

Strategies to Support People with Developmental Disabilities and Brain Injury to Achieve Goals Through Small Business Ownership

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month *and* Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness Month

National Community of Practice
(CoP) Webinar Series

March 12, 2024

3:00 – 4:30 PM ET

Thank You for Joining us for Today's National Community of Practice (CoP) Webinar

Our program will begin
promptly at 3:00 PM ET.

Until then, please sit back and
enjoy the music!

Maximizing Your Webinar Participation: Zoom Tips

- **Audio Settings:** You can change your [audio settings](#). You can also click the upward arrow (^) next to the microphone icon at the lower left of the Zoom window to change your speaker.
- **Accessibility:** Captioning and ASL interpretation are available during today's event.
- **Questions:** If you have a question for today's presenters, please type it in the Q&A box at any time during the presentation. Open the Q&A window, type in your question, and then press "send." We will respond to questions as time allows through the Q&A pod or live, during the Q&A portion of this event.

Agenda

- Welcome
- Speaker Introductions
- Introduction to Self-Employment by NASHIA
- Speaker Presentations
- Question & Answer (Q&A) Session
- Closing

Speaker Introductions



Maria Crowley
Director of
Professional
Development at
NASHIA



Jill Ferrington
Technical Assistance
Advisor at NASHIA



Aarti Sahgal
Founder and CEO of
Synergies Work



Angad Sahgal
Entrepreneur, Founder
of LetMeDolt



Kymberlee Baker
Entrepreneur,
Founder of
Kimmie's Heart
Cards

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA)

NASHIA is a nonprofit organization created to assist state governments in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs of individuals with brain injury and their families.

Support States.

Grow Leaders.

Connect Partners.



NASHIA Provides



**Resources
and Leading
Trends**



**Training and
Professional
Development**



**State and
Partner
Connections**

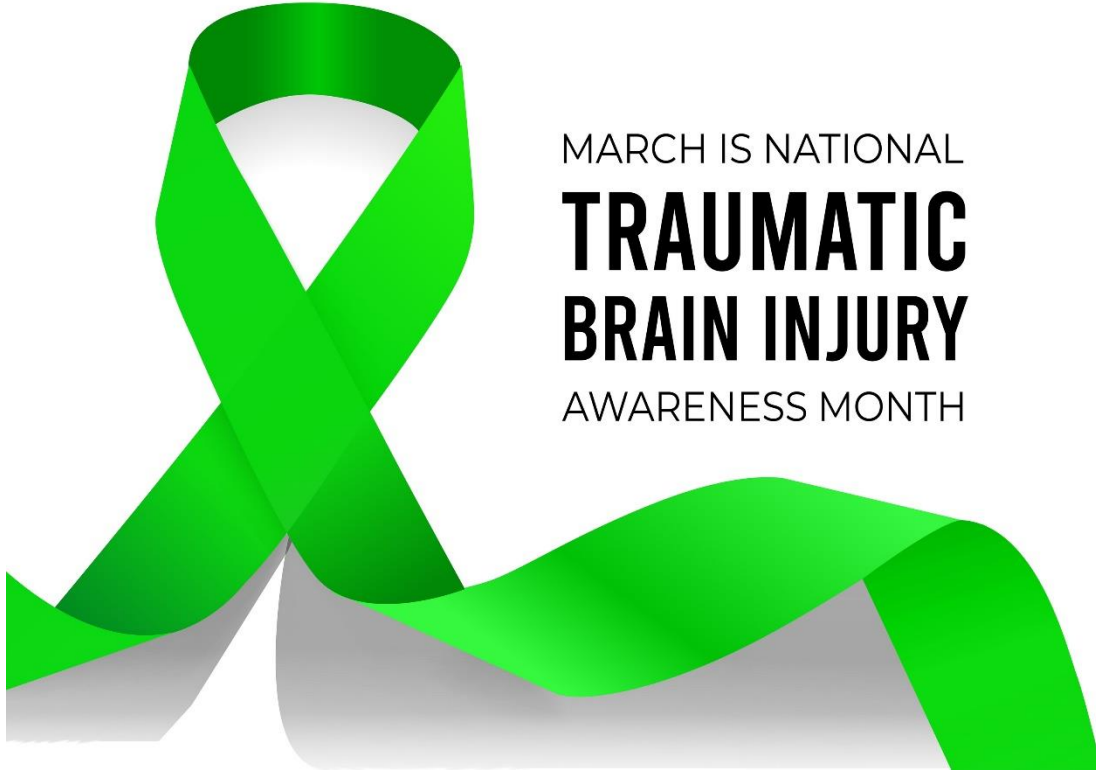


**Technical
Assistance**



**Federal
Advocacy**

March Awareness



MARCH IS NATIONAL
**TRAUMATIC
BRAIN INJURY**
AWARENESS MONTH



Credit for the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month graphic:
Jamila Rahimi, Art Enables studio in Washington, D.C.

Today's Topic (A Variety of Terms)

- Small Business Owner
- Entrepreneur
- Microenterprise
- Self-Employment
- Sole Proprietor

In other words...
EMPLOYED

Why Self-Employment?

- Flexibility of scheduling
- Control over work environment, coworkers, and collaborators
- Opportunity for career development, success, asset building, and self-sufficiency
- Allows fluctuations in income for those receiving SSA benefits
- Reduces transportation and accessibility issues
- Earn higher hourly wages
- Experience positive social and psychological benefits associated with self-employment

Source: <https://tacqe.com/self-employment-for-individuals-with-disabilities-general-factsheet/>

Self-Employment Support from State Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

- **Mandatory, not optional**
- Employment outcome means, with respect to an individual, entering, advancing in, or retaining full-time or, if appropriate, part-time competitive integrated employment, as defined in [paragraph \(c\)\(9\)](#) of this section (including customized employment, self-employment, telecommuting, or business ownership), or supported employment as defined in [paragraph \(c\)\(53\)](#) of this section, that is consistent with an individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Source: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-III/part-361>

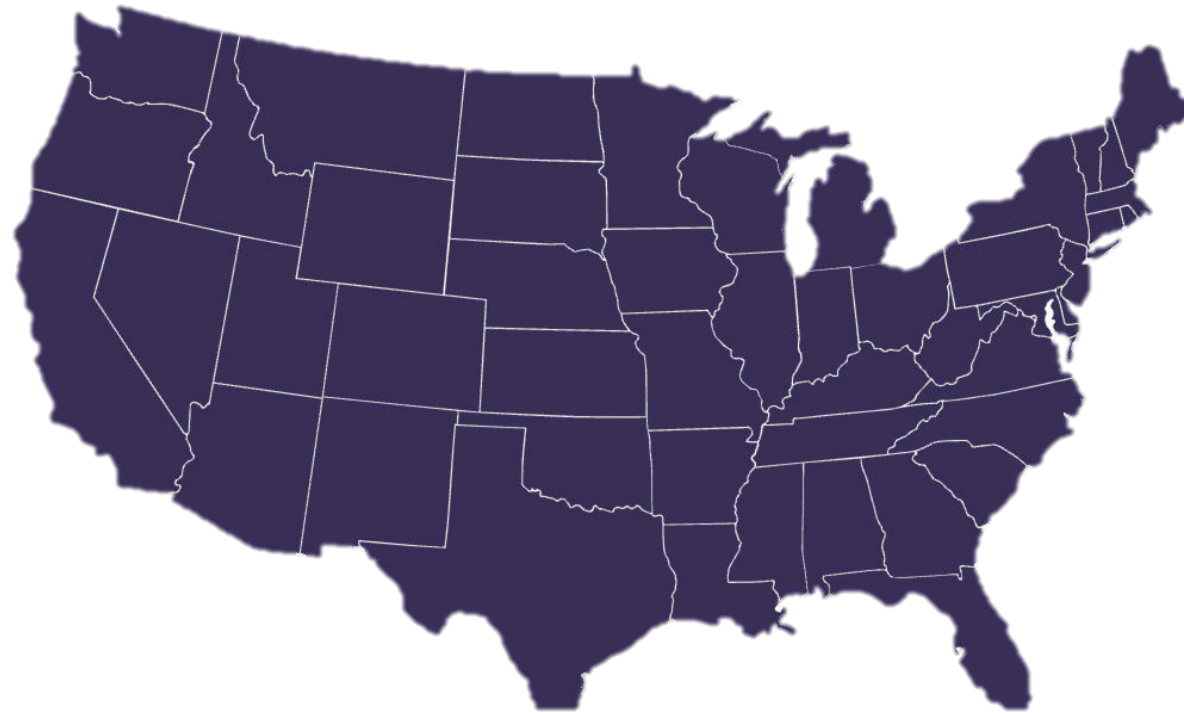
Center on Self-Employment

POLICY

Policy Map 

Source:

<https://centeronselfemployment.org/>



Percentage of VR Participants Exiting into Self-Employment Nationwide

20%

Source: Hansen, Kathryn, Keeton, Beth, and Jones, Joseph. 'Understanding the Provision of Self-employment for People with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program: A Policy Review'. 1 Jan. 2023 : 25 – 40.

Supported Employment or Self-Employment?

Both are possible!

Supported Employment

- Job match
- Intensive supports (job coaching) in the beginning
- Appropriate, ongoing supports (job coaching or natural supports)
- Job modifications, including assistive technology

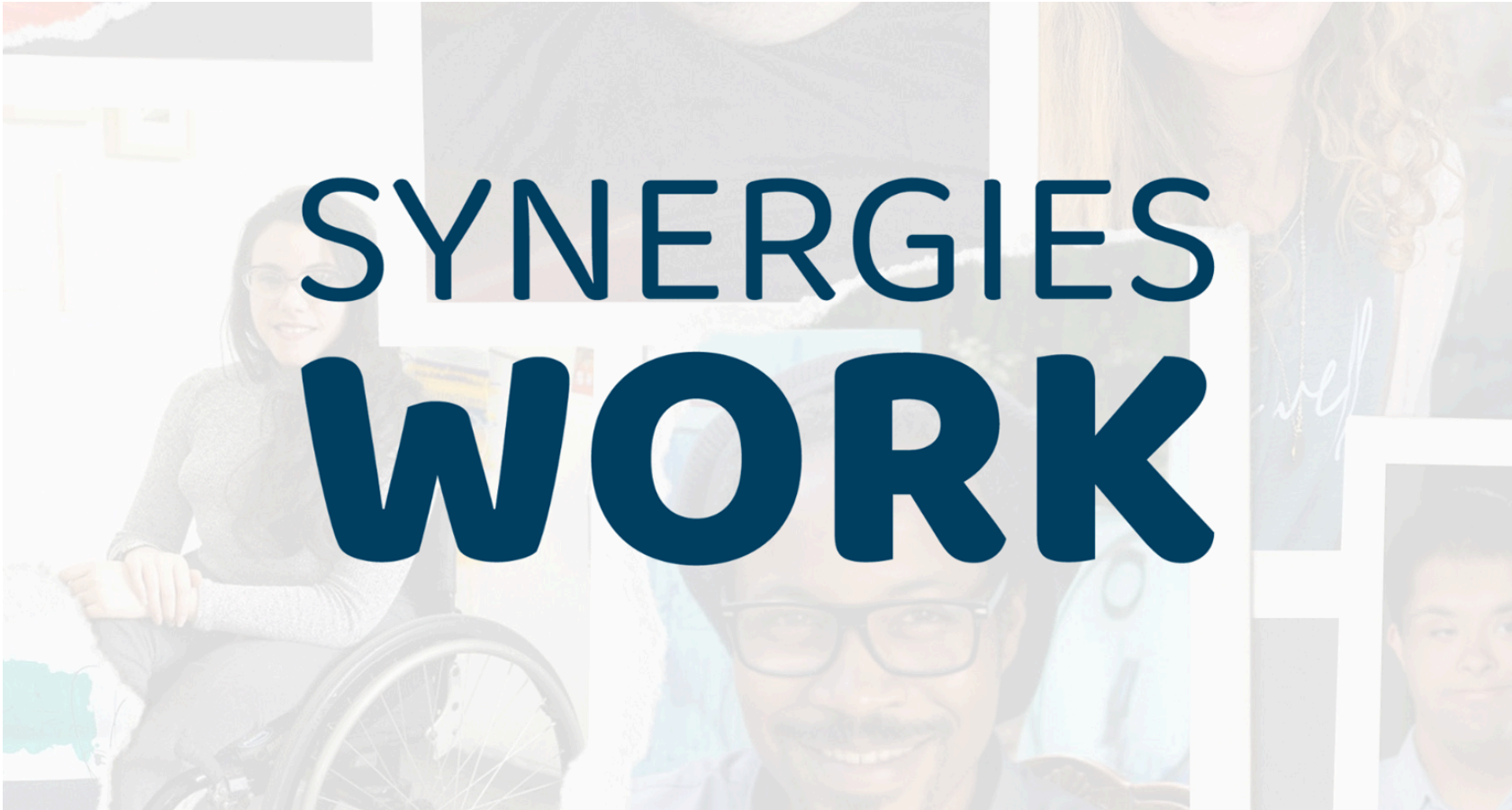
Self-Employment

- Working for oneself rather than working for a specific employer who pays them a consistent salary

Strategies to Consider

- Ask for a VR counselor who understands or specializes in self-employment
- Ask for help in the process
- Look into your state's Home & Community-Based Services Waivers
- Get connected with supports from a provider offering innovative solutions

Igniting An Entrepreneurial Movement



SYNERGIES WORK

**Building one world
where people with
disabilities belong.**

We are the largest startup hub for disability-led businesses that serves over 300 founders through our pre-incubator, incubator, accelerator, and venture hub programs.

A Tale of Two Worlds

People with Disabilities

- **Limited opportunities and choices:** Challenged by the soft bigotry of low expectations.
- **Success is measured at every point:** Any success is scrutinized and compared to the achievements of others.
- **Effort is not valued:** Any struggle is attributed to the disability and implies that you are not smart or talented enough.

People Without Disabilities

- **Abundant opportunities:** Established and clear paths for careers, opportunities, and passions.
- **Failure is an opportunity for growth:** Multiple chances to try and fail with built-in societal safety nets.
- **Difficulty & overcoming struggle is applauded:** The harder something is, the sweeter the reward.

A Personal Mission

**Beyond Inclusion:
Led by and With,
Not for and To**



Disability & Entrepreneurship

- Employed workers with a disability are more likely to be self-employed than those with no disability.
- Innovation is rooted in inclusive design- from electric toothbrush to Voice To text.
- The next wave of entrepreneurial innovation is from diverse disabled founders.
- Economic Impact of inclusive design & consumer power of persons with disabilities cannot be ignored.
- **Yet, there are no disability employment statistics specific to entrepreneurship.**

Where are Disability Led Businesses?

- Nearly all businesses in the US are small businesses.
- There are **32.5 million** small businesses in the US.
- **99.9%** of businesses in the US are small businesses (businesses with fewer than **250 employees**).
- Small businesses account for **64%** of new jobs annually and every year, they create **1.5 million** jobs in the US.
- Over **8 out of 10** small businesses have no employees.
- Entrepreneurs with disabilities have unique advantages.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/small-business-statistics/>

Why Entrepreneurship?

- “It’s given me a drive, a purpose. I feel fulfilled when I get up in the morning.”
– **Brandon Cantrell**, Owner of Brandon’s Crochet Shop
- “Being an entrepreneur has allowed me to be my best self without having to be at the mercy of the ADA or the able-bodied world. I’m my own boss and decide my own future.” – **Madeline Smith**, Owner of Blind Bear Designs
- “After graduating with a degree, I still could not find options for employment. This is the most accomplished I have felt in a longtime” – **Joshua W.**, Founder of Handi Acc

Barriers to Entrepreneurship

- **Barriers to Education:** Education tends to be focused on limited skill development, no clear career paths, and higher education is often extremely limited.
- **Barriers to Health:** Choices limited by health due to factors such as risk of illness, losing insurance, and physical limitations. Requiring the entrepreneur to sacrifice their health in order to work or pursue new opportunities.
- **Barriers to Finances:** Lack of opportunities towards saving and earning. Limited capital to launch ventures. Forces entrepreneurs into labor-intensive industries.
- **Barriers to Networks:** Often have no interaction with the larger business' community. Lacking entrepreneurial guidance. Segregation by socializations.

Synergies Work: IGNITING A MOVEMENT

Nurturing the Grassroots: By nurturing disability-owned small businesses, we change their long-term trajectory and help build sustainable success.

Building Collective Action: By partnering with disability and business organizations, we create an inclusive ecosystem where all founder thrive.

Creative Pathways to Capital: By creating pathways for direct investment in entrepreneurs, we spark the urgent and rapid shift needed to change the financial future for millions.



Supporting Founders at Every Step of Their Journey

- **Ignite:** Igniting Ideas Program
A scalable ideation program to help future entrepreneurs test their product-market fit & nurture early growth.
- **Incubate:** Incubation to Impact Program
An intensive incubator program to help founders grow & scale. The first and largest program of its kind.
- **Finance:** Synergies SEED Fund
Providing access to capital through a certified Community Development Financial Institution that focuses on disability-led businesses.
- **Sustain:** Community Hub
We provide ongoing support to our entrepreneurs through our online Community Hub - a virtual hub that provides founders with ongoing education, resources, and a community to support them on their entrepreneurial journey.

DIVERSITY OF DISABILITY

Self-Identified Disabilities Among Our Founders

- 56% Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)
- 6% Mobility
- 24% Sensory
- 12% Mental Health
- 2% Other

46% of our founders are people of color

- People of color are up to 2x as likely to have a disability

54% of our founders are women

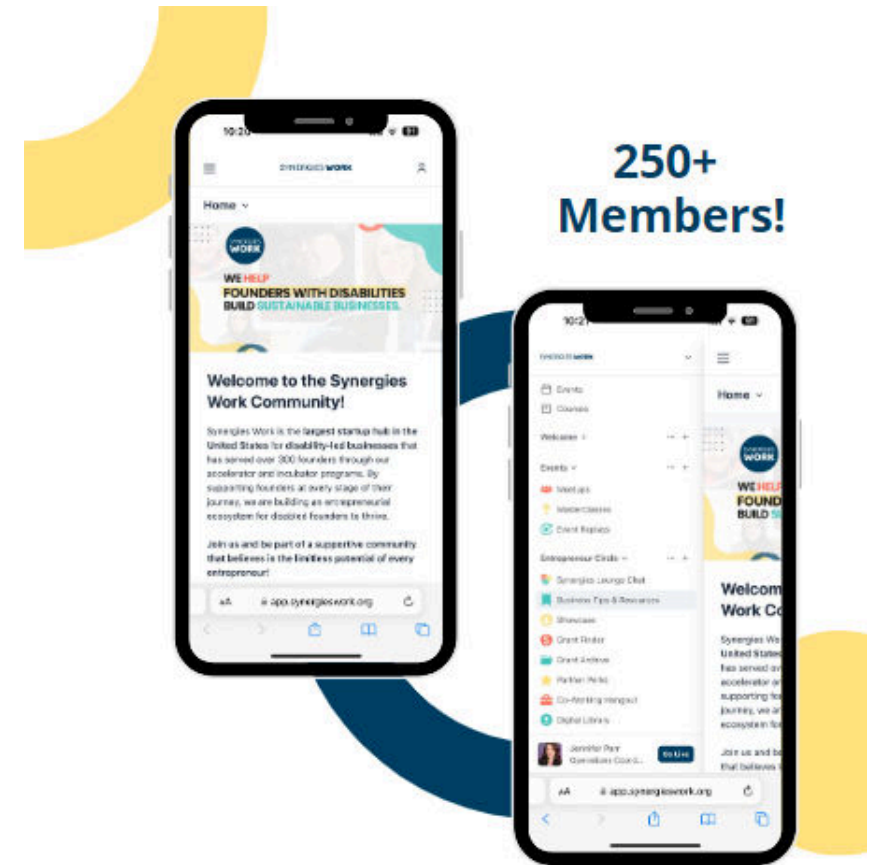
- Women are 27% more likely to have a disability than men

Nurturing Economic Independence

- **\$11,528** Average first year revenue after program completion
- **42%** of founders expect to reduce their dependence on public benefits
- **1.5** Average number of hires per company after 24 months in addition to founder
- **29** New Startups Launched in 2023
- **78%** of founders report revenue growth within 12-months of program completion
- **83%** of founders report making significant progress on their businesses through our programs
- **88%** of founders feel more confident and prepared as business owners after completing our programs

Community Hub

Synergies Work is a free online platform that provides the support you need to launch and grow your business. We guide founders through every step of their journey by providing guidance, funding, coaching, and connections with other disabled founders.

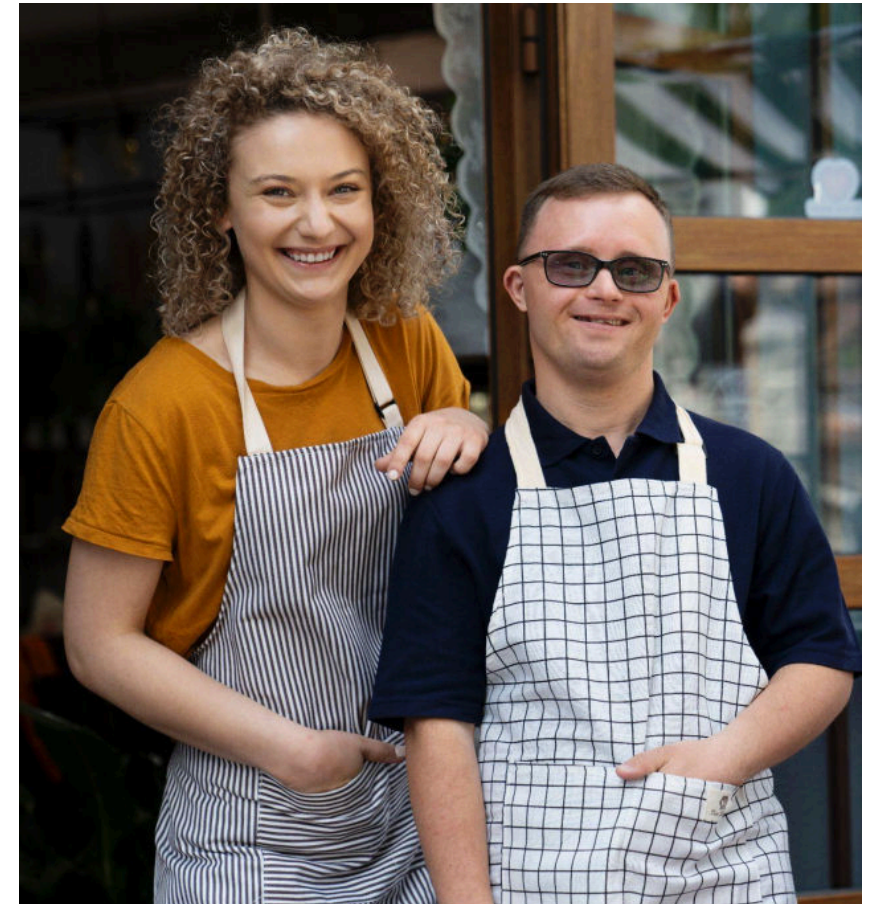


Synergies Market

Synergies Market is an innovative online platform that showcases the unique products and services of disability-owned businesses, connecting them with a broad audience of consumers and corporations. As a centralized hub, it fosters an inclusive commercial environment, championing disability entrepreneurs and their ventures.

“The opportunity to sell in a free marketplace is wonderful. Being promoted by other businesses helps expand our market outreach and continues to open doors for Joe that we would not have had otherwise.”

- Poppin Joe's Gourmet Kettle Korn



Synergies SEED Fund

Empowering Disabled Entrepreneurs Through Inclusive Financial Solutions

Synergies SEED Fund is dedicated to addressing the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities. These challenges include limited access to capital, barriers to financial services, and insufficient support networks. Our vision is to bridge these gaps by delivering specialized financial solutions, personalized advisory services, and comprehensive training programs. We aim to equip entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the business landscape successfully and with unwavering determination.

First Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund in the nation to support economic mobility of persons with disabilities through entrepreneurship.



EDDIE Awards

First Awards for Disability-Owned Businesses

The EDDIE Awards are the first awards in the United States celebrating the innovative business leaders within the disability community who are helping build a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem and inspiring the next generation of persons with disabilities across the world. (Entrepreneurs Dedicated to Diverse and Inclusive Excellence)

70+ Applicants across the USA

200+ Guests from across the USA

Live Streamed nationwide



Meet the Team



Aarti Sahgal
Founder & CEO



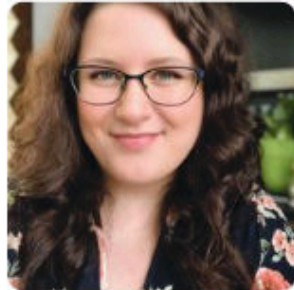
David Eckoff
Operations Director



Paola Blanco
Program Manager



Madeline Smith
Social Media
Manager

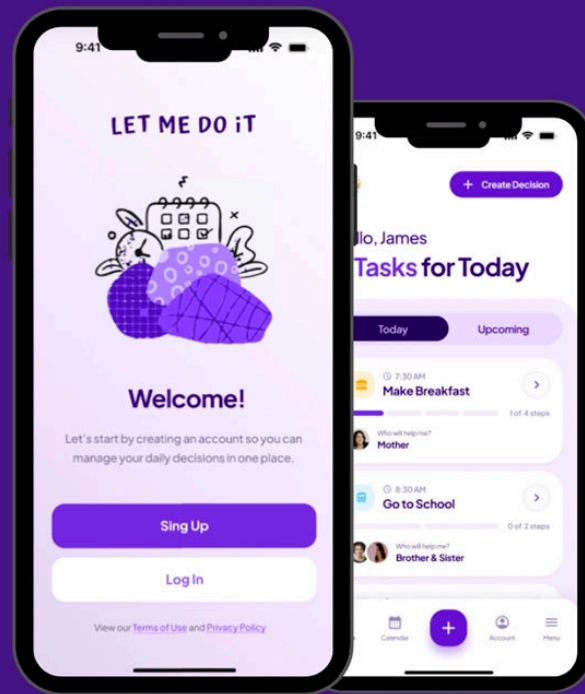


Jennifer Parr
Marketing Manager

Partner with Synergies Work

- Phone: (404) 491-9549
- Email: synergies@synergieswork.org
- Website: www.SynergiesWork.org
- Join our community at www.app.SynergiesWork.org

Empowering Independence



LetMeDolt

Angad Sahgal

I Am Not Broken. I Do Not Need Fixing.



- Student at Georgia State University (GSU) – Inclusive Digital Expression and Literacy (IDEAL) program
- A black belt in karate
- Avid Soccer fan
- Georgia Youth ambassador for Supported Decision Making

Decisions Made by the Person and Not for Them

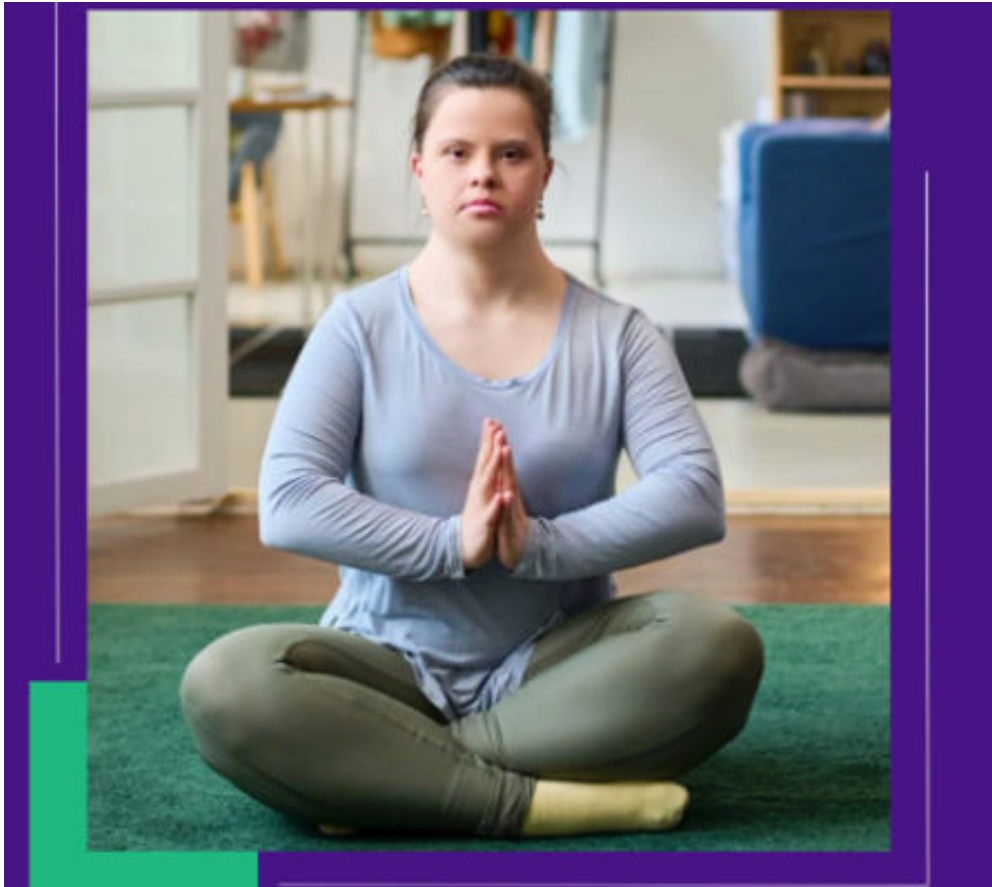
- **Cause**

- Misguided perception of limitations.
- Systemic disregard of potential of people with disabilities.

- **Effect**

- Exclusion from social, civic and Economic engagement.
- No choices, no right
- No independence

Bridging the Autonomy Gap



My Voice. My Choice.

Empowering Independence



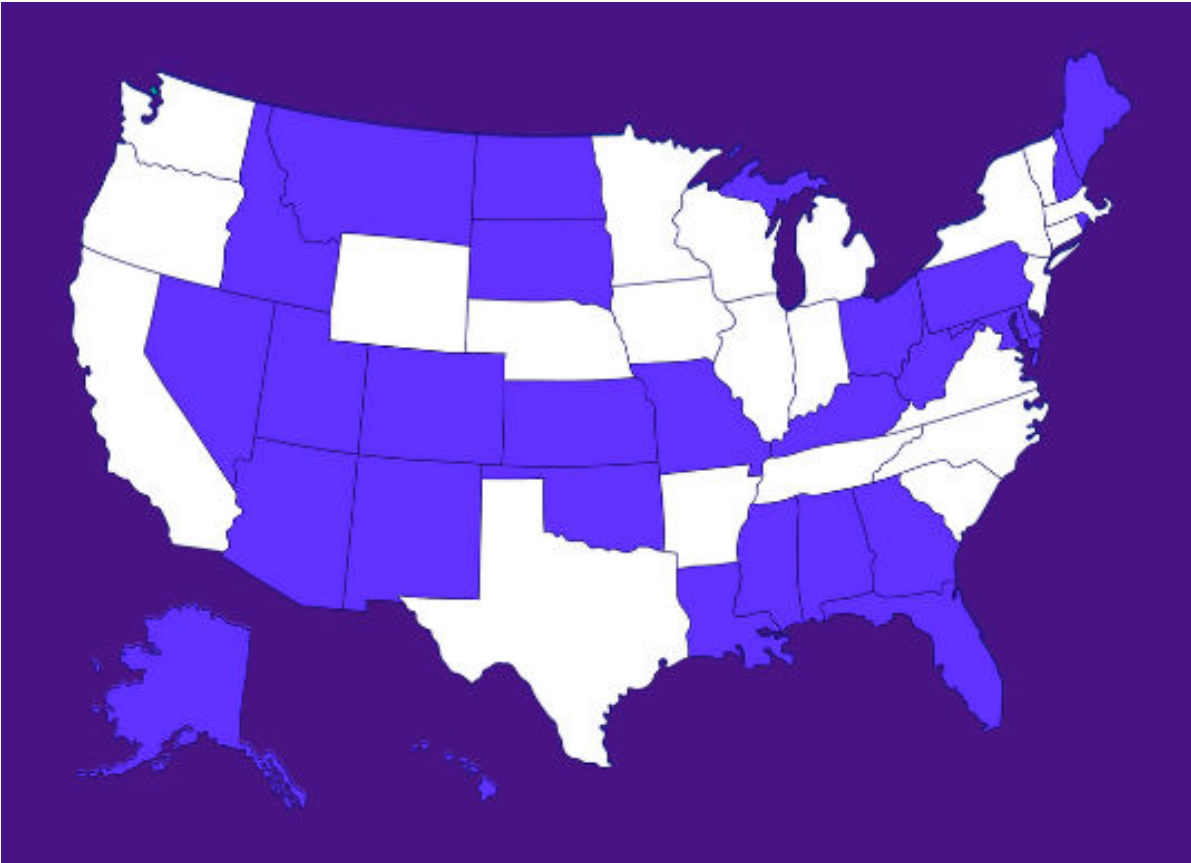
Structured activity flow, enabling user driven customization, managed by the user & their support network.

I can add decisions and decision steps.

I can add decision aids which can guide and help me.

I can add people who can help.

Our Superpower



7 million people with disabilities

28 million caregivers

3 University systems (Georgia State University, University of Wisconsin–Parkside, and Iowa State University)

4 National disability organizations (Synergies Work, National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC) Network, Center on Youth Voice, Youth Choice (CVYVC), World Institute on Disability (WID))

2 State disability organizations (Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD))

LetMeDolt Platform



**Raising Awareness for
Supported Decision Making**

Meet the Team



ANGAD SAHGAL

Founder

Letmedoit.org
Junior at Georgia State
University Youth
Ambassador



AMIT SAHGAL

Co-founder

Previously Global Director,
Strategy at The COCA-COLA
CO



VINAY PANJABI

Co-founder

Previously Head of
Engineering at an AI powered
Fintech Startup



The Time is NOW

- “... Learned from Angad’s success and making it an opportunity for more people”
 - Joe Uhl, Vice President, Intuit, as well as a mentor to Angad
- “LetMeDolt is innovative & intuitive. It is a rallying cry for people who have often be relegated and overlooked.”
 - Dana Lloyd, Program Director, The Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO)
- “LetMeDolt can make me ... more independent”
 - Adam Kettani, Intern, Project Search, Self Advocate with Autism
- “LetMeDolt would help Adam have everything at his fingertips.”
 - Gabriel Del Bueno, Adam’s mom and caregiver

Connect with Us

- Angad's Email: angad@letmedoit.org
- Amit's Email: amit@letmedoit.org

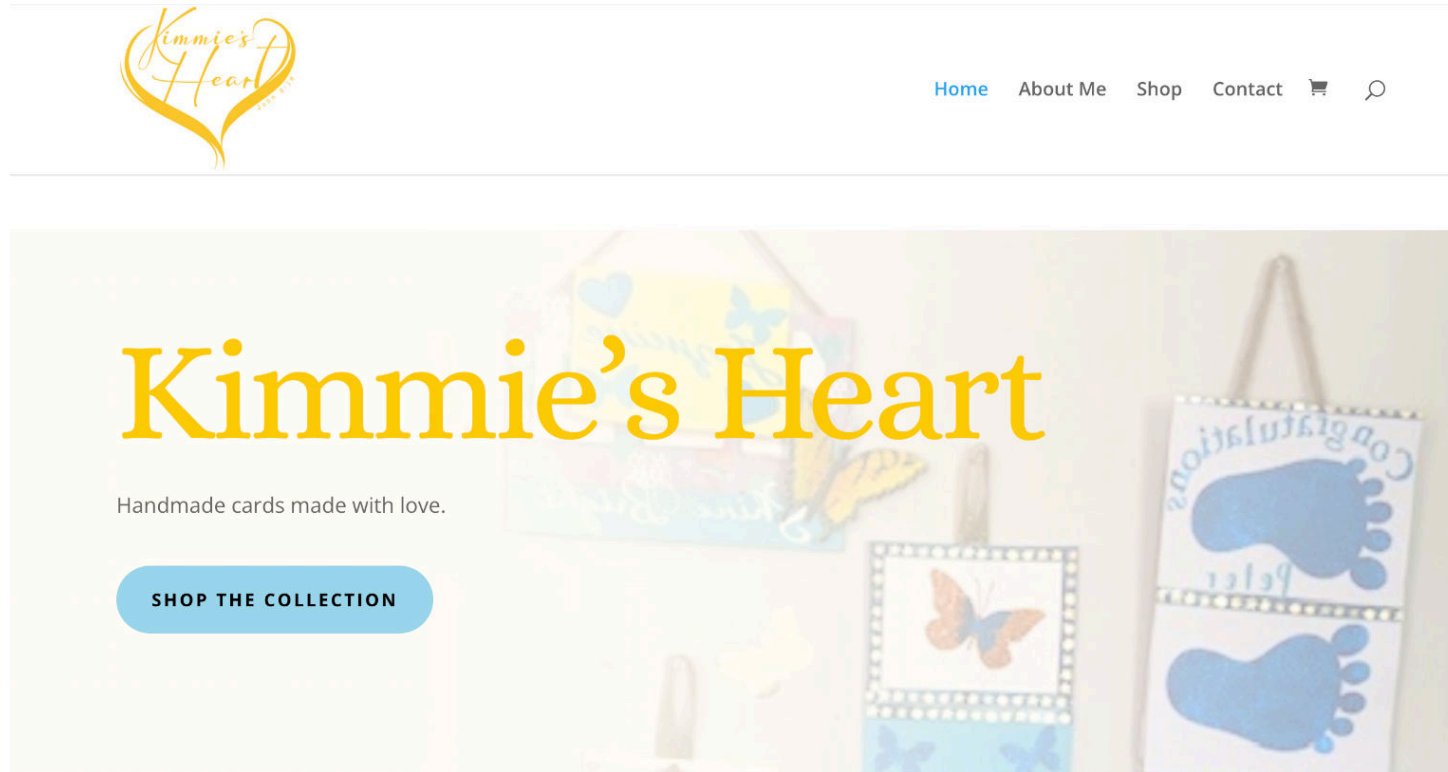
Meet Kymberlee Baker

Entrepreneur,

Founder of Kimmie's Heart Cards



Kimmmie's Heart Cards



Website: <https://kimmiesheart.com/>

Q&A Session

- Let's hear from you!
- Please type a question in the Q&A pod and we will do our best to answer.



Upcoming Webinar

Engaging Diverse Communities through Financial Education and Empowerment

Tuesday, April 16th, 2024

[Register Here](#)

DETAC Contact Information

Email: AoDeploymentTA@gmail.com

Website:

<https://aoddisabilityemploymentcenter.com>

DETAC Publications:

<https://aoddisabilityemploymentcenter.com/detac-publications/>

On-Demand TA Requests:

<https://aoddisabilityemploymentcenter.com/on-demand-ta-requests/>



thanks for
stopping by!