

## TURNING CREATIVITY INTO A CAREER

**Danni Andrew** has been an artist since she began painting at age 14. Into adulthood, she developed a penchant for the fiber arts and became adept at tie-dying. At the same time, she was a professional seamstress.

“So I blended the two, and began making wearable art,” Andrew says of her venture, Danni Andrew Creates. “I started dying my own fabrics, getting into designing a little bit.”

The self-proclaimed child of the 1970s explains, “I take clothing that doesn’t have much life left in it—maybe like a jeans skirt—and embellish it. I recycle clothing, making it look new again. It’s not totally a ’70s vibe, but it has a vintage look to it.”

Dealing with bipolar disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) kept Andrew from turning her calling into a successful business. That is, until she applied for services from the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Danni’s sewing machine had recently died, and she couldn’t afford a new one. **NMDVR was able to secure funding for equipment, fabric, and more.**

“They set me up with not only the equipment I needed, but also a business coach,” the lifelong Farmington resident recalls. “That helped get me into the business mode. I can get scattered easily. Working with the coach got me organized. I was able to focus. The key to having your own business—especially working from home—is being organized.”

Andrew says she no longer “freaks out” if something doesn’t sell. It’s just a matter of finding the right outlet. If there isn’t much interest in one of her creations at a farmers’ market, then maybe Etsy, the online craft marketplace, is where to sell it.



*Danni Andrew's stand at the Durango Farmers Market in Southern Colorado in 2022.*



*Danni Andrew with her creations at the Downtown Makers Market in Farmington, NM in 2022*

**She credits NMDVR with helping her take Danni Andrew Creates “from a somewhat part-time, weekend hobby to something that will take me to retirement and beyond.”** In fact, during the short time Danni was being interviewed for this article, she received two orders over her phone.

Ready to expand her business, Andrew is moving into working with other kinds of fabrics and making artistic hats, purses, and other accessories. And she is working on creating a better system for her tie-dye, as she has begun dealing with arthritis.

Danni has also written several books about living with bipolar disorder.

**“Be open to the possibilities,”** she advises anyone who isn’t sure where to begin when it comes to vocational rehabilitation services. “Have an idea of what you want to do, but be ready to pivot a little bit. Listen to people who have been doing this: the counselors and coaches. Let them do their jobs. I had blinders on (at first). But **everything evolved into something much better than what I had in mind.**”

Danni Andrew’s website is [www.danniandrewcreates.com/](http://www.danniandrewcreates.com/).

*The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps eligible individuals with documented disabilities find suitable employment. Vocational rehabilitation is a voluntary program supporting people who want to work. With a long history of success and proven methodology for making the best fits, NMDVR is committed to helping participants thrive in their communities. For more information, visit [dvr.state.nm.us](http://dvr.state.nm.us) or call 505-954-8500.*

*The Vocational Rehabilitation program receives 78.7% of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2023, the total funds awarded is \$22,066,600. The remaining 21.3% is funded by state appropriations and transfers from the Commission for the Blind and Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.*

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