Terry Miller receives Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Terry Miller had a successful construction business in West Chester, Iowa, until a debilitating condition forced him out of business. He had to sell his tools and equipment and his employees lost their jobs.

For a time his recovery became his sole focus and Terry's dream of having a business of his own seemed to slip away. Then Terry began the long and difficult climb to regain all that he had lost.

"I wanted to be self-sufficient and be able to provide for my family and have a better life," Terry said.

Roger Halvorson and Dick Grose with the Iowa City Office of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Kochell Weber-Ricklefs and Kim Barber, Business Development Specialists with the Iowa Self-Employment Program – a collaborative program offered by the IVRS and Iowa Department for the Blind, stepped in to help Terry achieve the goal of rebuilding his business.

Terry was a great candidate for Iowa Self-Employment.

"I had been in business before and I knew the business I was going in to," he said. "I wanted to start my business again and work in the field and do things positively."

Now, one year later he is back in business with Miller Construction in Washington, Iowa, doing carpentry, painting and restoration services. In addition, Miller is a Peer Support Specialist Trainer through the Iowa Peer Support Academy and teaches classes on self-advocacy, peer support and successfully living with a disability.

He credits IVRS for helping him to get back on his feet again.

Terry said, "IVRS was able to provide matching funds that allowed me to purchase the tools and equipment to make my business successful."

Terry Miller (center) received the 2009 Entrepreneur of the Year Award on Oct. 9. From Left: Roger Halvorson of IVRS, Terry Miller and Kochell Weber-Ricklefs, Iowa Self-Employment.

Terry Miller received the Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the Iowa Commission of Persons with Disabilities on Oct. 9 at the State Capitol. This award is presented to an entrepreneur with a disability who has displayed outstanding leadership, technical skills in their field, and the initiative necessary to successfully own and operate a for-profit business.

The nomination for Terry read, "Terry Miller displays exemplary character, self-awareness, and gratitude for the things that he has accomplished." He is noted for his persistence and his unwillingness to allow his disability to keep him from achieving his goals.

Terry's advice to other entrepreneurs?

"Don't give up," Terry said.

He added that launching a business takes proper planning – and Iowa Self-Employment assisted him with that process.

"Make sure to do the extended business plan because as you work on it you realize things you need to positively affect your business," he said.

To learn more about Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Iowa Self-Employment, visit our web site at www.ivrs.iowa.gov.