
SEECConnections
Spring 2001

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Campaign to Increase Direct Support Wages

The Campaign to Increase Direct Support Wages has been a long, hard road to travel. And finally, legislation passed in Maryland to close the 55% wage disparity between workers in nonprofit agencies and those in state residential centers. A bill, sponsored by 77% of the Maryland Senate and 90% of the House of Delegates, passed unanimously and was signed by Governor Parris Glendening on April 20, 2001. “The support from SEEC Board Member, Chris VanHollen and his colleagues in Annapolis was overwhelming. I’ve never seen anything like it,” says Karen Lee, SEEC Executive Director.

The bill calls for an \$118 million increase over five years beginning in the fiscal year 2003. So what does this mean for agencies like SEEC? According to figures from the Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS), agencies can expect approximately a 6% increase per year for direct support wages beginning July 1, 2002. MACS Executive Director, Diane McComb says, “It is bitter-sweet – We are delighted the legislation passed, but many agencies across the state need immediate relief.”

Throughout the wage campaign, there were many convincing numbers, but words also came into play. Whether it was in the newspaper, on the radio, or in Annapolis, the voices of the disability community were heard. Behind the scenes, MACS public policy and media committees worked the strings. According to Jennifer Appaneal, SEEC Director of Communications and media committee member, “Our presence in Annapolis and in the media has gone a long way to educate our elected officials and the public. Everyone knows what community-based agencies do and what we stand for.”

In Annapolis, individuals with disabilities, their family members, and staff presented powerful testimony. These stories were also told in the media. Local newspapers across the state covered the wage campaign including the *Montgomery Gazette*, which printed a series of articles, an opinion editorial from county agencies, and a letter to the editor from Karen Lee. Coverage in *The Baltimore Sun* include a feature article on the front page of the Maryland section and a full-page ad purchased by agencies across the state. Other paid advertising include radio commercials that ran in the Washington D.C. metro area, Annapolis, and Baltimore.

So, is the wage campaign over? Not exactly. MACS and its member agencies are now in “thank you mode,” but come next session, we switch to “reminder mode.” We will remind everyone how important this legislation is. Now that it is on the books, the wage increase must happen. The quality of services depends on it.

Sunday Salons

The Sunday Salons, SEEC’s signature fundraising events, were a great success, raising over \$10,000 to support the agency’s programs for individuals with developmental disabilities. Hosts, special guests, and

sponsors contributed their time, talent, and product donations to offer nine diverse Salons – Antiques Roadshow, Home Organizing, Political Discussion with George F. Will, Discussion with Opera Author Sheri Reynolds, Jewelry Making, Taiji Quan & Qi Gong, Wine Tasting, Decorating, and Cooking Demonstration.

Thanks to all those involved, the Sunday Salons brought together old friends and new friends, really exemplifying SEEC's participation in the community.

Hosts:

Sally Hulbert, Karen Lee & Jim Brown, Helen Montfort, Pat Shultz, Leslie & Sam Kaplan, Pat & David Lee, Bebe & Robert McMeekin, Susan & Larry Chandler, Marge & Bill Schinnerer, Marilyn & Marty Seitz, Leslie Traub & Howard Ross, Gloria & Conrad Williams, Sherry & Carl Migdail, Jeff Wilson & Bill Planta, Rebecca & Tom Williams, Barb & Ed Patigalia

Special Guests:

Vincent VanZwanenberg, Antiques Appraiser; Helen Montfort, Home Organizer; George F. Will, Political Commentator; Professor Leonard Steinhorn, Political Discussion Moderator; Sheri Reynolds, Oprah Author; Karen Migdail, Jewelry Maker; Mike Basdavanos, Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Instructor; Mariam "Raz" Razavi, Wine Consultant; Jeff Wilson & Bill Planta, Do-it-yourself Decorators; Kirsten Shippey, Cooking Demonstrator

Committee:

John Emanuelson, Chair, Susan Chandler, David Lee, Karen Migdail, Marge Schinnerer, Pat Shultz

Sponsors:

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Here's what guests had to say...

"Very entertaining! Gorgeous food, surroundings, and hosts!" Melinda Estridge
"Vincent was fabulous! Great afternoon!" Donna Bergstrom
"Very informal, very elegant, and comfortable setting in Williams' home"

Success Stories

Community Living

SEEC welcomes Heather Dahmer into its Community Living program. Heather rents her own apartment in Silver Spring.

Congratulations to Lynn Miller, an individual supported by SEEC, who moved into a new apartment in Silver Spring.

Employment Services

Congratulations to the following individuals who began new jobs:

Lori Chavis – Bugaboo Creek Steak House
Keumok Cho – Bugaboo Creek Steak House
Catrina George – Bugaboo Creek Steak House
Kip Jarrett – Interfaith Clothing Center & Wheaton Library
Raymond Pitts – Interfaith Clothing Center & Wheaton Library
Andrew Townsley – Kentucky Friend Chicken
Elizabeth Weightman – Resnick Elementary School

Values in Action

VIA now offers Pre-morning Activities for individuals who arrive before it's time to go into the community. Participants can make scented sachets and cards in Leona's Craft Corner; make jewelry, giftwrap, and giftbags at Yassa's Jeweler's Bench; workout in Nyle's Therapy Room; take walks with Jermaine; or play games, cards, and make puzzles at Susan's Game Table.

VIA and the Unidentified Flying Opera Company (UFO) were awarded a \$1,000 grant from the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County. These funds will pay for consumer participation in the UFO's "Yours, Mine, Arts" workshops. The workshops are designed to promote improvement in social skills, physical coordination, and cognitive skills.

The Newest "Hearts of SEEC"

Community Living

- Annie Arthur – Personal Care Assistant
- Victor Ayenugba – Community Connector I
- Hao-Yu Chang – Family Support Counselor
- Ahumah "Bernard" Fayorsey – Community Connector II
- Monica Gilbert – Mother's Helper
- William Kayode-Oshin – Community Connector I
- Susan Konneh – Registered Nurse
- Omolara Solesi – Community Connector II

Employment Services

- Abu Bantama – Employment Specialist
- William Battle – Employment Specialist
- Tamba Sam-Sumana – Employment Specialist
- Kenneth Smith – Employment Specialist
- Alona Snowden – Employment Assistant

Values in Action

- Christian Duru – Activity Specialist
- Earl Freeman – Activity Specialist

Administration

- Mary Jing Aquino – Office/Training Coordinator

Constance Owusu has transferred to SEEC's Employment Services program from Community Living.

Recruiter's Rectangle

SEEC is currently looking for qualified applicants to fill positions in its administrative offices and programs, Community Living, Employment Services, and Medical Day Care (Values in Action).

Open positions include Senior Accountant, Director of Quality Assurance, Employment Development Specialist, Community Connectors I & II, Part-time RN, and Part-time Physical Therapist. For more information on these positions, call the SEEC Job Line at 301-527-0307.

SEEC Direct Support Professionals... Making a Difference!

David Mitchell

As an Employment Specialist, David Mitchell goes above and beyond in every aspect of his job. He has been with SEEC for two years and in the field for twelve years. He has also been a CPR instructor with a private company for seven years.

At SEEC, David supports five individuals on a rotating basis. If someone he supports is out for the day, he calls the office to fill-in for others. Fellow employees and supervisors all agree that David is a team player. But when he does help, be prepared. Before he transports or provides support for an individual, David asks a series of questions. Do they have food allergies? Do they take medication? etc. etc.

David's supervisor, Cynthia Posthumus, describes him as dedicated, honest, and flexible. She says, "With David, I never have to worry about anything." Cynthia is also impressed with his ability to help individuals with disabilities be independent. According to Cynthia, he has made amazing progress with a number of people. His style is strict and firm, but not intimidating. He is determined to help individuals meet the goals set in their annual meetings.

David Mitchell is an excellent role model for the individuals he supports. His professionalism sets a great example for those looking for jobs or currently working. In addition, he helps people gain the skills to help them in the workplace. A few months ago, David was working with a young woman preparing to work as a greeter in a nursing home. She needed to improve her speaking skills and become more comfortable in a conversation, so they knocked on the office door of a SEEC employee and asked her to participate in a mock conversation.

David is also a great advocate for those he supports. He is currently working with two young women and their co-workers to deal with personal issues in the workplace.

In his personal time, David can be found doing Kung Fu (he's a black belt!) and spending time with his wife.

Susan Kennedy

Susan Kennedy has worked at Values in Action (VIA), SEEC's medical day care program, for almost 3 years. She progressed from an Activities Assistant to an Assistant Team Leader about one year ago.

According to VIA Program Director, Steve Blanks, "She is an invaluable asset to the program – balancing compassionate personal support and respect for each of our consumers with an efficient work attitude, focused on ensuring every consumer receives the most meaningful supports throughout their day."

Susan works within a team structure that supports over 40 consumers. In her role as an Assistant Team Leader, she has learned how to support and develop each and every one. Susan has worked closely with some individuals needing intense support, developing close relationships that extend beyond the program. She has taken it upon herself to touch base with a couple of consumers on a regular basis, by calling them at home and making sure they are ok.

Susan clearly understands the needs of VIA participants, and she takes the initiative to make things happen. Most recently, a young woman wanted to visit a firehouse. Susan set-up a tour and took along a few others who were interested.

In addition to direct support, Susan takes on scheduling oversight, tactical team management, formulating consumer plans and goals, and is ever increasing her roles and responsibilities. She has gained the respect of fellow team members, and is growing daily in her confidence to lead, coach, and motivate her peers.

While developing at VIA, Susan has also balanced a busy personal life. Over the past 3 years, she has worked part-time while finishing her Masters degree in Pastoral Counseling and completing a Certification of Advanced Study. Her counseling skills are an invaluable asset to supporting consumers, and assisting them and their caregivers through tough situations. Specifically, Susan has used these skills to support one woman who experienced anger and frustration, helping her handle emotions and better express herself.

Charmayne Ison

In today's developmental disability field, all supervisors need them – quality direct support professionals they can count on. For SEEC Employment Services Team Coordinator, Tracy Hanson, her saving grace is Charmayne Ison.

According to Tracy, “Charmayne is the one I go to. I can rely on her for last minute flexibility with no complaints.” After four years with SEEC as an Employment Specialist, Charmayne has developed close relationships with a large number of consumers; therefore, she is often called upon to support them. She is not only familiar with the individuals and job sites on her team, but other teams as well. No matter who needs help, Charmayne is always there to step in.

In addition to Charmayne’s professional attitude, she has demonstrated professionalism in other areas. She is well versed in problem solving when scheduling issues arise. She always finds her own coverage when she is out. She meets deadlines with documentation. She calls the appropriate supervisor if she observes problems with coverage.

When Charmayne is not juggling support at job sites, she assists individuals with job development and placement. Her most successful placement was a young woman who had not worked in a paid position. Charmayne worked with the young woman and her mother to find the right job niche, and after much hard work, they were successful.

Charmayne has also demonstrated diverse skills during her time with SEEC. She provides periodic respite care for families who have children with developmental disabilities. Many of these children have intense medical needs and behavioral challenges and according to Kathleen McNally, Chief Development Officer, “The families and children love her!”

In addition to her exceptional day-to-day work, Charmayne volunteered to write letters, make phone calls, and serve as a SEEC spokesperson during the “Campaign to Increase Direct Support Wages.” It is employees like Charmayne that the Campaign is based on. She is a true professional in every way.

Afi Pauline Mawusi

Afi Pauline Mawusi came to SEEC’s Community Living program as a roommate two years ago. She supports Dick and Terry, two men who rent their own apartment in Montgomery Village.

In the beginning, she faced cultural barriers including problems with the English language. Her supervisor, Koren Plummer, recalls Pauline’s first brown bag lunches for Dick and Terry – peanut butter, jelly, and bologna (minus the sandwich bags). Over time, the barriers dissipated and life in America became much easier for Pauline.

Now Pauline is a constant source of comfort and support for Dick and Terry. After a recent trip to the hospital, Dick refused to leave, so Pauline was called. She went to the hospital, talked with him, and he left within five minutes. In general, Dick is more comfortable around Pauline. He prefers that she help him with certain tasks, like shaving.

During her two years with SEEC, Pauline went to Africa for three months and had to resign from her position. Upon her return, she was delighted that the job had not been filled, so she re-applied, and easily moved back into her home. After her time away, Pauline expressed her love for Dick and Terry and said she never wanted to leave.

As a testament to the comfort and consistency Pauline has brought, Terry’s mother moved to Florida in fall 2000. She felt comfortable with the staff and natural supports surrounding her son.

Pauline also serves as a good role model keeping the apartment clean, which pleases Dick and Terry’s landlord. Koren Plummer also stresses that Pauline is someone you can definitely count on in an emergency. Overall, she is a well-balanced employee with a caring nature and a good understanding of the basics of direct support care.

Dorothy Shelton

Two years ago, Dorothy Shelton worked in the food service industry at Boston Market. When SEEC Team Coordinator Koren Plummer met her on-the-job, Dorothy made an impression. Koren saw a hardworking, dependable person, so she asked Dorothy if she would like to consider a different industry.

For the past two years, Dorothy has worked 35 to 40 hours a week as relief staff in SEEC’s Community Living program. Regulations prohibit her from working full-time because she does not have a driver’s license. According to Koren, “She’s so dependable. I wish she could be full-time. She has always been there when needed.”

Dorothy supports five men with developmental disabilities in three homes where she is famous for her cooking. She loves to cook for the guys, and more importantly, they love her cooking and helping out. Any pickiness disappears when Dorothy is around and all plates are clean!

Dorothy has a wonderful attitude and has made a commitment to this field and the individuals she supports. At first, one of the men gave her a hard time, but now they are the best of friends. Another calls Dorothy his girlfriend. A third man she supported recently passed away, and his family left Dorothy his book collection because they often read together and had discussions.

As relief staff, Dorothy often fills in, taking people to medical appointments, shopping, or on community outings. And without her own transportation, she uses public transportation. This method could be seen as difficult, but it is realistic and it teaches the gentlemen how to fully integrate into their communities.

Koren Plummer is delighted that she came upon Dorothy Shelton two years ago. Some things are just meant to be.

Lending a Helping Hand

Why does SEEC need my support?

The majority of SEEC’s funding is from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Other sources include Medicaid, Montgomery County, and private donations. The level of funding from the government is limited and restricted. For instance, DDA will reimburse SEEC between \$7 and \$9 per hour for a direct support staff position, but the agency pays between \$9 and \$11 per hour to ensure quality support.

The government funding available is not adequate for the type of intense supports SEEC provides. SEEC’s mission clearly states the agency’s commitment to provide individualized support to individuals who have significant needs. If an individual needs one-on-one support, we provide it, but we don’t receive the funding to do so.

SEEC needs assistance from non-governmental sources to ensure quality, individualized support for ALL individuals with disabilities.

How can I help?

Financial donations will be used to cover a variety of costs:

- Individuals in SEEC’s Community Living program often need help with medical expenses, paying utility bills, completing home repairs and home accessibility modifications.
- Children supported through Family Support Services need a wide array of support, including financial assistance for therapy and staff support to provide respite care.
- Participants in SEEC’s medical day care program, Values in Action, need financial assistance to participate in community activities, such as, horseback riding, cooking classes, going to the movies, to plays, bowling, and much more.
- Individuals in SEEC’s Employment Services program often need assistive technology devices to help them on-the-job.

A number of in-kind (or product) donations are always needed:

Household goods

- Tools
- Furniture
- Linens
- Kitchen utensils
- Electronics
- Exercise and recreational equipment
- Old books and magazines
- Home decorations

Office equipment

- Photo copier
- Filing cabinets
- Furniture
- Computer equipment

Volunteers are periodically needed for a variety of jobs:

- Household repairs and painting
- Yard work
- Moving large items
- Office work

How do I lend a helping hand?

If you can assist SEEC with the above items, please call Jennifer Appaneal at 301-527-0440, Ext. 201. Thank you!

Recent Donations

Thanks to the following individuals who made donations to SEEC:

- Manugistics Inc. in Rockville donated audiovisual equipment.
- Mr. Howard Teller donated a photocopier.
- Barb Patigalia donated household items.
- Pat Shultz donated household items.

SEEC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization – donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. A copy of our current financial statement is available upon request by contacting SEEC at 707 Conservation Lane, Suite 200, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878, Phone: 301-527-0440.

Rights and Rallies Self-Advocacy Group

Rights and Rallies members, Christina Hogan, Michael Reese, and Elizabeth Weightman went to Annapolis for DD Day at the Legislature in February. They visited with Montgomery County Legislatures and their Aides, and participated in a reception for all Maryland Legislatures at St. John’s College.

The Rights and Rallies fundraising cookbooks are still available! Donations for the books start at \$10 and proceeds from the sale will help Rights and Rallies members attend conferences. To purchase a book, see a group member or contact Elizabeth Weightman at 301-251-1076. (Checks should be made payable to “SEEC.”)

Rights and Rallies meetings are held the last Thursday of the month at Values in Action in Rockville from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. The group is always interested in welcoming new members! For more information, contact Elizabeth Weightman at 301-251-1076.

Terry Gough – MACS 2001 Consumer Recognition Award Winner

Terry Gough comes together with his community in every aspect of his life. He works, lives, and takes part in recreational activities in Montgomery County. This past year, Terry’s mother felt comfortable moving out-of-state because she’s confident with his community support.

At the age of 33, Terry has come a long way, participating in SEEC’s Community Living, Employment Services, and Medical Day Care programs. For almost three years, he has worked at Walker’s Laundry in Gaithersburg, performing general cleaning duties with the assistance of his job coach, Robin Butler. According to Robin, Terry is an excellent worker, who has improved greatly over the past few years, doing his work with increased independence.

As an extension to his workday, Terry attends SEEC’s Medical Day Care program, VIA. VIA’s activities-based programming is perfect for him. He’s very social, easy going, and fits in with a variety of people. Terry has limited communication capabilities, but this doesn’t stop him from choosing his activities. He chooses by looking through an activity book that includes photos of himself bowling, playing basketball, playing arcade games, and much more.

To communicate, Terry also uses a Macaw communication device that includes pictures that he chooses and it speaks on his behalf. Ask anyone what Terry’s favorite picture is, and the answer will be the same, “Coke.” Terry’s personal preferences, like his fondness for Coke, are becoming more familiar to SEEC staff since April of 1999 when Terry entered the Community Living program. He lives in an apartment in Montgomery Village with Dick Powell, another individual supported by SEEC. According to SEEC staff and Terry’s mother, he is very happy with his move and has adjusted well. He is a great roommate - shopping for groceries and helping to prepare lunches and dinners.

Overall, Terry is thrilled to be a part of his community. Presently, SEEC is working with him on his independence - he wants to be more self-sufficient and everyday he takes the steps to make it happen.

SEEC In Brief

- Missy McQuillen, SEEC’s Employment Services Program Director, is participating in the Silver Spring Community Leadership Initiative. The program was created to bring together community leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds. It encourages local residents to work with others in the community through a series of workshops and retreats held October through June.
- Karen Lee, SEEC’s Executive Director, was nominated for Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Montgomery County Workforce Development Corporation. Karen has also been named the Chair of Montgomery County InterACC/DD, a coalition of Montgomery County providers supporting individuals with developmental disabilities.
- SEEC is looking for team members for “Walk F.A.R. for NAAR Washington, D.C. National Capital Area.” This fundraiser for the National Alliance for Autism Research (“NAAR”) will be held on the campus of the National Institutes of Health on Saturday, September 29, 2001. To join us, call Jennifer Appaneal at 301-527-0440, Ext. 201.
- A group of SEEC professionals attended the Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) Direct Support Conference in March 2001. They attended a number of sessions on personal development for direct support staff and cultural diversity.
- A group of individuals supported by SEEC and employees participated in “Earth Day 2001” on Friday, April 20. They volunteered for the Izaak Walton League of America, assisting with clean up and gardening.

SEEC’s Newest Employers

Bugaboo Creek Steak House

Interfaith Clothing Center
Kentucky Friend Chicken
Resnick Elementary School

For information on becoming an employer, contact Missy McQuillen at 301-527-0440.

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