



Communications Office
News Release

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VR Helps Man with Autism Realize Dream of Opening Business

LYNN HAVEN, FL – Ian Barbour always knew he wanted to run his own business, but it wasn't until he started working with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) that his dreams became reality. Ian, who has autism and other developmental disabilities, was determined to make something of himself.

When Ian paired up with his VR Counselor, Pamela Cramer, they worked together to find a career specifically tailored to his needs. Pam referred Ian to a company that helped him find the perfect business to launch and created a business plan to help him be successful. They decided Ian's best bet was to open his own vending machine business. That's when everything began to come together.

Ian's dad, Michael Barbour, says, "VR helped plan the business and coordinate the purchase of the vending machines." He went on to say, "They also helped with the initial start-up costs, products and marketing."

Pam says Ian was always determined to get his business off the ground from the day she met him, "He knew from the start he wanted to do self-employment. He came to us when he was still in high school, and after years of working on a plan he was able to open his own business."

In January 2012, after four years of hard work, Fresh Foods Vending was born. Ian works closely with his dad to keep multiple vending machines up and running in the Lynn Haven area. "VR actually purchased three vending machines for him," says Pamela. "Because of his disability, he wouldn't fit into a typical 8-5 job, so to see Ian reach his employment goal and be successful after all this time is great."

Ian is in charge of restocking and collecting the money from each vending machine twice a week. He's also trying to come up with new ways to expand the business. His dad, Michael Barbour, said, "The goal is to save and buy additional machines to grow the business."

Pam knows the key to Ian's success was his determination, and the many people who believed in his dream. "He was successful because he had a good support team – his parents, support coordinator, and friends." Ian also is quick to give credit to those who rallied around him and says that Pam was extremely friendly and helpful in getting through the processes of opening the business.

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Now, each day Ian wakes up and works at his dream job, one that makes him feel happy and fulfilled, “I love it!” Ian says. “It’s cool!”

Florida’s Vocational Rehabilitation program is committed to helping people with disabilities become part of America’s workforce. Our employer-focused website, **FLJobConnections.com**, allows businesses to search at no charge for employees who are ready to go to work, as well as to post available jobs. VR has 80 offices across Florida, and last year helped 6,071 Floridians with significant disabilities find or keep a job. For more information about VR and its services, call (800) 451-4327 or visit **Rehabworks.org**.

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REMINDER FOR MEDIA--When reporting on stories about people with disabilities, remember to use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability. For example, use phrases such as "people with disabilities" (instead of "the disabled") and "person who uses a wheelchair" (rather than "wheelchair bound"); and “people with a mental illness” (rather than “the mentally ill”).