
SEECconnections
Spring 2000

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Campaign to Increase Direct Support Wages

The Maryland Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) receives the lowest amount of state funds for direct support staff wages compared to similar occupations. DDA reimburses agencies at \$6.30 per hour when the rate for nursing home direct care staff is \$9.35 per hour and the rate for community mental health direct care staff is \$10.10 per hour.

This inconsistency, combined with staff turnover problems that plague the industry, a need to be competitive in a tight labor market, and the desire to properly reward employees, are the motivation behind the Maryland Association for Community Services (MACS) "Campaign to Increase Direct Support Wages." This campaign began in February by calling on MACS service providers, such as SEEC, to advocate on behalf of this effort. And since it all began, much progress has been made.

Representatives from SEEC and other Montgomery County service providers began asking for support from Maryland Legislatures during a February 1st reception in Annapolis and the process continued on February 10th during a MACS "Developmental Disability Day at the Legislature."

On the 10th, 15 SEEC representatives, including consumers, their family members and employees, participated in the day's activities. The SEEC representatives talked with over 10 Montgomery and Prince George's County Legislatures and visited an additional 30 to leave information packets, including 15 personal stories from SEEC employees. During the second part of the day, the representatives mingled with Legislatures at a reception and enjoyed a Consumer Recognition Banquet. Laura Kuster, an individual supported by SEEC was recognized for her personal accomplishments in the area of employment. (Laura's award nomination can be found on page 4.)

As a result of the above activities, along with thousands of phone calls, the Maryland State Legislatures have contacted Governor Glendening to pledge their support for the Campaign, so now the focus has shifted. Service providers, including SEEC, are writing letters and postcards to the Governor and to Dr. Georges Benjamin, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene. They are asking the Governor and Dr. Benjamin to work together to increase the DDA direct support reimbursement in the Governor's supplemental budget.

If you would like to help out in the "Campaign to Increase Direct Support Wages," please write to Dr. Benjamin at the address below or contact Jennifer at 301-527-0440, ext. 201, for more information. Letters

should focus on how direct support issues have effected you personally and how an increase in wages could help.

Dr. Georges Benjamin, MD, Secretary
Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
201 West Preston
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Reservations Still Available for Select Sunday Salons!
Reservations still available for select Sunday Salons! Call 301-527-0440 to check on availability for your favorite Salon.

As you know, the government does not provide total funding for support, so fundraising is a necessary part of operations. Without your participation, support to the individuals we support, including staff to consumer ratios, could be effected. Thank you for your generosity.

Happy Anniversary Karen Lee
During the Annual Staff Appreciation Party in December, the Board of Directors recognized SEEC staff for their dedication and accomplishments, including our Executive Director, Karen Lee. The Year 2000 not only marks the beginning of a new millenium, but it also marks Karen's 10th Anniversary with SEEC.

Here is a snapshot of Karen's 10 years...

1990 – 10 Years Ago

Karen Lee came to SEEC when the office was in one room lent by the Arc of Montgomery County. At that time SEEC consisted of:

- 2 employees
- 10 consumers
- 1 program – Supported Employment
- A budget of \$100,000
- A white van (a gift from the state of Maryland) and a maroon Subaru

In August 1990, SEEC moved to 622 Hungerford Drive, Suite 9 (the current location of SEEC's medical day care program, Values in Action).

1991 – 9 Years Ago

- SEEC created its first strategic plan, had the first audit and began to expand the board of directors.
- SEEC joined the Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS).
- With Karen's assistance, SEEC revised its mission and assisted Maryland in writing the Community Supported Living Arrangements regulation.

1992 – 8 Years Ago

- Karen became the local legislative liaison for the Mid-Atlantic Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps.
- Karen helped create the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) supported employment assessment.
- SEEC received The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps "Friendship Grant" with Rock Creek Foundation.

1993 – 7 Years Ago

- SEEC began a second program – Community Living (with 2 residents from Great Oaks state residential center).
- Karen was elected as a MACS Board Member.

- Karen completed her Master's of Education – Special Education, Transition and Secondary Education at the University of Maryland and five months later; she had her first child, Zane.

1994 – 6 Years Ago

- Community Living expanded as more people left Great Oaks and SEEC began to support individuals to purchase their own homes.
- Karen was invited to the White House for the 4th Anniversary of the Developmental Disabilities Act.

1995 – 5 Years Ago

- Karen was invited to sit on the President's Committee for the Employment of People with Disabilities, Sub-committee for People with Cognitive Disabilities.
- SEEC's third program, Values in Action, opened its doors in Rockville.
- SEEC's Administration, Employment Services and Community Living moved to 707 Conservation Lane in Gaithersburg.
- Karen gave birth to her second son, Karl.

1996 – 4 Years Ago

- Karen attended the McGill School of Leadership in Montreal, Canada.
- SEEC continued to grow and Karen created a second Deputy Director position to handle the expansion.

1997 – 3 Years Ago

- The Maryland Association of Community Services named SEEC the Innovative Agency of the year.
- SEEC began a reorganization that took place over the next two years.
- Karen chaired the DDA Subcommittee on CSLA.

1998 – 2 Years Ago

- Karen served as the conference chairperson for the MACS convention.
- Karen served on the Self-Determination Advisory Task Force, supporting self-determination, consumer choice and community inclusion in all aspects of life.

1999 – 1 Year Ago

- SEEC began supporting children with disabilities and their families through a new program – Family Support Services.
- Karen received the state Leadership Award from the Maryland AAMR.
- Karen became a graduate of Leadership Montgomery.

So now, 10 years later, SEEC has gone from:

- 2 employees to 160 employees
- 10 consumers to 158 consumers
- 1 program to 4 programs
- A budget of \$100,000 to a budget of \$5 million
- A white van and maroon Subaru to community-based transportation

“Karen, on behalf of the Board of Directors and individuals supported by SEEC, I thank you for your dedication and hard work over the past 10 years. Your vision and leadership have made SEEC what it is today.”

Debra Steffen
President, Board of Directors

Success Stories

Community Living

SEEC welcomes Jeremiah Hamilton and Tyrone Morris into its Community Living program:

- Jeremiah Hamilton is being supported in a condo he rents in Rockville.

- Tyrone Morris, who is 10 years old, is receiving recreation-based support after school.

Larry Shaw, who has been supported by SEEC for 2 years, recently moved into his new home in Hartford County with his foster mother and sister.

Congratulations to Angelia Elliott and TJ on the birth of their son, Thomas Elliott Tabbs. Angelia receives support from Community Living and she's a previous VIA employee.

Employment Services

Congratulations to the following individuals who began new jobs:

- Hallie Autry – Stepping Stones
- Julie Bryson – Shady Grove Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
- Julie Faglie – Fashion Bug
- Carey Hansen – Stepping Stones
- Jennifer Kleiman – Independence Now
- Kelly Long – Stepping Stones
- Debbie Perry – Manna Food Center
- Michael Reese – Petsmart
- Seamus Roles – Domino's Pizza
- Bruce Wallace – The Discovery Channel

Values in Action

Welcome to VIA's newest participants:

- Christopher "Kip" Jarrett
- Karim Mousavvi
- David Mulkey

Thanks to the generosity of many donors and volunteers, VIA has undergone a makeover for the new millennium. A list of these individuals is on page 3 under "Have You Seen VIA Lately?"

In December 1999, VIA hosted a delicious holiday party for the individuals they support and their families. The party had an international flair thanks to the VIA employees who provided dishes from around the world.

Congratulations to Manoj Kumaroo on his Gold and Silver medals for his outstanding performance in recent 100m and 500m cross-country skiing competitions.

The Newest "Hearts of SEEC"

Administration

- Randi Barclay – Recruitment Specialist
- Rupal Mistry – Customer Service Specialist
- Deborah Smith – Receptionist

Community Living

- Nathan Donald – Community Connector
- Maryann Harvey – Overnight Awake
- Elizabeth Kallon – Community Connector
- Varkey Kurissingal – Community Connector
- Monica McCritty – Personal Care Assistant
- Esi Mohammed – Overnight/CNA
- Rebecca Moore – Community Connector

Employment Services

- Beverly Peavy – Employment Specialist
- Antoine Tebah – Employment Assistant

Values in Action

Yassah Kargbo – Activities Assistant

Congratulations to Elliott Portnoy

Elliott Portnoy, a friend and former board member of SEEC, was one of 17 local heroes named a “1999 Washingtonian of the Year” by the Washingtonian Magazine. Elliott was recognized for his role in helping people and making our community a better place to live by founding KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now). KEEN is a sports program for children and young adults with disabilities that began in 1992 and has benefited many individuals supported by SEEC. Congratulations Elliott!

Recruiter’s Rectangle

SEEC is currently looking for qualified applicants to fill positions in Community Living, Employment Services and VIA. Please spread the word and have your referrals contact SEEC recruiter, Randi Barclay at 301-527-0440.

Award Recipients & Nominations

Outstanding Direct Support Professional Awards sponsored by the Maryland Association for Community Services (MACS)

Award Nominees:

- Frances Ford
- Lisa Howland
- Alem Mekonnen

Award Winner:

Congratulations to Lisa Howland, winner of a MACS Outstanding Direct Support Professional Award! Out of 88 nominations, Lisa was one of ten individuals in the state of Maryland to receive this award. (Read Lisa’s story below.)

John F. Kennedy, Jr. Award

Kathleen McNally, SEEC’s Chief Development Officer, was nominated for the John F. Kennedy, Jr. Award sponsored by the President’s Committee on Mental Retardation.

MACS Consumer Recognition Award Recipient

Laura Kuster

On February 10, 2000, Laura Kuster, an individual supported by SEEC was recognized for her personal accomplishments in the area of employment. She received an award during the Maryland Association for Community Services, Consumer Recognition Banquet in Annapolis. Laura’s award nomination is re-printed below.

Nomination submitted January 2000:

Laura Kuster was recently hired as a paid employee at the U.S. Consumer Product and Safety Commission. This personal achievement was significant because she contributed to the organization as a volunteer for over four years.

Laura always had the desire to be a paid employee, but the opportunity never presented itself. When a desirable position did open up, her hard work and dedication paid off. Laura went through the application and interview process and she was chosen for the job because she was qualified. Laura’s career with Consumer Products is a success story because of her initiative and partnerships with SEEC staff and her supervisor, Ann Montalbano.

In the beginning, SEEC worked with Laura to assess her work-related needs and helped her find the job with Consumer Products. The agency also supported Laura helping her with actual work-related activities,

but overtime, the natural supports were built-up and her supervisor took on this role. SEEC now drops in on Laura one day a week and supports her with matters above and beyond her day-to-day work. SEEC Employment Specialist, David Mitchell works with Laura to build her social skills with co-workers and on the development of new work skills. Laura would also like SEEC to assist her to improve her mobility and Braille, and to learn new computer skills.

Throughout Laura's employment, SEEC and the employer have enjoyed a positive working relationship. Everyone works together, providing Laura with the necessary support and adaptive devices, enabling her to do the best job she can. She uses devices to help her with the preparation of mailings and the office photocopier and microwave are equipped with Braille.

Laura is fortunate to have such great partnerships with SEEC staff and her supervisor, but her personal accomplishments are above all, a result of her own initiative.

SEEC's Award Winning Volunteer

Greg Fainberg

Greg Fainberg, an individual supported by SEEC, received a Daily Points of Light Award for his outstanding volunteerism. The Points of Light Foundation featured Greg on their web site in November, 1999 and in addition to this recognition, he received a Letter of Commendation from President Bill Clinton and President George Bush.

Most recently, Greg began volunteering as a greeter at a local Safeway, but prior to this he dedicated five years to Shady Grove Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and three years to the Lealand Recreation Center. Excerpts from his award nomination are re-printed below.

Nomination submitted July 1999:

Greg Fainberg is a unique and compassionate volunteer who began visiting Shady Grove Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in March of 1994. He wakes up every morning, Monday through Friday, looking forward to spending three hours of his day helping others.

Greg is a remarkable individual who overcomes many obstacles to dedicate his time to volunteering. Born visually impaired and with cerebral palsy, Greg uses a wheelchair. Although, he is limited to the amount of physical activity he can do, he has an amazing will, and manages to accomplish a lot.

Greg is supported by SEEC, a non-profit organization dedicated to enabling persons with developmental disabilities become contributing members of their community. SEEC and Greg's family believe he has the right to work within his community in the same manner as his non-disabled peers. They help him to determine what he wants for his life and support him in making this personal vision a reality.

Greg wants to give to his community. Part of his personal vision is to help the staff and residents at Shady Grove. Every morning, Greg arrives at the center with his Employment Specialist. With her assistance, he helps the staff and residents with the group activities and day-to-day tasks.

The residents are delighted to see Greg as he delivers their mail every morning. This social young man always has something nice to say and brightens every room he's in. With his regular presence, Greg accomplishes something very remarkable – he enriches the life of each resident at Shady Grove. He knows all the residents' names and their voices. They are his friends.

It has been almost five years since Greg began volunteering five days a week. He is extremely dedicated to his work. Unless there are circumstances beyond his control, he is there.

With assistance, Greg also helps the staff at Shady Grove with their group activities. He greets all residents as they arrive and helps with miscellaneous tasks; such as, the distribution of materials, clean up, and his favorite, calling bingo. Greg also provides companionship for many residents. There was one gentleman that he called "Grandpa" and watched *The Price is Right* with everyday.

Before his work at Shady Grove, Greg spent three years with Lealand Recreation Center in Montgomery County. From 1991 through 1993, he volunteered at the activities desk, welcoming guests, checking ID's, and handing out sports equipment. As a result of his work, he received an Outstanding Volunteer Award from the Montgomery County Community Service Partnership, Inc. and the Volunteer Center.

Through Greg's charitable activities, he sets an example for other SEEC consumers and staff. They see the consistency and quality of his accomplishments and realize they are also capable of helping others through volunteering. Everyone knows Greg because of his cheerful presence and because he was one of SEEC's original consumers when the non-profit began in 1987. As a founding member of the organization, Greg's mother saw the need for her son to work and give to the community.

Greg Fainberg accomplishes so much through his volunteer activities. He not only enriches the lives of the elderly through his companionship, but he also brings attention to individuals with developmental disabilities. With the right support, he has proven that he can contribute to his community in a meaningful way.

Have Your Seen VIA Lately?

If you have not been to Values in Action lately, it's a MUST SEE. In December 1999, SEEC's medical day care program was refurbished with new carpet, paint, wall coverings and furniture. And who should we thank? The new VIA was made possible by an extensive list of individuals who did anything from painting to donating items or cash. Special thanks to our donors and volunteers:

- Duron Paint in Rockville
- Potomac Floor Covering
- Mark Becker
- Lou Berman
- Susan Chandler
- John Daniels
- Diana Don
- Seth Duncan
- Eric Evans
- Mitzi Francis
- Susan Gallagher
- Darlene and Nick Gordon
- Tracy Hanson
- Karen Hurd and Bill
- Meryl Icove
- Sue Jacobs
- David Lee
- Karen Lee, Jim and Zane
- Jay Lerner
- Nyle Macfarlane
- Kathleen McNally
- Missy McQuillen, Iliana and Troy
- Karen Migdail
- Kim Miller
- Joseph Mugamba
- Piper Neal and Brad
- Barb Patigalia
- Stephen Penhoet
- Metra Petersons
- Cynthia and Christina Posthumous
- Noel Rappaport
- Ruth Stolberg
- Judy Weightman

Avi Weintraub
Miriam Weintraub
Conrad Williams
Bernie Woolfley

In Memoriam

SEEC remembers Alan Silverberg, a dear friend and consumer, who passed away. Alan was supported through Employment Services and Values in Action.

SEEC “In-Need” of In-Kind Donations

What are in-kind donations?

In-kind donations are physical products (NOT including cash).

Why should you donate in-kind items to SEEC?

The funding SEEC currently receives does not cover items beyond basic support to consumers, so there is often a need for those little extras we sometimes take for granted in our lives.

What type of in-kind donations does SEEC need?

- Television
- Coffeemaker
- Two drawer cupboards
- Computer equipment/printers
- Sofas

If you are able to donate to above items, or anything else, please call Jennifer at 301-527-0440. Thanks for your generosity!

Lisa Howland

According to Team Coordinator Cimone Coulbourne, Lisa Howland is “truly a natural” in her field. As an Employment Specialist at SEEC, Lisa supports individuals with developmental disabilities who have significant needs. She works in partnership with consumers, their families and employers to develop community-based employment opportunities.

So what exactly makes Lisa outstanding? For starters, she has a natural ability to be in-tuned with the needs and concerns of the individuals she supports. When she came to SEEC, the community-based philosophy of the organization is not something she needed to learn. She instinctively listened to and observed the individuals she supported to help them find their employment niche in society.

Eric, one of the first young men Lisa worked with at SEEC had many challenges to working in the community, but she quickly learned how to work with an agency Behavior Specialist to best support him. Eric had worked with other employees and he successfully volunteered at a recycling center, but despite what everyone thought, Lisa believed that he could work in a paid position. With this belief, and despite the fact that Eric does not talk, Lisa moved forward to find Eric a job he would be happy with. She knew he enjoyed the outdoors, so she used her creative mind and aggressive nature to find him a job delivering flyers door-to-door for a pizza shop.

Lisa’s ability to be an outstanding employee is really a combination of some basic characteristics. According to Patty Hause, a SEEC Operations Assistant who has known Lisa for almost eight years, “She is very energetic, very enthusiastic. She really goes after an idea and she really cares about the people she supports.” Patty, who was Lisa’s supervisor at another agency, described an individual who goes above and beyond her day-to-day job, even taking consumers to a baseball games on her own time. Now at SEEC, Lisa continues to spend her personal time with the individuals she supports, giving them rides home, going shopping and out to eat.

Lisa's caring nature can be seen in her interaction with the individuals she supports and their family members. Cimone Coulbourne says that "parents think highly of her and they appreciate the relationship Lisa has with their sons and daughters." Cimone also talks about the importance of Lisa as a positive role model for the individuals she supports. According to Cimone, she not only has good people skills, but she is extremely professional, as well as very organized.

In addition to Lisa's work as an Employment Specialist, she has become certified to conduct first aid, CPR and blood borne pathogen training to other SEEC staff who respect her skills. During this aspect of Lisa's work she demonstrates her excellent skills as a teacher.

Lisa Howland is "truly a natural." A natural who is balanced – she understands the personal care aspects of her job and the business aspects, and this combination creates an outstanding role model for everyone in the field.

Rights and Rallies Self-Advocacy Group

The Rights and Rallies fundraising cookbook will be available beginning in May! Donations for the books start at \$10 and proceeds from the sale will help Rights and Rallies members attend conferences. To reserve a book, send your donation to Elizabeth Weightman, c/o SEEC, 707 Conservation Lane, Suite 200, Gaithersburg, MD 20878. Checks should be made payable to SEEC.

Rights and Rallies is pleased to announce its first group of elected officers. Congratulations to Elizabeth Weightman, President; Christina Hogan and Michael Reese, Vice Presidents; Lucia Apostolidis, Secretary; and Lev Nair, Treasurer.

Rights and Rallies members met with SEEC Program Directors to make recommendations following their review of the Ask Me! Survey data from the past two years.

Rights and Rallies is always interested in welcoming new members. The group usually meets the last Monday or every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Aspen Hill Library in Aspen Hill, Maryland. For more information, contact Elizabeth Weightman at 301-251-1076 or Kathleen McNally at 301-527-0440.

SEEC 1999 Accomplishments

- SEEC expanded by 20% across three programs – Community Living, Employment Services, and Values in Action. Special thanks to our dedicated staff, especially to, Mitzi Francis and the Program Directors – Franstine Wallace-Barnes, Missy McQuillen, Steve Blanks, and thanks to Vickie Wilkins (who was with SEEC for most of 1999).
- SEEC began its Family Support Services program and helped over 40 families and their children with developmental disabilities. Special thanks to Kathleen McNally who really embraced the needs of these families and worked hard to develop the resources to assist them.
- SEEC was awarded a \$1.1 million capital grant from the State of Maryland for the purchase of a building. This action is really a testament to SEEC's strength as an agency and to our commitment to the individuals we support.
- SEEC began an Employee Development effort including a Monthly Training Series, monthly Coordination Meetings and New Employee Orientation.
- SEEC continued the implementation and revision of its re-organization initiated in 1998 by transferring the Personal Vision Planning to Operations to facilitate more focused individual planning.
- SEEC partnered with the Epilepsy Association of Maryland to offer a summer job program to young adults with developmental disabilities (TRAINED – Together Reaching Adolescents in Need of Employment Development).
- SEEC launched its Consumer Information Management System to manage and track all aspects of the agency's support. The system is also being marketed to other agencies to ensure quality support beyond the individuals supported by SEEC. Special thanks to Mike Mullenix who created the system and to the staff who served on the database committee.

- SEEC’s new identity and logo were developed to reflect the SEEC of today. An agency that is strong, professional and dedicated. An agency that works everyday “strengthening connections between people with disabilities and the community.”
- SEEC began to reach out to new audiences in 1999. The agency was seen on local cable programs and in the newspapers.

SEEC 1999 Awards

- Karen Lee – AAMR Maryland Leadership Award
- Kathleen McNally – AAMR Regional Service Award
- Greg Fainberg – National Points of Light Outstanding Volunteer Award

Special Thanks to Our Employers!

Allied Silver Spring Interfaith Services for Senior Today
 Allyson Louis Gallery Inc.
 Alzheimer's Association of Greater Washington
 Asbury Methodist Village Home
 Ask Me! Project
 Autism Society of America
 Best Price Plus Gourmet Deli
 Burger King Restaurant
 Catholic Diocese
 City of Rockville
 Cradle of Hope
 Domino's Pizza
 Federal Drug Administration
 Furs, Fins & Feathers
 Germantown - Upcounty Regional Library
 Giant Food, Inc.
 Golden Bull Grand Cafe
 Good Hope Community Center
 Heritage Christian Church
 Hollywood Ballroom
 Humane Society
 Interfaith Clothing Center
 Jeepers
 Jewish Council for the Aging of Greater Washington
 Jewish Library
 Kids R Us
 La Madeleine French Bakery and Cafe
 Loehmann's Inc.
 Manna Food Center
 Mariner Health of Kensington
 Marshall's Department Store
 Marriott Corporation
 McDonald's Restaurants
 Mediplex in Montgomery Village
 Montgomery County Government
 Montgomery General Hospital
 MVCR
 National Consumer League
 National Naval Medical Center
 Oldies 100
 Ourisman Chevrolet
 Quality Suites
 Ross Dress for Less

Round House Theatre
SAAH Furniture
Safeway Food and Drug
SEEC
Shady Grove Nursing and Rehabilitation Center
Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department
Sniders Supermarket
Special Olympics
States Attorney Office
U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Unitarian Church of Rockville
United States Securities & Exchange
Upcounty Library
Values In Action
WaWa Convenience Store
Walker's Laundromat
Wheaton Library
YMCA Child Center

For information on becoming an employer, contact Irene Souada, Employment Development Specialist at 301-527-0440.

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Questions and comments should be directed to Jennifer Appaneal, SEECconnections Editor
707 Conservation Lane, Suite 200
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878
Phone: 301-527-0440
Fax: 301-527-0119
E-mail: jappaneal@seeonline.org
