

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Helps Hoosiers Get Back to Work

In 2011, Patty Kinney and her husband Charles were running out of hope of keeping their farm. This, after a farming injury and subsequent surgeries left Mr. Kinney with limited use of his right arm. After nearly 40 years, they had already given up raising quail.

“The work load after Charlie’s accident became too great for him, and we had to let our contracts go,” said Mrs. Kinney.

This was before the Kinneys contacted Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), an FSSA program within the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS). VRS helps people with disabilities like Mr. Kinney prepare for, obtain or retain employment. Eventually, the Kinneys’ call for help ended up on the desk of Hope Hoar-McCoy and her team at the VRS office in Huntingburg, which covers Crawford, Dubois, Martin, Orange, Perry, Pike, Spencer and Warrick counties.

Hoar-McCoy referred Mr. Kinney for a rehabilitation engineering assessment of his farm through AgriAbility, a program that assists farmers, ranchers and other agricultural workers with disabilities. Based on the recommendations from the farm assessment and working closely with the Kinneys, Hoar-McCoy and her team were able to provide necessary accommodations for Mr. Kinney, including steps to access his grain bins, a platform lift to assist him with entering the cab of his combine safely and an automatic roller tarp for his grain cart to allow Mr. Kinney to continue to farm his 316 acres of soybeans.

“I can never express to you the gratitude I feel to see my husband get back in his combine without me climbing behind him, holding and pushing him up a ladder,” said Mrs. Kinney. “That was just one of the things that gave my husband his pride and independence back.”

“The Kinneys participated in the process by assisting me in finding vendors that agreed to work with the state’s payment system, obtaining bids for services, billings and helping me as a counselor understanding the necessity of the farming equipment,” said Hoar-McCoy. “It truly was a team effort on all fronts, with my secretary, Lucinda Hurst, processing all the complex fiscal documents and my area supervisor, Reuben Fakes, making sure policies and procedures were followed resulting in quick approval from management.”

“I appreciate Hope’s hard work as a VR counselor on this case. The team did an outstanding job of helping Mr. Kinney to continue to work on his farm,” added Kylee Hope, Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services. “In the past, reaching out to rural areas has been difficult for VRS, but having success stories like the Kinneys’ is a great way for us to showcase our services as we try to reach new audiences.”



Charles Kinney reaches the cab of his combine using the platform lift he received with help from VRS.

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