyed Charlie's humor," says Handy. "They were like a family to him," adds Mandy Richards, Charlie's home coordinator. "They treated him like family and still do. He looked forward to going to work every day and he talked about how much work he got done."

For Charlie, there's lots of great memories of work at Dana. On his living room wall there also are several pictures of him at work or being recognized by plant management. "I'd like to go back," he says.

Margaret recently retired from her job as a data entry operator at the Missouri Conservation Department's Columbia research facility.

She was honored by the facility's staff recently with gifts, a decorated cake and picture book. Misty-eyed, Margaret received her many gifts and a card from her co-workers.

"We don't want to lose touch with you," survey office supervisor Alan Bowling told Margaret during the festivities. "For birthdays and other events we want you to come back."

Bowling added that even on her last day of work, Margaret would not take a break from work. "She's a real hard worker, on time every day. You have to force her to take a break—even today."

Ute Breeding, assessment coordinator for the Supported Employment Program, added that Margaret's long-term employment was also due to the solid support provided by the Conservation Department staff to ACT's employment program.

"They really support our clients," she says. "The Department of Conservation is one of our most supportive employers. We owe a big thank you to them for the many years they've employed our clients."

Personal assistance service available

This March ACT began offering personal assistance services as the result of a contract with the state. The service began at the request of the state to offer such services to an individual living mostly independently in Columbia.

One to two staff positions will be available 40 hours per month to assist clients with what is classified as IADL or Instrumental Activities of Daily Living. Such activities include banking, balancing a checkbook, budgeting, some problem solving and oversight regarding cleaning, making out a grocery list and other activities.

"We believe quite a few people may need a little assistance," says Don Lafferty, director of the Supported Living Program.

Finance director leaves

A familiar face to the ACT family, Andrea Meinhart, is resigning as director of financial operations. Andrea will be moving to Louisville where her husband, Fred, has accepted a new banking position.

Andrea has been a valued employee of ACT since 1994 when she joined as an administrative assistant to Mark Hassemmer, executive director.

"I did everything," she recalls, "from working with the donors to labeling diskettes." It was an exciting time for ACT, she adds, because the relationship with diskette distributor GreenDisk was just beginning.

"This is absolutely the finest organization I've ever worked for," she says. "The leadership is steady and stable and dependable. I leave ACT with a heavy heart. I'm going to miss everyone here."

ACT a good match for new manager

An experienced assisted living manager has joined ACT. Rob LaRoue has 12 years of experience with the Missouri Department of Mental Health. He now manages three homes supervised by ACT's Supported Living Program.

"ACT was everything I was looking for," says LaRoue. "I can fall right in. There's a lot to learn but the basic goal is what I'm used to."

As a program manager, LaRoue oversees all aspects of three assisted living homes. The homes include eight individuals and all the staff necessary to operate the homes.

His job entails developing individual plans for each resident, making sure their medications are right, getting clients out into the community, arranging transportation, assisting with finances and supervising the many staff involved with the home.

For 10 years LaRoue helped manage similar situations in the St. Louis area. While the homes were not completely independent, he supervised nine homes and 72 residential individuals. He also directed a care staff of about 60. LaRoue has always hoped to work with completely independent homes like those managed by ACT.

Arranging private home living arrangements offers "a much brighter outlook rather than a secure, restrictive habilitation center," he says. He adds that he is enjoying getting to know all the individuals at each home.

"There's been live-in staff for eight, nine, 10 years. It's like one big family."



MAKING A DIFFERENCE.
'It was always very fulfilling for me to help individuals even with the smallest task,' says Rob LaRoue, new program manager.

The new program manager has been involved with helping those with disabilities since he was 19. "I just got hooked," he says. "It was always very fulfilling for me to help individuals even with the smallest tasks like putting a shirt on or actually picking up a fork to eat. I've always gotten immense satisfaction that I could be a part of that."

"Everything ACT stands for is me. Everything I hoped to see, I can see here."

ACT's family-like atmosphere particularly is something LaRoue enjoys. "It's a very close knit group where everybody is very, very much for the clients."

SPOTLIGHT Amanda Blumhorst

Director of financial operations

Tell us about your work experience.

My main background is accounting. I've worked for ABC Labs and an accounting firm in Marshall. I also worked for Jeffrey Smith Cos. in Columbia and now ACT.

Why did you come to ACT?

I thought it would be a different focus in accounting to work for a non-profit organization like ACT. I really chose this position because I would like to make a difference in someone's life.

What's different about ACT?

The people who are brought on board are really here for the purpose of the clients. They're here to make a difference. ACT is very family- and people-oriented. It's very appealing to me that we're here to help others.

Tell us about your job.

I'll be responsible for preparing the financials for ACT, keeping the budgets for clients, working with the regional center, monitoring cash, tracking overtime, overseeing human resources, risk management, and being on the intake committee. It's a big job—a challenge, but I'm ready. I'm really ready. I always like to face a challenge.

Are you a CPA?

I'm taking the test in November. I'm starting to study now.



Any goals in mind for your job?

We're looking at the accounting system as a whole. We might work on making some of the tasks a little easier. I've always been one who likes to import information from different software to make tasks easier for people.

What would you like to say about yourself?

I'm originally from the Marshall area. I went to college at Southwest Missouri State University and then my last year transferred to Arkansas State University. I received an accounting degree from there. I now live in Boonville.

Tell us about your family.

I have a three year old son, Skyler. He's the best thing in the world.

NEWSbriefs

CALENDAR

ACT's offices and facility-based programs will be closed for the following holidays:

Monday, May 26—Memorial Day

Friday, July 4—Independence Day

Monday, September 1—Labor Day

SIX RECEIVE EMPLOYMENT AWARDS

Six ACT staff members recently were recognized for their length of service. Receiving recognition for five years of employment was John Cook. Receiving 10-year awards were: Casandra Washington, Don Lafferty, Ray Handy, Terri Kruger, and George Reichert.

DAY PROGRAM BOOSTS COMMUNITY HOURS

Community-based activity hours increased substantially in 2002. The program, also known as the Personal and Social Services Program, involves participants in numerous trips and activities—from attending major league baseball games to bowling in Columbia. Total hours of community-based activities for 2002 totaled 18,140 hours as compared to 10,629 hours in 2001.

VIDEOTAPE LABELING BOOSTS JOBS

ACT participants now have new ways to keep the videotape business running. Once tapes with heat-stamped labelings were given away or sold for five cents each. Now with new face and spine labels the heat-stamped wording is covered and tapes are sold for 40 cents to 65 cents depending on length of tape. The new process provides additional work for ACT clients. Work also has been generated by providing coverings for write-protect tabs that were missing on donated tapes.

DONATION UPDATE

The holiday season brought many generous contributions to ACT through the ReachOut Program. Recent contributions were received from the following individuals:

Memorial

Gerald and Barbara Braznell in memory of Lorraine Berndsen

General Donations

John and Jacqueline Pascucci
Peggy Payne
Columbia Northwest Rotary
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Pinckney
Missouri State Employees Charitable Campaign
Ms. Joan Watson
Mr. and Mrs. C.J. Furrer

ON THE ROAD AGAIN



ACT hit the road to see two St. Louis landmarks. One jaunt took participants to the Museum of Transportation in St. Louis where a coal-burning locomotive got everyone's attention. A few miles north, Larry gives a thumbs-up to the Anheuser-Busch museum located at the St. Louis location of the world's largest brewer.



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Make a wish come true

Would you like to donate a specific item or items to help the individuals of ACT? The following "wish list" items have been identified as needs at ACT.

SUPPORTED LIVING—Double bed, \$400; bathroom scale, \$20; vacuum cleaner, \$175; women's blouses/tops, \$30; blood pressure cuffs, \$25; stethoscopes, \$10 each; television, \$250; recliner, \$400; couch, \$700; love seat, \$400; living room chairs, \$150; and full-size bed frame, \$30

DAY PROGRAM—Craft supplies, \$250; and a 32-inch television, \$450; two vans, \$20,000 each.

WORK PROGRAM—Label dispensers, \$350; platform trucks, \$200; metal work tables, \$230; platform scale, \$1500; and grinder, \$2500.

If you'd like to donate, call Mark Hassemer, executive director, at 474-9446 or e-mail mhassemer@socket.net.

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