



COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

The DSP Chronicles



Zoubir Bittout

At A Glance

Name: Zoubir Bittout

Age: 49

Home: Cherry Hill, N.J.

Position: Direct Support Professional

Where: Bancroft

Number of People He Supports: 6

Key Quote: *"The men I support teach me a lot every day. What you see is what you have. We complain about the simple things that bother us. They are grateful for everything, never complain, and teach me life lessons about humility and humanity, two values we tend to lose in today's world."*

How a Colleague Describes Him:

"Zoubir is very hard working, knowledgeable, a team player, full of compassion and empathy, and he understands the importance of our work in the industry – a manager's dream employee."

– Jeff Kueny, Program Manager & Zoubir's supervisor.



Zoubir Bittout:

Veteran DSP Called 'A Dream Employee'

By TOM KING

There is a very special Direct Support Professional (DSP) working at Bancroft in Cherry Hill, N.J., helping support six men who live in two townhouses (three individuals per house), a man with 19 years under his belt as a DSP, a man named Zoubir Bittout who is called a "dream employee" full of compassion and a role model unlike others.

Let's meet this fascinating 49-year-old native of France, born of Algerian parents who moved to France to escape the strife of Algeria. Zoubir was born and educated in France. He came to the United States in 1991 and became a U.S. citizen in 2008. His mother, four sisters and two brothers still live in France.

"Zoubir is very hard working, knowledgeable, a team player, full of compassion and empathy, and he understands the importance of our work in the industry. A manager's dream employee," says Jeff Kueny, a Bancroft Program Manager and Zoubir's supervisor.

And there's more from Kueny about his DSP. "Zoubir is a great guy who is always looking out for the best interests of the men he supports. He is the guy who thinks things through thoroughly to make sure we aren't missing a detail that may throw a wrench into a new plan. He's the guy who keeps the men moving, keeping up with their responsibilities and introducing new things for them to try."

Zoubir's life as a DSP began when he formed a neighborhood volunteer group in Paris to help the kids who needed help with life to keep them away from drugs and crime and into homework, recreation, creating a soccer league and helping them find jobs. After high school he went to college and earned a degree in Special Education – "Diplome d'etat d'education specialise" -- to put it in French. He began working with children with autism of pre-school age and then at-risk youth.

Then he became involved with the International Language Exchange and accepted what was to be a one-year job at Bancroft that turned into two years. And he never returned to France. "I liked working at Bancroft and I really fell in love with the United States and was granted a work visa and started working toward my citizenship."

"My passion is this work and every day is challenging for me and for the men I support," Zoubir says. "I love human contact and I am passionate about making life better for people. This job is not for everyone, but if you are dedicated to improving the lives of others, if you love working with people and enjoy being challenged, then the rewards are priceless."

Zoubir and his wife have two children, a son 17 and a daughter 11. That's his hobby away from work – the kids – and soccer is close behind. His wife teaches foreign languages.

He works the 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. shift Wednesday through Friday at his group home and a long shift on Saturday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The six men he supports range in age from 23 to 48.

Here is how Zoubir describes himself: very compassionate, humble, a good listener, and very patient.

Enter Jeff Kueny again. "Many times throughout my work week I'll be reminded of how compassionate Zoubir is. Just a few weeks ago I noticed one of our men with a brand new pair of sneakers. I complimented him on his new sneakers and, for the sake of small talk, asked him where he got them. He said, 'Zoubir gave them to me.' This particular individual does not have much family and earns very little money. Zoubir will often help him out however and whenever he can. In fact, every few months it seems like this person benefits from Zoubir's charity and compassion," he said.

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If you would like to nominate a Direct Support Professional to be profiled in *The DSP Chronicles*, please send your correspondence to Tom King at tkwrites1021@gmail.com. Please briefly explain why you are nominating this person to be featured.

The Job, The People & More from Zoubir Bittout

Describe your primary responsibilities and your current job: “I provide direct care and support in the daily life of persons we serve. I assist with daily living skills, training toward achieving goals, dispense medications, take them to medical appointments, provide counseling, encourage community inclusion and social activities, coordinate different aspects of each person’s life -- such as vocational work, medical, residential, family relations.”

Describe the types of supports you provide for your clients and how many clients do you support and in what setting? “I work residentially with six clients who live in two townhouses (three individuals per house). They are adults ranging from age 23 to 48. They each have their own bedroom and the setting is very pleasant. This type of setting favors the community inclusion that we all wish for those we support. I provide support in areas such as recreational activities, daily life skills, promoting independence, responding to medical needs, contact with families, counseling, and socialization.”

Tell us a little about the people you support: “I work with individuals with developmental disabilities. Some have autistic tendencies, some are diagnosed with PTSD, others with schizophrenia. Some are referred to as high-functioning and some may need more assistance in completing their daily life skills. In my program, some of the individuals are more independent and do not require a high

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Beyond his DSP duties, Kueny uses Zoubir as a mentor for new hires. “Whenever a new person joins our team I’ll make certain they spend most of their orientation and training directly with Zoubir. He has years of experience to draw from and is willing to share his experiences to build their confidence and abilities,” he said.

In 2010 Zoubir began taking College of Direct Support (CDS) courses and lessons. He says this made a huge difference in his life. “I’m gonna be honest with you – I was a little bit burned out and



Zoubir Bittout working on the CDS in his office.

level of supervision, and so they are able to stay at home without staff supervision for a certain period of time (one hour to two hours). That gives them a sense of autonomy.”

What is the most challenging part of the job?

“There are a few – not feeling supported or appreciated by people in higher positions, not being heard, the low wages and altering and changing the opinions of people in the community about the work we do and the persons we support.”

What is the most enjoyable part of the job for you?

“Seeing the individuals I support grow and increasingly become independent. I love being a part of their lives, respecting them for who they are. Being able to earn their respect, trust and learn from them and find humility and humanity in each one of them, as we tend to lose these two values in today’s world.”

my battery was dying. The CDS was like jumper cables for me. Sometimes we get so busy that we lose track of what we are doing and get stuck in the routine. CDS helped me step back and get refreshed and is helping me figure things out better.”

And he added: “The curriculum helped me regain strength and belief in what I was doing and how worthy it is. That’s very important.”

As we said -- a very special DSP!

The DSP Chronicles

This publication introduces you to Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) from around the country and chronicles their stories as they go about the important work of direct support. They discuss the job: the challenges, the success stories, how they work with those they support and the unique ways they get the job done. DSPs are America’s quiet and unknown heroes. Their dedicated and hard work improves the lives of those they support. Many work more than one job. They are devoted to the DSP profession and to those they serve.

The DSP Chronicles are archived on our website at www.collegeofdirectsupport.com and also on the website of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals – www.nadsp.org. If you would like to nominate a DSP to be featured, please contact Tom King at 865.659.3562 (toll free) or email him at tkwrites1021@gmail.com.



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