

## NMDVR HELPS CHAD “HONE” HIS CAREER

While watching the History Channel reality program “Forged in Fire,” Chad Thompson got an idea. He had always had a fascination with swords and knives and thought he might be able to turn that interest into a career.

The obstacle was the disability the 48-year-old has had since he was the victim of a random shooting in 1999. He had worked with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) previously, and the agency had helped him find work at a Carl’s Jr. fast food restaurant. But an incident there one day rekindled his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) anxiety.



“It took me many years to come to grips with what happened,” says Thompson. “I don’t have panic attacks like I used to. Now I feel stronger, so I want to better myself. I’m not a sit-at-home type.”

This time, NMDVR was there to support his training to become a bladesmith, paying for travel expenses so he could attend the [Bill Moran School of Bladesmithing](#) at Texarkana College in Texas. “It’s the best school in the United States for bladesmithing,” Thompson says. “It seems niche, but everybody uses knives and there are big knife shows where people sell their stuff.”

He also has dyslexia, so book learning has always been a challenge for him. This hands-on education has proven to be a good fit. “I can make any sharp edge, and doing knives is so detailed,” he says. “Once you do that, you can do other machinist work (like hammers and other tools).”

Thompson is currently an American Bladesmith Society apprentice. With further education and practice, he’ll become a journey smith then a master smith. “Then you charge thousands of dollars for a knife!” And it’s not just a dream. The Los Lunas resident is working to make it happen. Through a connection made by NMDVR, he is working on a business plan. He already has a logo and business cards and expects to launch in early 2025. Until then, with NMDVR’s assistance, he has more long trips to eastern Texas to sharpen his skills and earn certifications, and more tools to buy to fill his workshop.



“The counselors have been so wonderful,” says Thompson about his experience with NMDVR. “They’ve really helped me out. Everything they said they could do, they have done.”

Of his burgeoning future, Thompson says, “I’m super stoked. People talk about how good it used to be. But my better years are still in front of me.”

He adds people should not be afraid to reach out to agencies like NMDVR for assistance. “Everybody has a disability in some way, and everybody needs a little help. Don’t be scared to ask. There’s help out there!”

For information about NMDVR programs, contact your nearest office. There are two dozen locations across the state: [dvr.state.nm.us/locations/](https://dvr.state.nm.us/locations/).

*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](https://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 2024, the total funds awarded is \$24,698,300. 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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