



Business Spotlight: Garvin County Community Living Center

Garvin County Community Living Center (GCCLC) is a nonprofit social service agency that provides residential and vocational opportunities for individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities. Its residential program offers individuals a safe and comfortable home environment with trained staff available to assist with daily living skills such as meal prep, laundry, home maintenance, etc. Its staff is trained to administer medication and coordinate medical visits and health-related needs.

GCCLC was organized in the summer of 1982 by small group of community members including social workers from Pauls Valley State School, a local business owner, a community psychologist, a school teacher, an interested parent, and a lifetime member of our Board of Directors, the late Lou Hall. Cathy Cash became the administrator in August 1982 and is the current CEO.

In the early 1980s, Mrs. Donna Nigh, Gov. George Nigh's wife, petitioned the state legislature to allocate money to begin a community group home program. The first group home opened on Jan. 11, 1983, and was one of the first developed in the state. Mrs. Nigh was personally involved and was present for all three group home openings.

Initially designed as a grant program, the funding sources changed over the years from total state funds to the current state dollars plus Medicaid funding. In addition, GCCLC operates several businesses that help to generate income for the agency. The bulk of GCCLC's business earnings helps to pay the salaries of the 70-plus vocational clients served by the agency.

Presently, GCCLC serves 74 individuals in its residential and vocational programs collectively, with 49 served by both program areas. We have 21 locations, including homes and vocational locations. GCCLC currently employs 74 people, but are looking to hire additional employees.

Several years ago, state and federal policies dictated that the vocational clients would be employed in non-segregated environments. "In a small community such as ours," says Cash, "placing individuals in competitive employment is challenging, so we did the next best thing: We began to develop businesses. We started with Valley Laser."

Valley Laser sells ink and toner to the state of Oklahoma, employing 8 to 10 individuals to prepare orders, load products, and deliver them to various state agencies across Oklahoma. The business also sells to persons in the community at the state-approved price. Donna Courtney manages this business and can be reached at 405-238-3888.

Next, Valley Gifts & Awards (VGA) was developed. Located at 115 E. Paul Ave., VGA is a multi-faceted business. It looks like a fairly typical gift store, but you soon learn about the magic of its graphic design artist, Cyndi Mitchell, can perform.

"Her talent is extensive, and she will work with our customers to design personal gifts for a loved one or an award that recognizes competitors, as well as so many other items," says Cash.

Connie Smith manages the store and supervises the clients. Visit Connie for a unique gift or any of the many items in the store. Connie can be reached at 405-238-7500.

Recycling has been a project that GCCLC undertook early on in its vocational program. It has grown and changed with the changes in the industry. The Pauls Valley Recycling Center was built with donations from the community and is open to the public 24/7. GCCLC also runs routes and collects cardboard from local businesses, which our clients bale and prep for sale.

Next, GCCLC has the Valley Market, managed by David Berrie. The outdoor seasonal market begins the year selling onions and potatoes and then moves on to spring vegetables and flowers, trees, roses, and shrubs. It includes a greenhouse where workers start some spring plants. GCCLC's clients help the market grow about 500 fall mums sold during the fall season, along with hundreds of pumpkins and gourds. The year ends with fresh-cut

Christmas trees for sale. All this and a beautiful gift shop filled with seasonal items, gifts and goodies, fresh eggs, and Legacy Beef every other Saturday.

Lastly, GCCLC manages a small homestead with various animals that individuals feed and care for daily. It's called Little Farm and includes chickens, rabbits, quail, goats, sheep, miniature ponies, and alpacas. "We've been fortunate to receive animals others could no longer care for, and we love them," says Cash. "They are handled daily and are very sweet." Often, a petting zoo is set up for community events and activities at the market or just for fun with GCCLC's clients.

As you can tell, Garvin County Community Living Center is deeply embedded in our community. Without the involvement of citizens, it would have never gotten off the ground.

"We greatly appreciate the people who have supported our businesses, provided contract work for the workshop clients, answered our request for grant funding, and so much more," says Cash.

GCCLC was selected as the Corporate Citizen of the Year in 2011. "We enjoy participating in activities sponsored by the Pauls Valley Chamber of Commerce," says Cash. "When asked, we volunteer to engage in an event, host a booth, or participate in holiday activities. And we involve our clients so they can feel like a part of the community they live in. Inclusion is extremely important to our overall mission and the Chamber of Commerce gives us many opportunities to be involved."