

## PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF FOR JESUS CARBAJAL

“I’m in a better position than even one year ago,” says **Jesus Carbajal**. He is part of a **job program with the U.S. Air Force in Utah**, where he is interning to perfect his engineering skills, with an opportunity to join a master’s program in Mechanical Engineering.

Carbajal has been diagnosed as a high-functioning autistic. He says that other than some social awkwardness and discomfort with making eye contact, people wouldn’t realize he has a disability.

NMDVR helped the Raton, NM native with planning, financial assistance, and just letting him know what options were out there for him. “There was a bit of a struggle, and they showed as much support as they could,” he says. He finally found his place at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology in Socorro.



“This was the place that allowed me to be a professional nerd,” Carbajal says of his time at NM Tech. “It was not easy, but it was a great program. I was always confident I would finish my degree.”

Then the shut-down of Covid epidemic made it more difficult to find career opportunities, “But I pressed on because doing nothing was going to amount to nothing.”

His persistence made the difference, along with the willingness to venture into the unknown by taking an out-of-state job with the military. “At first I was scared about it,” Carbajal recalls. “It’s a big change, but **things won’t happen unless you put in the effort to change**. I don’t have any regrets about my decision. The program on the base has been very useful and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“He has grown tremendously,” says Carbajal’s former rehabilitation counselor, **Casilda Gallegos**, now a program manager with NMDVR. “I’m so proud of his ability to not only finish his degree, but to get a job and begin a career, living on his own.”



Carbajal’s advice for others with similar challenges? “**Never give up. The perseverance will pay off,**” he says. “People don’t tell you about all the struggles and uncertainty. Despite that, the worst thing someone can do is just give up on their aspirations if they don’t see results immediately. **If you keep walking forward, your efforts will speak for themselves. It’s not about if something is easy, it’s about if it’s worth it.**”

The 27-year-old’s future may involve a career in HVAC system engineering, a master’s degree, or even a PhD. “Whatever it is I want to do in the future, I hope never to be bored of it,” Carbajal adds.