

VR Success Story: From Severe Symptoms to Self-Employment Success



IDVR's Mission is to prepare individuals with disabilities for employment and career opportunities while meeting the needs of the employers.



Kimberly's SUCCESS STORY

Location: Salmon, Idaho
Occupation: Business Owner and Operator
Business: Lemhi Vittles
Industry: Freeze Dried Foods



"I have had a wonderful experience working with IDVR. They have been one of the few positive support forces I have had since my life had to change due to circumstances beyond my control." - Kimberly, VR Customer

- Kimberly applied for VR services in September 2022, after being referred by the small business development center to obtain support with her goal of starting her own business and re-entering the workforce.
- After contracting COVID-19, Kimberly's chlorine allergy worsened, causing severe allergic reactions in environments where chlorine-based cleaning products were used. This made it challenging to find a workplace that wouldn't trigger these reactions. This resulted to her being laid off from her previous job in 2021 until she received medical clearance regarding her allergy and the severe reactions she experienced from even residual chlorine residue in the workplace.
- Through VR provided counseling and guidance, Kimberly and her VR Counselor agreed upon proceeding with her goal of self-employment to support her business idea of product development and sales of freeze-dried foods, which would also address her need for a workplace that is chlorine-free. In February 2023, VR supported Kimberly to expand from one freeze dryer she owned prior to her VR case, to six total freeze dryers. The assistance from VR enabled her to expand her ability to produce enough quantity of freeze-dried foods to start marketing her product for sale and developing contracts with vendors to sell her products.
- Kimberly also provided significant backing to her business through reinvesting money she was earning, as well as small business grants obtained, small business loans, and crowdfunding, all of which helped to support rent for her workspace, other necessary equipment and supplies, food product, packaging materials, business insurance, advertising, and more.
- Once she had increased her capacity for production, Kimberly started seeing an increase in sales for her products and continued to see her sales increase by the spring of 2024 as she signed more vendor contracts with small stores.
- In the fall of 2024, she also secured additional contracts that increased the number of vendors selling her products to 39 in Idaho and Montana, in addition to direct sales through her online website.
- Kimberly has been able to engage in meaningful work that allows her to control her environment and not risk severe allergy attacks, which was a significant barrier to her employment goals. She is now continuing to grow her business, which provided more financial stability to support herself and her family.

"Working with Kimberly has been an honor. She came to me with a well thought out plan and turned it into a reality. She has promoted and grown her business from an idea into something that is picking up steam. Because of her tenacity, I know her business, Lemhi Vittles will continue to grow and flourish." - Traci Bell, VR Counselor

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