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Future Of Panhandle Area Sheltered Workshop In Question

Stanley. He may be Guymon's most familiar face. He lives and works at the Panhandle Area Sheltered Workshop...for now.

According to a story in the Guymon Daily Herald, the future of the Panhandle Area Sheltered Workshop (PASW) remains in question after the State has eliminated 100 percent of its funding.

"We don't know how to handle it," said Carol Batterman, PASW Director.

She said she doesn't know how to handle it because they did not expect the cuts to be so drastic. They had braced for budget cuts, but not elimination. Nearly twenty people are employed and 21 receive assistance as part of the Panhandle's program.

PASW received a letter late last month informing them of the cuts. The contracts being eliminated that affect Guymon and the surrounding communities are Sheltered Workshop, Community Integrated Employment and Assisted Living. The cuts were made due to budget shortfalls and the State not receiving enough money, explained Batterman.

"For our agency, this will cut 21 individuals and possibly close three areas," said Batterman. "These individuals will have no extra income or nothing to do during the day. The extra money that they make at the workshops help them to buy food, necessities and do recreational outings. Some of the individuals even need the extra income to help with rent and utilities."

At Guymon's agency, the Individuals do janitorial work, mow lawns, work at their thrift store and do many other jobs. Without PASW, these jobs and their homes would not be available.

"The cuts could put them out on the streets and on food stamps," said Batterman. "They will have no place to go. These men and women may not have any family to take care of them and we are their families."

Started in 1981, PASW has a family-like atmosphere. It includes sites in Guymon, Beaver and Boise City. Batterman explained that PASW has enough money to operate for a few months but she doesn't know when the cuts will actually take place, even though they are slated for Fiscal Year 2011.

"The staff at PASW are willing to take pay cuts and possibly keep jobs for our Individuals," Batterman said.

The cuts are not for certain until there is an appropriation from the legislature, but agencies statewide are being told to prepare for the worst.

"We have to be strong," Batterman said. "They need our help."

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