

# Local counselor, student overcome barriers to achieve goals

By DAVID DISHMAN STAFF WRITER Posted on Jul 27, 2015

Alex Pippins feels he is absolutely wonderful and he wouldn't have it any other way.

Keeping a positive demeanor at all times is important to Pippins. He wasn't always this way, but he chose to count his blessings and bless others rather than dwell on misfortunes life dealt him.

Pippins is diabetic and only has use of 80 percent of his right arm after a work accident in 1996. A high-school dropout, Pippins relocated to McAlester from Jacksonville, Florida almost two decades ago. He lived and worked in the area doing various jobs, but by 2008 he had hit bottom.

"I had \$50 and one outfit," Pippins said.

He was diagnosed with diabetes that year thanks to volunteer medical service provided by Dr. Larry Lewis at the Mercy Clinic. Lewis' volunteer work inspired Pippins and changed his life's trajectory. Pippins went to work to further his education in hopes of improving his personal career, and to help others with his skills in the same way Dr. Lewis assisted him.

"Dr. Lewis inspires me," Pippins said. "He used his license for 22 years at the Mercy Clinic. I'm going to use (my skills) to donate back to Habitat for Humanity.

"If you think the purpose of life is to serve yourself, you have no purpose — go help somebody," Pippins said. "I got that quote from 'Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2'. I love that movie, I've seen it a few times and I love that quote."

## Back to school

Pippins had to return to school in order to achieve his goals. He enrolled in the vocational rehabilitation program through the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services to study as a Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC/R) tech. Pippins attended the HVAC program at Kiamichi Technical Center before furthering his education at Oklahoma State University-Okmulgee.