

CONTACT: Dustin Barnes
(501) 682-0180
dustin.barnes@arkansas.gov

Barber Pursues Dream in Spite of Health Battles

LITTLE ROCK – Corey Slater spends seven days a week working on his feet. It does not bother him, though, because he is living out his dream, doing something that he loves. He is the owner of A-State Fades, a barbershop in southwest Little Rock.

“I have three boys. I was just cutting their hair at the house, and one time, my cousin came to the house and said, ‘You might as well get into school. You know a little bit about it.’ I enrolled in school and took off from there,” Slater said.

Slater finished Washington Barber College – an accomplishment all by itself. But Slater managed to earn his license while enduring intense pain as a result of kidney failure. He has been on dialysis for nearly twenty years. He goes in for treatment three times a week.

“I come here [to the shop] from dialysis, and I sit here until I feel better. If I don’t feel well, then I go home,” he said.

Slater, 38, has not allowed his condition to stop him. In fact, his tenacity in the midst of his personal health battles is what led Slater to learn about Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. He heard about the division’s services and how ARS could help him toward his ultimate goal: owning a barbershop.

“After talking to my classmate and my instructor, I called ARS, and they got me connected with [Field Counselor] Stacy Gravett, and we set up an appointment. She came down and told me everything she could do for me. After that, I went after my dream,” Slater said.

After Slater’s meeting with Gravett, he created and submitted a business plan to the agency’s Small Business Program, a program in which Jeff Jackson oversees. This service allows clients with entrepreneurial pursuits to seek self-employment as a realistic goal.

“Stacy was impressed by Slater’s work habit, his determination to make it work, and his story. I make sure the counselor and I stay compliant. I read the business plan. I thought it was a great idea, but you know a barbershop is a barbershop. It takes a lot of passion,” Jackson said.

Jackson admitted he was not totally sold on Slater’s idea. The building Slater selected, according to Jackson, was not the best looking facility. Jackson recounted his initial assessment of the building.

“I looked at it, and I said ‘Wow! I’m not sure you’re going to be able to get six chairs in here.’ [Slater] explained where the chairs would be, where the sinks would be, and where the clients would sit. The building was in terrible shape. It was an abandoned building. He said he would repaint. He said everything he would do. He said it with so much passion,” Jackson remembered.

Slater’s passion and the revisions to his business plans are what sold Jackson and led to the creation of A-State Fades.

“I left saying ‘We’ve got to fund this guy.’ He showed us some of the things he had purchased already. He had already invested in it. It’s good to see a client who’s already invested in themselves. He called back a few weeks later for me to come out and look. He had already started painting,” Jackson said.

ARS helped Slater purchase equipment for his shop, which Slater installed himself.

“ARS didn’t give Corey anything. He worked for this. That’s what makes me happy – knowing that we were able to assist someone who deserved it. He really deserved it,” Gravette said.

Seven months as the owner of barbershop, Slater has welcomed two other barbers into his shop. He is living his dream and investing in his community.

“ARS really was a help to me, and I’m thankful that God sent me to them. God put us together, and we made this. As a team, we made it. They helped me with all of my equipment. They helped me with some of my mortgage. I tell everyone that comes in this shop that it is a blessing to me, and I have to keep blessing others,” Slater said.

Slater is spreading goodwill by helping other barbers get on their feet. He is also referring clients to ARS, making them aware of what the division offers people with disabilities.

“It feels really good knowing who Corey Slater is. Corey Slater is a father. He’s a husband. He’s a hard worker. He is on dialysis. He has not let his disability stop him,” Gravette said.

As long as his health allows him, Slater plans to be in his happy place – at his shop, with his clippers, doing something that he loves.

“Our motto is ‘We chop ‘til we drop!’” he said.

Click [here](#) to see pictures that accompany this story.

This is one of the many services provided by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), a division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education. ARS provides opportunities and accommodations for Arkansans with disabilities to work and lead productive and independent lives. To learn more information, visit us at www.ace.arkansas.gov or follow us on Twitter at @ARCCareerEd.

###