

Winter 2020 Program Update



Real Estate and Facilities
Supported Employment Program

aka.ms/supportedemployment

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Introduction from Brian Collins

Hi Everyone,



I'm excited that in this Update we will focus on some of the great people we have in this program. We are featuring Supported Employees all around the globe who share their employment stories, and job coaches, who discuss how we can collaborate to build a more disability-inclusive workforce.

From a global perspective, Microsoft continues to prioritize the health and well-being of our community. We are continuing to pay everyone, Microsoft employees and vendor employees alike, including those whose roles cannot be performed remotely.

Though Microsoft continues to be in various stages of opening, in accordance with guidance with local health authorities, I'm proud to share that not only has the program grown globally where openings are possible, but also that several Supported Employees have continued to perform their jobs on site at Microsoft in essential roles. Those roles include mail and package handling, janitorial services and landscaping. I also want to acknowledge and thank all the employees who are performing essential work every day. And I want to thank everyone who is working from home for staying home and staying safe!

We have been focusing on when the workplace will be available, and changes in day-to-day operations. Thanks to ideas and information provided by Supported Employees, their families and job coaches by meeting with our coaching agencies, advisory council, and extended leadership team, we have prepared a Welcome workbook [for what to expect when back at the office](#).

And this summer, we hosted our first, virtual and global summer party. The participation of Supported Employees in global locations made for a truly unique and entertaining event. I hope you'll enjoy watching the video of the party.

I wish you and yours a safe and wonderful holiday season! And as always, feel free to reach out with any thoughts or suggestions: supportedemployment@microsoft.com.



Virtual CommUNITY Summer Party

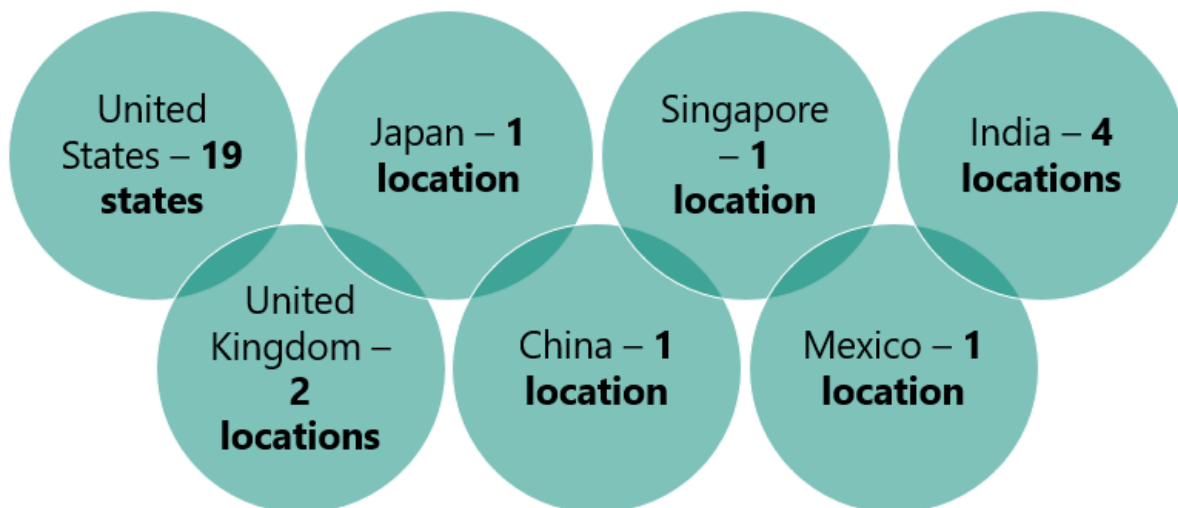
On August 25th, the Supported Employment Program gathered virtually around the globe for our summer celebration: Virtual CommUNITY. In the spirit of staying home and staying safe, we held a virtual party and talent show where we showcased Supported Employees in locations from Puget Sound to Singapore and everywhere in between. Supported Employees had two opportunities to tune in with their friends and families to the live-streamed events.



Both Michael Ford, head of Microsoft Real Estate and Security, and Mike Lawings, Regional Director Real Estate and Facilities Americas, joined the party to welcome everyone, and to thank the Supported Employees and program supporters for the great work they are doing in supporting Microsoft globally.

The American Sign Language provider, Purple, recommended that we utilize both a deaf interpreter and a hearing interpreter. A big take away we learned about accessibility through this project was deaf interpreters have a more universally understood “accent” and can provide a more fluid performance interpretation for viewers.

The Virtual CommUNITY event was a great learning experience in digital accessibility and event planning. We are excited for next year and exploring more new and unique ways to tell our story and get connected with our global partners. [Check out the video linked here.](https://aka.ms/supportedemployment)



Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October was an exciting month for the Supported Employment Program. We celebrated the 75th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To highlight this momentous year, we spent the month sharing content related to the theme of "Increasing Access and Opportunity" across CRE Microsoft social media platforms. We shared stories of our Supported Employees as well as resources for prioritizing accessibility in the workplace and disability etiquette tips through the ["Simple Things Count"](#) video series shared by Microsoft Story Labs earlier this year. NDEAM is a great tool we use to share the story of the Supported Employment Program and all the unique stories help generate meaningful conversations around disability employment. Below are a few stories we shared throughout the month:



Meet **Marcus Flack Jr.** He joined CBRE at Microsoft in February 2020 as a Lobby Host. Marcus shared his recruitment experience with CBRE, which led to him landing his first real job. Marcus is thankful for the time and intention of finding a workspace that was accessible for his wheelchair and would create the best work experience for him and his guests. Marcus would say to anyone looking for a job to stay focused on what you need and want out of employment. You will find the place that sees you, hears you, helps build your confidence, and will focus on keeping you as an employee.



Meet **Adam Curry** who works for CBRE at Microsoft on the logistics team. Adam is the perfect fit for his role because he can recall almost every name and location of the packages he processes. He prides himself on his great customer service and computer skills. This is Adam's message for those looking for a job: "Never give up on your dream. You may try a lot of different jobs before you land on the one that is best for you!"



Meet **Hilary Niess** who is a member of the SBM Team. Hilary shares how being a part of the team at SBM has helped her learn to be patient with all employees, and that it is important for her to work hard, remain positive, and always gives her best. [You can learn more about Hilary at this link.](#)

This year Microsoft gained recognition as one of the top employers for people with disabilities by scoring 100 on the Disability Equality Index. This is a testament to the work being done driving accessibility, opening doors for hiring people with disabilities, and going beyond to support our employees through the COVID-19 pandemic. We are looking forward to what we will accomplish in the year ahead and having you join us on the journey!

Stories from our Global Supported Employees

United Arab Emirates -

Vaishna and Manahil

Meet Vaishna (left) and Manahil (right) from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, two young women with big dreams and ambitions. Their hard work and determination landed them successful corporate roles with Sodexo at Microsoft in August last year. They started as trainees at the Microsoft office after completing their graduation from Al Noor

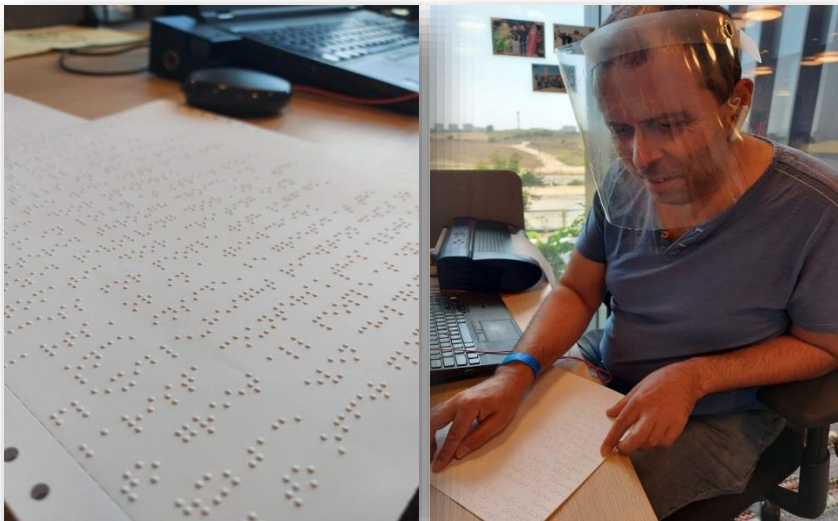


School of Special Needs, Dubai.

Vaishna joins the mailroom staff and sorts out daily mail and excels at data entry tasks with extreme efficiency. Her motivation to learn and willingness to grow continue to impress. Over the last year we have seen her grow from a shy, reserved individual to an independent, fearless person!

Manahil carries out daily tasks at seven social hubs and is excellent at customer service and engagement. Her positive attitude and friendly nature make her an indispensable part of our team.

They have both mastered challenges: whether it be commuting on their own, or interacting with team members and colleagues, or taking on new tasks! Today we are honored to have Manahil and Vaishna on board and can proudly celebrate their first work anniversary with Sodexo at Microsoft.



Israel – Yair Simantov

Meet **Yair Simantov**. He is 52 and lives in Tel Aviv. He plays guitar, loves art and culture, and tries to attend all the cultural and art events accessible to the blind.

Yair is a hardware engineer, who worked in his profession for many years until his visual disability no longer allowed him to do so.

He joined Ramot-CBRE at Microsoft in August 2018 and has been a part of the Real Estate & Security team since then. He is responsible for monitoring the operational team service tickets via the ServicesApp. This new set of skills has enabled Yair to have a new transferable trade, should he ever choose to leave Ramot to seek out new career opportunities. He also supports accessibility issues with his unique expertise and willingness to teach us.

So how can he perform his role without being able to see? “The company made the job accessible: I got a computer with a screen reader, special braille printers; also braille signage and tactile path markings are installed all over the campus; and of course - my team members who are good souls, are always happy to help. The work at Microsoft gave me back the optimism about my professional future”.

China - Xin Zhao



I am **Xin Zhao**, and I was hired as a receptionist on the Real Estate & Security team at Microsoft's Beijing West campus in August.

Although I haven't been here for long, I have received lots of encouragement from my line managers Shanshan and Lily, who encourage me and help me to grow and learn new skills.

In addition to my role as a receptionist, I'm proud to cooperate with the Research & Development (R&D) team on a hackathon

project. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) project will help me and other receptionists who have a hearing disability communicate with the guests arriving at the lobby at Microsoft.

We envision a future where the AI technology will translate all sign language in real time and where hearing and deaf individuals will not experience barriers to effective communication.

This job not only gives me a sense of belonging being an employee with a disability, but also makes me feel that I am contributing to the professional development of people with disabilities in society.

The success of the first stage of my employment has filled my heart with gratitude and given me great confidence that employees with these obstacles will work around us like any ordinary employee without any difference in the future.

Redmond - Marc Russo on Career Progression and Manager Support



Marc Russo is a Maintenance Assistant at CBRE and recently joined his third team since he began in 2018. Marc is a hardworking and trustworthy team player who is consistently looking to take on new

challenges. His can-do attitude and work ethic allowed him to take on full time work with CBRE. He has a piece of advice for other Supported Employees looking for more work as well as for their supporting managers:

"If you are wanting more at work, just ask. Be open and honest about what you want and what you think you can add to your team. Most importantly, be willing to try new things. If it works out, great! If it doesn't, keep working and try something else."

"Managers- stay open minded about what you are having your employee do. Think beyond the job description and keep communication with your Supported Employee open. Creating the space of trust and commitment to the team will help your SE feel confident at work and want to keep doing more!"

Celebrating International Day of Persons with Disabilities



On December 3rd, we celebrated [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](https://aka.ms/supportedemployment). To honor the day, CRE Microsoft held a global celebration on our social media platforms to highlight the work of our Supported Employees, and to honor the growth and expansion of the program to more international locations. We are looking forward to seeing how we grow in the coming years, and we are so grateful for all the work our employees are doing each day.

Be sure to follow CRE Microsoft on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram all year long for more fun features!

- [Corp Real Estate Microsoft \(@cremicrosoft\) | Instagram photos and videos](#)
- [Corp Real Estate MS \(@CREMicrosoft\) | Twitter](#)
- [CRE Microsoft | LinkedIn](#)



Employers and Job Coaches Collaborate to Build a Disability-Inclusive Workforce

Though the COVID pandemic has led to significant job losses globally, employers can plan to continue the great strides made in hiring individuals with disabilities. In fact, just as the theme for the 2020 [International Day of People with Disabilities](#) says, we can all look forward to 'building back better – toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world.'



When we asked some of our job coaching partners how employers can partner with employment providers (aka job coaching agencies) for a strong return to the workplace, a few themes resonated and repeated, with communication being at the core.

As **Cesilee Coulson** with [WISE](#) explained, employment providers have been "partnering with employers on customizing new job duties to meet new demands, during the pandemic. They've also had great experiences with short, online meetings with employers to learn about emerging needs, to do tours and interviewing."

She also shared that "employers could play a huge role in seeking the employment provider industry out and intentionally bringing them into their businesses to think about creative solutions to staffing during this time."

Once that relationship with employment providers is established, as it is for vendors at Microsoft, employers can gain so much by reaching out and working in tandem with job coaches. It sounds simple enough, but it is important to remember to communicate not only with your Supported Employees, but also with their job coaches, who are an essential part of their support system, and who can help a Supported Employee access, and learn the intricacies of new procedures and expectations.

Put simply, **Laura Coutts** with [Puget Sound Personnel](#), summed up the advice from our partners by explaining that “a key to a successful partnership with employers is communication!”



Communication not only helps to reinforce new procedures, but also helps to keep your teams connected. As **Liesa Spring** with partner agency, [Trillium](#) said, “Many of our participants have been feeling very isolated so having the ability to connect with team members weekly to even just say, “hi” is something they look forward to and creates some stability in these weird times.”

Brenda Kim, coach and trainer in Microsoft’s Supported Employment Program, with [Highline Achieve](#), elaborated on the how and why of keeping the job coaches looped into communication.

Brenda’s tips are:

- “Include coaching agencies in correspondence when sharing all core and important information that your supported employees would be impacted by.
- When there is a scheduled team meeting, send meeting invites to both your supported employee and their coaching agency/job coach. Pro tip: coach participation in such meetings can be a reasonable accommodation in compliance with the ADA.



- Discuss any projected changes to protocols in the workplace and job tasks or assignments that may impact the supported employee with the coaching agency staff, first.
- If it appears the tasks or role of the supported employee will change due to new safety protocols or there is a change in ways your company does business, reach out to the job coach to discuss your supported employee's strengths and interests.
- Share your company's safety plan with the coaching agency and include them in discussions around:
 - Health Attestation
 - Infection Control: PPE Procedure, Requirements, Protocols, & Social Distancing Plan
 - Contact Tracing Plans and Notifications
 - Infection Reporting Protocols
 - Testing Requirements and Reporting
- Share materials with your Supported Employee's coach ahead of the meeting so that they can review the material with the supported employee ahead of time.
- Create written and video materials with universal design principles in mind, to make the materials as accessible as possible to the broadest audience."

With these words of wisdom about the importance of communication, connection, and thinking outside the box, we are confident that we will build back better with a diverse and sustainable workforce after COVID-19 is in the rear-view mirror.



Stay tuned for the next Newsletter: Summer 2021

For questions or additional information, please contact Gillian Maguire Austin Landon, and Lizzie Gilmore, at [**supportedemployment@microsoft.com**](mailto:supportedemployment@microsoft.com).