



NEWSLETTER

Seeking Employment, Equality and Community
for People with Developmental Disabilities

SEEC Internal Newsletter April 2026

From the Desk of Karen Lee, SEEC's CEO

This first edition of the IDEA Lab Chronicle is being shared through From the Desk of Karen Lee as an introduction to the Chronicle and the work taking shape in the IDEA Lab. Future updates will be shared as stand-alone Chronicle issues.

IDEA LAB Chronicle

Stories, experiments, and impact from SEEC's maker space.

How the IDEA Lab Started

After attending a TASH conference, **Mercedes McKeel**, Learn to Earn Manager at SEEC, saw examples of assistive technology that looked different from what she was used to. The tools were simple. Many were made from everyday materials. Most importantly, they were created *with* the people who used them.

Instead of coming back with a product list, Mercedes came back with an idea: what if people supported by SEEC had a place to try things out, build their own support, and learn by doing?

She applied through **SEEC's Innovation Fund** to explore how to create access to these great tools for everyone at SEEC. She expanded her idea and partnered with SEEC's **Person Driven Technology program** to bring these great tools into people's lives. Together, the Person Driven Tech team and Mercedes began shaping what is now the IDEA Lab, a space meant for testing, adjusting, and figuring out how to overcome barriers in real time.



L to R: Abby George and Mercedes McKee

About the Team

Mercedes McKee

Mercedes supports people to build meaningful work and community lives. She focuses on practical tools, self-advocacy, and approaches that grow out of real routines and preferences. The IDEA Lab reflects how she works every day: start small, stay curious, and build solutions side by side with the people who will be using the tools.

Abby George

Abby leads SEEC's Person Driven Technology program. She works with people and staff to use low and high technology strategies in ways that support independence, choice, and everyday problem solving. Her work helped turn an idea into a space people can actually use.



Q&A: From Inspiration to Impact

Q: What first inspired the IDEA Lab?

Mercedes: The IDEA Lab was inspired by a session at the TASH Conference in New Orleans in December 2024 called *"Making Assistive Technology Solutions in Minutes."* During the session, the presenter shared simple, low-cost assistive tools made from everyday materials—many already found at home or easily purchased at a hardware store.

It was an eye-opening moment that showed assistive technology doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. More importantly, it highlighted the power of removing barriers so people can solve their own everyday challenges, rather than having solutions designed *for* them.

Q: Why was it important that this be a Co-Creation space?

Mercedes: It was important for the IDEA Lab to be a co-creation space because the best solutions come from the people who experience the barriers firsthand. The lab will be a place to explore curiosity and creativity where people can try ideas, experiment, and design *with* others rather than having solutions created *for* them. This approach builds self-confidence and autonomy, encourages both people SEEC supports and their staff to try, learn, and problem solve together, and results in tools that truly fit into everyday life.

Abby: Inclusion is the name of the game in the IDEA Lab! People with I/DD have long been excluded from conversations about what benefits them and tools that would support their autonomy. We hope to change that notion by cultivating a space where people we support co-design, co-create and co-exist with their DSPs. People with lived experience can tell us better than anyone what tools and supports will or will not work for them and in the IDEA Lab, they can bring those tools and supports to life.

Q: What do you hope people feel when they walk into the IDEA Lab?

Mercedes: I hope people feel welcomed, curious, and confident when they walk into the IDEA Lab. It's a space where creativity is encouraged, ideas are celebrated, and people feel safe to try, experiment, and explore.

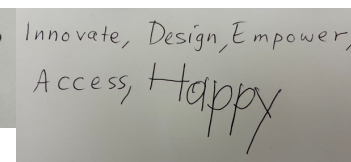
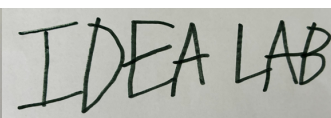
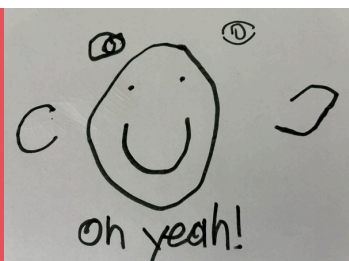
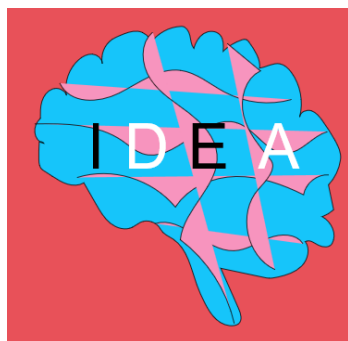
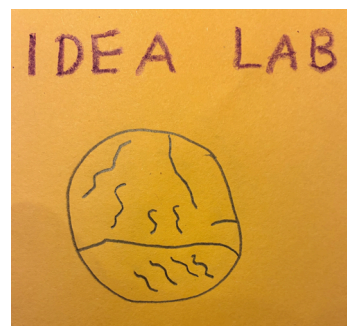
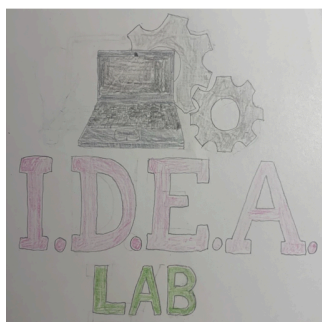
Abby: Everyone should be excited when they walk into the IDEA Lab. There will be lots of cool gadgets (low and high tech) to explore, and lots of Do It Yourself (DIY) tools and supports to build themselves. I hope the excitement and inspiration spreads to all DSPs, families, and community members alike!

I am interested in attending the IDEA Lab Ribbon Cutting!

A Community-Designed Logo

To mark the launch of the IDEA Lab, SEEC hosted a logo design contest open to the people supported by SEEC and staff. The responses were creative, thoughtful, and wide-ranging. Each submission reflected a different take on what the Lab could be. SEEC staff voted on the designs, and the winning logo was created by Justin Valenti who works at the National Institutes of Health. His design will serve as the official logo of the IDEA Lab, while all submitted logos will be displayed in the IDEA Lab as part of the story.

The contest reflects what the IDEA Lab is meant to be: shaped by many voices, built through participation, and grounded in real ideas from the community.



Other IDEA Lab Community Logo proposals from Scott Gladstone, Alex Zhen, Sarah Alfaro and Tati Sollod.

SEEC's DSP Making a Difference: Donnette Edwards



Donnette Edwards brings patience, care, and deep commitment to every part of her work. She supports the same person across both Supported Living and Employment Services, adapting seamlessly to different settings and needs. From assisting with a home-based business to providing support in community employment and daily living, Donnette shows incredible flexibility and dedication. She is highly attuned to behavioral and medical needs, and approaches every challenge with calm, respect, and compassion. Her support makes a meaningful difference, and her work is deeply appreciated. **Congratulations, Donnette!**

HR Update

Thanks for joining SEEC's Community Spring Wellness Event!



Folashade AkJohnstone Ashutangtang
Johnvictor Chieke
Abdulai Mansary
Julvet Nde

George Muniko



New Hire Orientation (April 2026)



L to R: Emmanuel Salako, Willow Newman, Portia Burke, Sally Turayson



Our Contact Information

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