

## “Southeast Health Group launches Vocational Program in 2014”



We all need a reason to get out of bed in the morning.....and people living with severe mental illnesses are no different.

Going to a job or a volunteer position provides structure and helps us find meaning in our lives. It is a way to make a contribution to the world and become part of a community. At work, we can feel challenged, learn new things and take pride in accomplishments.

### Meet Norlin Smith.

Norlin has been a steady volunteer at the SOS Center on East Olive Street and for Sage Nutrition in Prowers County for over 20 years, working in the kitchen and assisting the staff. He was honored for his dedication to service last August by the Prowers County Commissioners. Norlin lives independently in Lamar where two of his sisters look in on him from time to time.

“Norlin hasn’t always done this well,” said Jackie Brown, Norlin’s sister and Integrated Care Director at Southeast Health Group. “He has had a lot of challenges over the years, but since he has committed himself to volunteering at Sage, he has really come into his own.”

Norlin appreciates the kindness of his co-workers and he says his work keeps him from being bored. “If I couldn’t go to work, I’d just smoke all day long,” said Smith. “You don’t eat if you don’t work.”



“People always comment about Norlin’s smile and his attitude,” said Brown. “He is dependable, and he cares. The rest of the staff at Sage treat him well, and treat him with respect. They look out for him, making sure he eats and takes home a meal. Many times they will pick him up or give him a ride if he needs it. Norlin has a real sense of being needed and he believes he is important to the work efforts. We all need to feel important.”



### T-shirt Palace is open for business.

Southeast Health Group is planning to help others like Smith in 2014 through a new vocational program starting at the T-shirt Palace in Rocky Ford. “When the T-shirt Palace came up for sale last year, we jumped on the opportunity,” said JC Carrica, Chief Operating Officer at Southeast Health Group. “As a business, the T-shirt Palace has been serving the Arkansas Valley for 30+ years. We wanted to keep it running and be able to provide job opportunities for people with disabilities.”

SHG hired Joni Stevens to manage the shop, and train employees how to use the screen printing and embroidery equipment. “The T-shirt business provides a whole host of job training experiences, from customer service, to computer skills, to print production,” said Carrica. “These are skills that can transfer to other job settings and lead to full-time employment.”

The vocational program began on January 14<sup>th</sup> and will run two days a week in Rocky Ford. It is open to people receiving treatment at Southeast Health Group who are interested in learning job skills. For more information about the new Vocational Services, contact Southeast Health Group at (719) 384-5446.

