



*Seeking Employment, Equality and Community for  
People with Developmental Disabilities*

## COVID-19 Vaccine Update

By Karen Lee



We are thrilled to announce that the people SEEC supports are part of the 1b group to become vaccinated in Maryland. We are considered a long-term care provider and as such we are partnering with CVS Omnicare for our vaccine clinics here in Maryland. Our plan for now is to have the SEEC office be the physical site for the vaccine clinics. The goal is to have all the people we support be able to access

whatever vaccine is made available to us.

Just last week we learned that our SEEC staff were part of group 1a and as such have started getting vaccinated through the county and in Washington, D.C! It's incredibly exciting news. We know some people we support and staff might be getting the vaccine through other places, either with a residential facility or through a second job, so we will be working to capture that information as well. Our goal is to be able to offer the vaccine to everyone we support and staff who want it.

We will be given dates for when the vaccines will be administered. We will have a plan in place for how to get as many people vaccinated as possible both safely and efficiently. We are looking at the logistics and making plans.

SEEC is in the process of educating and informing SEEC staff and the people we support about the safety and effectiveness of both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines. There is a FAQ page of the website where people can learn more about vaccine rollout and about the vaccine itself. Staff are being briefed in weekly staff calls and family updated through weekly Wednesday family calls. We want everyone to have all the information they need to make a well-educated decision. It's important to know that both vaccines are 94% or more effective and serious side effects are minimal.

We will continue to keep you updated as we know more. It's an exciting time and a light at the end of the tunnel.

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## SEEC Hires New Director of IT



We are pleased to announce that Djibril Kamara has started in his new role as Director of Information Technology for SEEC and joined the ranks of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), overseeing our amazing IT team headed up by Edwin Chan. We are all excited to have a senior, strategically-focused leader rejoin the ELT and provide deeper leadership around all our technologies and systems across the entire agency.

Djibril has over two decades of Information Technology skills, experience, and competencies with the Arc of Montgomery County. Djibril understands what is required to bring new technologies and systems to the disability field, and has been described as a caring leader who is genuinely curious about new software/hardware. At the same time, he is excited to make technology work for all, including those for whom technology at times is scary. Djibril's staff-centric approach ensures our agency continues to grow our training and development of team members, while also pushing the envelope with leading edge tools. We are thrilled to welcome him to SEEC.

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## Learnings from the Disability Field

by Cindy Kauffman

*Cindy recently embarked on her retirement, although she continues to work part time for SEEC.*

### Lessons Learned in My Career:

I have worked hard in the field of disabilities and for people with disabilities for the past 46 years. It started with my sisters in childhood with disabilities and a highly stressed family that had no access to any support except an institution, which was the ultimate death of my one sister. Years later, as an intern in college, I began my career by living in a group home with 10 women who began teaching me about the lives of people with disabilities and what they wanted in their lives. Since that time, I have truly been granted some of the most phenomenal roles, experiences, and opportunities at the individual, local, state, national and international levels. I believe I could go on for days about the many big and tiny lessons I have learned through the years and the experiences. These few below, however, are the ones that stand at the front for me.

### Know the History of the Field of Disabilities:

It is important to know from where the field of disabilities has come. The reason we have successes today is because families, people with disabilities and providers have worked hard and fought to get people out of institutions where people with disabilities were being neglected, harmed, and isolated from having any life of their own. In getting people out of institutions, laws were changed or adopted, children were for the first time, given access to a public education, services were developed in the community where they never existed before, and people with disabilities were protected under federal law so they could not be discriminated against. There were and still are the need

for advocacy and fighting battles, but we need to know how it all came about. We continue a long journey toward people with disabilities having the same opportunities as anyone for 'a good life'.

### **Families:**

It is easy to forget that we, the providers and staffs, are not the only important people in a person's life. Families were a part of the person's life before us and will likely be involved long after any one of us are no longer. Think of the family as the 'constant' in a person's life. Getting to know and providing support to families are as important as doing the same for the person with disabilities.

### **We Can Be Person-Centered and Family-Supportive at the Same Time:**

This is a tough one because families often have different ideas than the person with disabilities has. Our role as staff and helpers is to help a person get experiences so they can make 'good life' choices, have dreams and goals to work toward like anyone else. Sometimes those choices and wishes scare families who want their member to be safe and protected. Helping the person with disabilities to have a voice, make decisions, have control in life and having the family support the person is often difficult and can result in a battle that should not happen. We need to form partnerships with families, provide education and show them successes so they can feel trust and begin to see that a disability is something a person has and is not who a person is.

### **Vision:**

Know what you believe in and the values you bring to your work every day. This will help you know if you are in the right job for you. If your vision of the lives of people with disabilities is different from the organization you are working in, you will not be happy and you will not help the organization on its journey toward its vision. I have always suggested to staff I work with to finish each workday with one question: Have I completed every work task today in support of people with disabilities and what I believe in? If yes, I have had a successful day. If no, I need to think about why I got off track and reset. On the other hand, if your values and beliefs match the vision of the organization, you can fulfill your career hopes and be instrumental in helping to move your organization on its journey toward the vision.

### **It is Not Just a Job:**

We all know we are not going to get rich doing this work. We have also learned that our role is not just to 'take care of' people with disabilities, It is about getting to know people, learning what is important to them, helping people to have experiences that allow for informed choices, helping people to identify their outcomes for their 'good life' and then doing your absolute best to support the person to achieve those outcomes. There are few rewards bigger than seeing someone have a life of their choosing and knowing you helped to support that outcome every day.

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## **Soulfull Café - New Inclusive Coffee Shop in Rockville and Valued SEEC Partner!**

The SoulFull Café located at 50 Monroe Street is running a fundraiser to benefit SEEC! No better time to try or return to the SoulFull Café than the week of January 18th when they will be contributing 10% of ALL purchase proceeds to SEEC! **From January 18th -22nd simply mention SEEC at time of purchase so that you can help SoulFull Café help**



**SEEC! (Does not apply to Gift Card purchases.)**

Check out their website and menu features. "Menu" tab will show the many drink offerings and "Order Online" tab will reveal full menu! Orders can be made by walk in, phone or online and can be picked up curbside or carryout!

Let's support SoulFull Café so they can in turn support SEEC as they have always done! They support our mission of inclusion and accompany that with great menu offerings!

Check out their website and please plan your visit! <https://www.thesoulfullcafe.com/>

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## Nothing Bundt Cakes Fundraiser - January 29, 2021

Nothing Bundt Cakes in Silver Spring has been a generous partner to SEEC since opening in 2018. This month they are celebrating a "bakery birthday" and are planning a week of giving back to the community and will be supporting a different organization each day by donating 10% of the proceeds from sales. If you're looking for an excuse to purchase a delicious cake, this is it! **On Friday, January 29th, 10% of proceeds will go to support SEEC**, so you're doing it for a good cause. Order online at <https://www.nothingbundtcakes.com/bakery/md/silver-spring>. They offer delivery, curbside pickup or you can enter the lobby and order there! Enjoy!



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## End of Year Success



Thank you to everyone who contributed to SEEC's End of Year Campaign! Together we exceeded our goal, raising over \$36,000 to help the people we support and our staff to stay safe while staying connected and engaged. We had over 120 donors contribute to the cause so it was truly a community effort. Thank you also to everyone who helped by purchasing gifts off our Holiday Wish List for people we support. With the help of our generous supporters, SEEC was able to make sure that everyone in Supported Living had at least one gift to open during the holidays. We are extremely grateful to everyone who helped make a difference this holiday season. Thank you!

Lastly, thank you to those who contributed to our latest fundraising effort, SEEC Supporting SEEC. When Karen Lee realized that there were staff who were struggling financially, she sprang into action and created SEEC Supporting SEEC. SEEC Supporting SEEC is helping staff who anonymously write in to ask for help because their spouse had lost their job or they weren't able to work their second job due to COVID. Since launching in mid-December, we have had 14 requests from staff who are facing food insecurity or who are unable to pay utility bills. We have given groceries, grocery gift cards and \$1000 in funds as well as paying for utilities and Christmas gifts for kids. Thus far we have collected almost \$6,000 from SEEC employees and family members. We are providing a list of resources for utility help, for food, etc. and have helped people apply for things online. If you want to help make a difference close to home, you can!

Please [email seecsupportingseec@seeonline.org](mailto:seecsupportingseec@seeonline.org) to let us know you are donating and then [visit our donate page at www.seeonline.org/donate](http://www.seeonline.org/donate) and put SEEC Supporting SEEC in the notes section. There are many ways you can think globally but act locally.

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## CVS Donates Supplies to SEEC



When CVS heard there was a need at SEEC, they sprang into action. Thank you to the CVS Regional Workforce Initiatives team in Northwest D.C. who generously donated personal supplies to the people SEEC supports and to SEEC staff. Pictured here is Erika Bailey, Senior Consultant, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health who helped deliver boxes of donated face washes, deodorant, skin lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste and daily pill boxes. We appreciate your generosity this holiday season!

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# Project | SEARCH

## VIRTUAL Information Session

**Date:** Wednesday, February 3rd

**Time:** 6:00pm - 7:00pm

**ZOOM Link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8940904816?pwd=ME5DZ2NUR>

**Meeting ID:** 894 090 4816

**Passcode:** 436383

**Project SEARCH provides employment readiness training for people aged 18 to 30 with intellectual and developmental disabilities through intensive internships and classroom instruction.**

Parents, professionals, and potential students who are interested in applying to the Project SEARCH programs should make plans to attend.

The agenda will include:

- Program overview will include information on our host business
- sites at —Project SEARCH NIH; Project SEARCH Montgomery;
- Project SEARCH Smithsonian
- “A Day in the Life of a Project SEARCH Intern”
- Hear from a former PS intern and parents
- Review application process and receive application materials

### QUESTIONS?

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