

Paul's Story

By Paul Nichols

In 2002, the work center as we knew it, closed down. I started at the work center over twenty years ago. When it closed, I felt great! Because I knew it wasn't fair to just be stuck here all day. We needed to do something more with our lives besides working production. The good thing about the workshop was it taught you to be responsible for yourself.



A “work center “is also known as a Sheltered Workshop. That is a place where groups of people with disabilities work. Vermont has closed all the Sheltered Workshops. People with disabilities are found jobs individually in community settings.

I talked to 3 self-advocates who worked at the work center before it closed. I asked them how they felt about the work center closing and about how things are going now.

They all said they are earning more money and meet new people in the community all the time.



One self advocate said “I enjoy going out, I like my job better and I like the hours better.” He doesn't miss the work center but he misses the staff that worked there.

When the work center closed, Laurie said to her friend, “I’m free.” She loves her job at VNA. She just received her third award for excellent work at VNA.



Sean, on the other hand, felt “terrible” when the center closed. He misses working there and he misses the staff. But he loves the job he has now. “People are nice, calm, and courteous.”

What can we learn from Paul?



Why do the self advocates feel good about the work center closing?



What causes some folks to feel terrible about the work center closing?

How do you stay in touch with old staff or coworkers?

And you?

