

Robert

When Robert walked into the Vancouver Island Vocational and Rehabilitation Services (VIVRS) offices in Nanaimo last fall, it was really a case of tackling first things first. Robert had holes in his shoes and, with winter coming, his counselor Bud Rowarth didn't hesitate.

"Bud took me right to Wal-Mart and bought me a pair of boots," Robert said. "After that, a lot happened in a short period of time. The people at VIVRS were great – they said they would help me and they did."

Robert, 54, had a host of issues that needed attention and that were looked after by VIVRS through the Community Assistance Program funded by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. He had an immediate need for new eyeglasses and dental work, and VIVRS arranged to have both those things attended to.

But Robert also has a number of long-standing physical disabilities that were causing problems with day-to-day living including plantar fasciitis, vertigo, osteoarthritis and hearing loss. He has difficulty walking short distances and standing still for more than a few minutes at a time. Though he has tried looking for work, he finds he hasn't received a warm reception from potential employers.

"Things can be very frustrating when you have a disability," Robert said. "I felt like I was getting more and more behind every month."

It became clear that Robert needed some permanent assistance in order to be able make ends meet and live as healthy a life as possible.

VIVRS assisted Robert with applications for disability assistance by applying for Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) status, but these were both initially turned down. Robert felt disappointed and frustrated, and wanted to give up the process, but VIVRS staff encouraged him to keep going. He appealed the decision and, after meeting with a psychiatric nurse who is qualified to assist with reconsiderations, had a positive outcome. He now has PWD status and receives the support he needs to meet his living expenses.

"Before I went to VIVRS, I had hit one dead end after another," Robert said. "I'm so glad I heard about them. I am very, very thankful."

