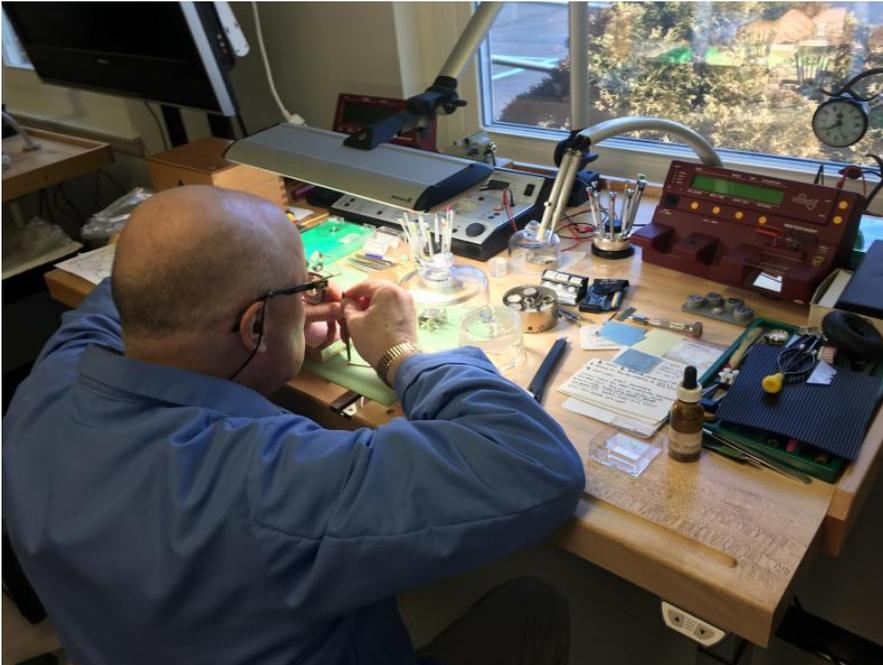




Odessa's Veteran Watchmakers Initiative to expand

By [NICK CIOLINO](#) · FEB 10, 2019



Jim Gardner repairs an old watch / NICHOLAS CIOLINO

The Veteran Watchmakers Initiative and its 16-month old Odessa Center for Horological Excellence are receiving a \$30,000 grant from M&T Bank just as its first class of watchmakers gets ready to graduate.

Former Coast Guard Member Jim Gardner is one of five

completing the program.

“This has been a great opportunity for me. I fell in love with watchmaking,” said Gardner. “I can’t wait to get out in the field and take advantage of it.”

The program’s chairman Samuel Cannan says his soon-to-be graduates are already receiving job offers from watch companies. And he says there’s a list of more than 400 veterans waiting to enroll in the next 20 classes.

“We have people that are waiting to come here from as far away as Texas,” said Cannan. “I actually have one in a wheelchair who is legally blind that I can train as a watchmaker if I can get him here.”

Cannan says his is one of four watchmaking schools in the country.

He says the new grant will go towards moving a building to sit next to the former American Legion Post 25 where the school is located and serve as a dormitory for up to eight students.

“I’m going to apply for the zoning and take that money—I’ve already got the estimates for the foundation to put the building on,” said Cannan. “If I get the zoning straightened out, I can have it here where the new c-box is sitting hopefully in the next few months.”

Cannan says there are other plans for expanding classroom space at the Odessa site as well. He also says he’s also looking to build a second Middletown location.

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