

BUILDING A NICHE FOR HIMSELF

While stationed in Okinawa, Japan serving in the U.S. military, Michael Waring had a deck with an ocean view. He designed and built wood couches and benches just for himself, but friends who saw them wanted to buy similar furniture for their own spaces.

So began the idea for [Mustang Home Goods](#)—bespoke, made-to-order, quality wood furniture based out of Waring’s garage in Albuquerque. “I consider my furniture to be usable art,” he says. (In Navy and Marines lingo, a “mustang” is someone who started enlisted and then commissioned as an officer.)



After living in 12 other states and three foreign countries, Waring came to New Mexico to work at Sandia Labs. The 70+ missions while serving in Iraq as a combat medic took their toll though, and his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and panic attacks made it difficult for him to work in an office setting.

He recalls walking into a New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation office and saying, “I heard you can help me. I don’t know what you can do, but I’m a disabled veteran.” The agency assisted Waring with what he calls “key investments at key moments.” NMDVR provided money to purchase the wood to make demo models of his furniture, as well as marketing materials and a professional canopy he uses at art shows.

Of the help from NMDVR he says, “It turned the corner from ‘I’ve got ideas’ to ‘I’ve got these incredible products.’” NMDVR continues to assist as the 42-year-old looks to open an industrial shop and retail space and hire a handful of employees.

Waring has difficulty concentrating and says, “It takes effort to interact with the world.” That’s one reason he envisions the team working for him being “other vets who need a safe, healthy space to work, where we can support each other.”

He has recommended NMDVR to others and counsels them to advocate for themselves. “There are some really great people at DVR. They care and want to see people succeed. Be persistent enough to let them help you.” Waring adds, “It takes time and effort, but it’s worth it in the end.”

For information about how NMDVR can help you achieve your employment or self-employment goals, contact your nearest office. There are two dozen locations across the state:

dvr.state.nm.us/locations/.

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps individuals with 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 or call 505-954-8500.