

Recycle Center Grows In More Ways Than One

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(L to R) Threshold Employees Chris Bullert, Rick Pillans, Nelson Jennings

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Mary Donaldson/KMXT

Threshold Recycling offers many more services to Kodiak residents than meets the eye. That's because about half of the staff at Threshold have disabilities or special needs in one form or another. Mary Donaldson has more.

Rick Pillans says depending on how you view it, everyone could consider themselves disabled. He says he considers himself disabled on some level, having diabetes and heart issues. But that doesn't stop him or any of his roughly 20 employees from running a phenomenal operation. Pillans says he's been the recycling plant manager at Threshold Recycling for about four years now, and says that since he's been collaborating with his staff and the public, things have really progressed for the operation.

(Pillans 2 :30s “…think we’re starting to get that.”)

Pillans says the amount of recycling the center does is growing about 21 percent each year. Last year they shipped out about one and a half million pounds of plastics, aluminum, paper and other recyclables. Then this year business took off. In July alone, they shipped out over one million pounds of goods. This month he predicts they will ship out five vans of recycled goods. With these large numbers, the staff at Threshold is definitely staying busy. Pillans says the most senior employee at the recycle center is 51-year-old Nelson Jennings, who has put in 16 years of hard work. Jennings says he likes working to earn a paycheck, but more importantly he enjoys his duties on the job.

(Nelson 1 :07s “…at the job here.”)

Twenty-six-year-old Chris Bullert is another employee at Threshold. Pillans says he did a complete 180 after entering the work force. Before, Bullert was shy and introverted, and living with family. Today he is able to work and live independently, riding the bus to and from work by himself, which he hadn’t done before. Bullert says he uses the money he earns just like anybody else.

(Bullert 1 :10s “…and recycling stuff.”)

Arne Tviet is thirty-four-years old, and says he has put in eight years of work at Threshold. He says he loves his job because it allows him to be responsible.

(Arne 1 :12s “…to pay sometimes.”)

Pillans says giving these guys the opportunity to work is paramount.

(Pillans 1 :29s “...is working very well.”)

Employing people with disabilities or special needs is

part of the business model that makes Threshold a successful operation, but more than that, it's gives them a chance to shine. Items to be recycled can be dropped off at their building located at 380 Von Scheele Way, or at other various drop-off locations around town.

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Mary Donaldson.

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