

## It's a Family at VODEC



(Above L to R) Brothers Adam and Nick Doner show off their finished cable.

“We can always depend on the other to help whenever it’s needed.” says Nick Doner about his brother Adam. Both Nick and Adam work at the Council Bluffs work center. Nick also works at one of VODEC’s community worksites. When at the work center they work on all the jobs that VODEC offers and are the go to guys when it comes for someone needing help. “I help a lot with moving items and other tasks as staff needs me to.” says Nick.

Adam and Nick were adopted at a young age along with their sister into a family in Council Bluffs. There are a total of six children in the family and Adam, Nick and their sister have always had a great relationship with their other siblings. “Not only do I work at VODEC but I also help my brother with his snow removal business in the winter time.” says Nick. They both now live in VODEC residential homes and spend a lot of time at each others houses or at their parents home.

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## Gossip in the Workplace

by: Danielle Ferguson

*This article was created by Danielle Ferguson. She is an aspiring writer and wants to create a fun and professional workplace that she and others can enjoy. “Shhh, I’ve got a secret to tell you.” That is a common statement heard in many offices and work-*



(Above)- Consumer Danielle Ferguson

*places throughout the country and the VODEC work center is no different. What is different is that I am working on stopping it. I am a consumer at VODEC and participate in both the work center and residential programs. I want to create a professional work environment at VODEC and the VODEC staff is helping me with that process, but before I get into what we are doing to change things let me give you some background.*

Gossiping in the workplace is both unprofessional and disrespectful to not only the people you are talking about but also the people you are telling it to. Some of the biggest issues come with relationships between employees and when that relationship goes wrong or hits a bump in the road unfortunately those issues bleed over into the workplace. It seems that some would like to tell the secrets that were told to them in confidence just to hurt the person involved. Once this gets going on the work floor it spreads like fire and it’s then hard to focus on the job at hand. I have tried my best to stay out of it but it seems that the best way is actually to try and stop it from the beginning and that is the reason for this article.

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*This list reflects donations received between  
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### **It's a Family at VODEC**

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What the Doner bothers like most about VODEC is that they get to work on many different types of jobs throughout the day and week and it teaches them many skills that they will be able to take into a community job in the future. It is also a stable enviroment for them and since VODEC has many contracts there is always work to be done.

When asked what they like least about seeing each other everyday Adam spoke up and said, "He's crazy!" to which Nick responded with just a shrug of his shoulders. They said the hardest part is that they know what buttons to push with the other and that sometimes that can cause problems but at the same time Adam is the only one that can calm Nick down if he is upset and vice versa. They support each other no matter what.

VODEC has many family members on both the consumer side and the staff side. It is one of VODEC's



*(At Left L to R) Consumers Adam and Nick Doner work on a cable machine at the Council Bluffs work-center*

many goals to create an enviroment that fosters relationships between not only family members but also between consumers and staff.

If Adam and Nick had the opportunity to speak with a potential consumer and their family member they would tell them, "VODEC is very family oriented and to keep looking out of each other. Oh and work in seperate areas!"

### **From the Desk of the CEO Steve Hodapp**



Family is pretty important to me. I guess it is to you, too. Each of us has a place in our family and there is lots of literature about that, like whether you are first born, a sibling, the patriarch, the caregiver, and so on. I am fortunate to be part of a family. And my family knows no one gets to mess with my family.

I am also fortunate to be part of an extended family. I have a different dynamic with this family, a dynamic about which I am unaware of much literature. This extended family is comprised of lots of smaller families. And these smaller families share many of the same challenges and successes which make them all one family. I am blessed to have participated in some of all of them. For examples:

When I was asked to convert an Iowa residential care facility to a waiver home. I met individually with the residents' families to reassure them that services would not be interrupted, that the conversion would be seamless, and that it all would be handled with care and respect. Some of those were hard meetings with tears, anger and dismay. But I think the follow through brought me further into their lives.

When I was asked by parents to create a program for their kids graduating soon from JP Lord School with multiple and severe disabilities. As a group WE created a program to meet the specific needs they brought forward. WE found a location and it was staffed by caring people. Emotions ran high the evening of the open house when we rolled out ELM and again on the first day shaken by a misunderstanding by a civil servant. These extended family members earned a special place in my heart as they road this roller coaster.

I have to share that as I write this I am struggling a bit with my own emotions. As I recall these and more examples too numerous to recount here I have a lump in my throat, my heart is beating faster, and I just feel so blessed. How am I so lucky to be part of the extended VODEC family?

## **Gossip in the Workplace** by: Consumer Danielle Ferguson

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VODEC, like all workplaces, is a business and there needs to be a high standard of professionalism. Employees need to speak about work related issues during work and not bring personal issues or conflicts onto the work floor. I would tell others that if they want to spread rumors and not work then they need to stay away from VODEC because VODEC is a workplace not a social club. Whether they are at work or in a social setting please take a moment and read this article again before choosing your words and think about how they will affect those around you.

The VODEC staff is working with me on curbing the gossiping on the work floor. They are instilling with others that just like any job this one is not a place to spread rumors and needs to be treated as such. I really appreciate all staff is trying to do to help me with this process and this article is just the first step in creating a fun, safe, and professional work environment for myself and fellow consumers. I would like to end with this long standing quote. "If you can't say something nice. Don't say nothing at all." Thumper (Disney's Bambi).

*Youth fades, love droops,  
the leaves of friendship fall  
a mother's secret hope  
outlives them all*

## *Happy Mother's Day!*

*In honor of all our mothers  
and all of their hopes.*

## **VODEC Vikings Cheerleaders place 1st at Mid Winter Tournament in Iowa City**

In March the VODEC Special Olympic Cheerleading squad took the gold medal at the games in Iowa City.

The VODEC cheerleaders spent 8 weeks preparing for the Iowa City event. They spent their Sundays practicing and practicing making sure they got it right. Then they traveled the over 4 hours to get to Iowa City the night before. The girls spent the morning getting ready with glitter, makeup and hair and any additional finishing touches to stand out in the crowd.

VODEC staff member Rheanna Webber said about the team's coach Tammi Barber, who volunteers her time to coach and travel with the team, "I am proud to say I have known Tami and her father for many years and one day I just asked her a question about cheerleading and she volunteered right away to help and has even said that she may move away this year but will come back for the athletes come competition time."



*(Above)- Staff member Jennifer Koedem and VODEC consumer Richelle Dennis are ready to show off their cheerleading skills at the Iowa City event.*





## How to Enroll in VODEC Services

(Part 2 of a 2 Part Series)

by: Daryn Richardson

### The Application

Each person seeking services is given an information packet. This packet contains information on community resources, VODEC and a VODEC application. Different states have different applications and we will advise each individual on the application that is appropriate for them. We ask that all application material be complete. This helps ensure the best possible outcome for the persons seeking service.

### The Decision

Once an application is received by VODEC it is immediately sent to VODEC Services Manager that is responsible for making the decision on how our service can best serve the individual. The Manager may request additional information that is needed to make a determination. Once all relevant information is gathered the Services Manager relays the decision to the Case Management Professional and arranges the intake date. In rare cases, VODEC services may not be appropriate for an individual. Most often this happens because the needs of the individual are greater than what VODEC can provide or the needs are greater than what can be funded. At this point I provide information alternatives to VODEC's service that might be available to the individual. We always want to help in any way we can. In some cases this means helping the person and their family find the right service.

To schedule a tour, make a request for an application packet or any other questions, please contact: Daryn Richardson at 712-328-2638 or via email at [daryn@vodec.org](mailto:daryn@vodec.org) or Michelle Nelson at [mnelson@vodec.org](mailto:mnelson@vodec.org).



## Relationships at VODEC

*This article was written by Day Services Manager Shannon Harter. Shannon has been with VODEC since 2004 in various roles.*

Romantic Relationships happen all the time. They can happen at work at social gatherings and just about anywhere that you can imagine. VODEC is no different. The people we serve have the same needs for companionship that we all share. As VODEC staff we have a responsibility to guide those that we serve to make safe and healthy choices and to above all be able to experience a relationship that causes no harm. However, that is not always how it goes.

It has been my experience here that anything can happen and it usually does. At times it can feel like you are working in a soap opera. I have seen hundreds (probably thousands) of new budding relationships, I have seen the majority of these relationships turn south and disintegrate just to witness a new relationship at times the very same day.

I have had the joy of seeing consumers get married; I have seen consumers have children; I have seen consumers lose their parental rights and divorce. I have witnessed consumers that have limited communications abilities demonstrate affection for each other in very touching ways. I have got to hear about a consumer having their first date. I have seen healthy relationships and I have seen relationships that were not healthy.

We as Staff must remember that our consumers are adults and have the same rights that we all share. They also have the same need and want for affection that we do. At times it can be difficult to give advice to consumers regarding relationships while protecting their rights and empowering them to make choices.

At VODEC we strive to make sure that consumers get the best guidance as possible, are able to make healthy choices and above all, will remain safe and comfortable so here are some things to keep in mind:

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*(Left) Consumers Edward Dawson and Miko Walker enjoy Valentine's day as a couple during an ELM program party.*

## Relationships at VODEC continued

- Most employers have a zero tolerance for romance at work, and our work centers and day programs follow this model.
- In our residential settings there may be an opportunity for a consumer to express their feelings for another.
- Staff members work with family members, case workers and guardians to make sure that the consumer gets as much support and good advice as possible.
- Teams assess the consumer's ability to navigate a relationship. In some cases where a consumer is vulnerable due to limited understanding, staff members make sure that protocols are in place to protect the consumer.
- Consumers who currently may be experiencing behavioral issues may not in theory be able to participate until they reach a level of stability.
- Bottom line: Relationships are a part of life and are a part of growth. This is a part of life that we all deal with; including the consumers we serve.

## Mardi Gras Party with NE Residential



*(Above) Consumer Amanda Severin displays her mask at the Residential Mardi Gras Party*

On March 12th the Nebraska Residential Program celebrated Mardi Gras at the 72nd Street location. Consumers and staff enjoyed a pot luck dinner, crafts, music, and water tattoo's. "The consumers seemed to really enjoy getting to see there their peers and getting to make their own MardiGras masks. It was a great feeling to be able to watch them participate in a new activity that we haven't ever done and to see how much joy it brought to them." said Residential Services Supervisor Micky Burbach.



*(Above)- Consumer Skip Richardson and VODEC CEO Steve Hodapp exchange beads at the residential Mardi Gras Party*



*(Above)- Consumer Jordan Lorenzen listens to music at the Mardi Gras Party.*



*(Above) Consumer Andrew Plato enjoys Mardi Gras*

# Vocational Development Center, Inc.

VODEC

612 South Main Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

## Return Service Requested

The mission of VODEC is to provide services to persons with disabilities in order that those persons may live, work and participate in the community in the least restrictive environment to achieve their full potential.

The purpose of VODEC is to support and advocate for persons with disabilities so those persons have opportunities to develop to their fullest potential, to interact with society, to experience a sense of belonging, and to contribute something of themselves at their own levels of ability.

Vocational Development Center is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Donations may be tax deductible. Vocational Development Center is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants for services or employment are considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability.  
We are a certified provider of day and residential services by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.  
We are approved by the Iowa Department of Human Services to provide waiver services to individuals with intellectual disabilities, brain injuries and we are an approved habilitation service provider.  
We have accreditation from CARF for Community Employment Services, Organizational Employment Services and Community Integration.



VODEC is a proud member of:

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**VODEC IS ON GoodSearch!**

For more information on VODEC services please contact Darryl Richardson or Michelle Nelson at 712-328-2638 or by email at [dtrichardson@vodec.org](mailto:dtrichardson@vodec.org)

1. Be at least 16 years old for any vocational program
2. Have behavioral needs within VODEC's scope of service
3. Have medical needs within VODEC's scope of service
4. Have transportation needs within VODEC's capability to provide
5. Have adequate funding in place (including service hours authorization or private payment in place) for services being requested
6. If applying for an in-home service, the applicant's home must meet basic health and safety requirements

An applicant must meet the following criteria to be considered eligible for any VODEC service: