

## 4,253 miles of Awareness



*(Above L to R)-Matt Dickinson and his father Ron get set for a practice ride in preparation for their trip accross America this summer.*

4,253 miles and ten states on the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail from Yorktown, Virginia to Astoria, Oregon. That is some serious awareness. Beginning in May, Ron and Matt Dickinson will travel between six and eight hours per day covering roughly 65 miles as they make their way across the country to raise awareness and money for VODEC.

In addition to being avid cyclists, Ron and Matt see this trip as an opportunity to help individuals with intellectual disabilities in their community – and hopefully across the nation. Raising awareness about disability issues is important to both Ron and Matt.

Matt was born with a disability that left one of his legs a little longer than the other. Because of that, Matt was unable to compete in many activities that required running. A few years ago, Matt and his father discovered that he could ride a bike, but he needed a little help. He has since had to adapt his bike with a modified saddle that allows him to make a full rotation of the pedals. Without this modified seat, Matt would not be able to reach the pedal when the pedal is in its lowest position, thus limiting his power on the bike. Matt overcomes his disability each and every day, which allows him to reach his full potential.

Ron currently serves on the Board of Directors for VODEC, and he is also a CPA and financial advisor with

Dickinson-Clark CPAs, PC in Council Bluffs. Knowing that VODEC needed to make some improvements to accommodate the growing consumer base, Ron and Matt decided that a ride across America to raise awareness and money would be the best way to give back. Both Matt and his father want others with disabilities to be inspired by Matt's story. "We hope that individuals with disabilities across the nation will be inspired by Matt to continue to strive for full potential. This is why we support VODEC," added Ron. Helping others in "Reaching Full Potential" is the core of their mission.

With the money raised both from this ride and from a grant awarded to VODEC from the Iowa West Foundation, VODEC will begin an extensive renovation of its Council Bluffs location. The centerpiece of the renovation will be a new instructional kitchen that will be used by individuals who receive VODEC's services. Adding this space will give staff the opportunity to teach individuals about healthy meal preparation, using whole fresh foods and making use of recipes that are easy for someone with an intellectual disability to understand.

"Many of the individuals that we serve typically use pre-packaged meals," said Steve Hodapp, VODEC CEO. "Those types of meals are often not very healthy. We believe that we can create a healthy eating program that is easy to understand while using tasty and healthy ingredients. We expect that participants of the program will enjoy a better quality of life that includes losing weight, stabilizing blood sugar and cholesterol, and making better shopping choices." Work is scheduled to begin on the kitchen project this coming spring.

According to the Center for Disease Control, 36% of persons with disabilities are obese. This is due largely to a lack in healthy food choices, lack of accessible environments (gyms, walking/biking trails, etc.), and a lack of resources (money, transportation, etc.).

If you would like to know more about Matt and Ron's "Ride for Full Potential," you can visit their website at [www.rondickinson.org](http://www.rondickinson.org) for photos, blogs, and other features of their biking adventure. or you can visit VODEC's website at [www.vodec.org](http://www.vodec.org). If you would like to donate to the ride to benefit VODEC, please send checks or money orders to VODEC's corporate office at 612 S. Main St. Council Bluffs, IA 51503 or online via paypal through VODEC's website.

## From the Desk of CEO Steve Hodapp



This is momentous having all of March being National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. President Ronald Reagan proclaimed this in 1987. The goal for this month is to increase the public's awareness and understanding of people who have developmental disabilities so that these individuals will have increased access in our communities to employment, education, housing and social opportunities. The following is pulled from that proclamation of Feb. 26, 1987.

“For many of these people with developmental disabilities there is now the prospect of a brighter future and greater opportunity. Americans are becoming increasingly aware that such disabilities need not keep individuals from realizing their full potential in school, at work or at home, as members of their families and of their communities.

“New opportunities have been created through the efforts of those with developmental disabilities and their family members, along with professionals and officials at all levels of government. Working together, they have brought about significant changes in the public perception of young people and adults with developmental disabilities, opening new doors to independent and productive lives.”

Much remains to be done despite best efforts since 1987. Attitudes of employers about persons with disabilities need to get real (yes, they can be valuable and productive employees). There also needs to be an attitude adjustment among some advocacy groups who promote that only community employment is acceptable (yes, center-based employment is also an acceptable choice - the US Department of Labor says they are employed). More accessible housing needs to be created (yes, persons with disabilities are responsible and solid home owners and tenants). And more, of course.

You can help with all this. If each of us did one small thing towards increasing awareness of the potential possible from a person with a disability instead of looking at the disability we could get so amazed! Let's go get amazed and help them all reach full potential.



# Thank You FOR YOUR HELP

American National Bank	Erin Lucas
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Steve & Mary Hodapp	
Rebecca Lepin	

*This list reflects donations received between  
1/13/2013 and /13/2014*



## Donations Made in Memory of Mico Walker

Steve and Mary Hodapp

## VODEC: Series Host for Coffee & Contacts

Each month local business from Council Bluffs and the surrounding communities gather at the Council Bluffs Chamber



of Commerce to network and learn a little more about the businesses in their community. At each event a different business is highlighted and given the opportunity to talk about their business and what they do for those around them. VODEC is proud to sponsor the entire series for 2014. “Participation in the Council Bluffs Chamber’s Coffee and Contacts is an important part of our involvement in not only the community but also a vital part of our Community Employment Programs,” said VODEC CEO Steve Hodapp.

## Finding Common Ground In March

In 1987 President Ronald Reagan proclaimed March Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. That proclamation promoted inclusion of our fellow citizens with Developmental Disabilities in all aspects of their community; housing, recreation and especially employment.

At VODEC, inclusion is critical to our mission and so to help facilitate that inclusion we have planned activities for the month of March and throughout the year that raise awareness and create common ground. We use an effective tool to build common ground which is fittingly called the Common Ground Tour.

Participants in a Common Ground Tour attend an initial briefing where a presenter from VODEC describes the parameters of the Common Ground activity. The activity consists of each participant having a discussion with a person with developmental disabilities for the purpose of finding at least 10 things they have in common, such as movies, sports, food, music, etc.

After the activity is completed, everyone is invited to share their experiences. Following the discussion, participants will learn about the history of the treatment of people with developmental disabilities. Finally, everyone will be asked to share how their opinions changed about the abilities of persons with developmental disabilities. A discussion will follow about how they will use what they have learned to advocate for persons with developmental disabilities as they interact with co-workers, family and friends.

Persons with developmental disabilities encounter barriers to community inclusion in all aspects of their lives. Whether it is finding a place to work, live, or in establishing relationships. All these barriers have one thing in common: the lack of understanding of persons with developmental disabilities by the general public. Understanding the person's needs is not enough; you must also understand the individual. The Common Ground Tour meets this need by helping the general public identify areas of common interest with persons with developmental disabilities.

By introducing staff members of a local business to people with developmental disabilities as part of the tour, they will hopefully be inspired to go forward with a deeper understanding of this population. The desired outcome of this common ground tour is to influence the decision-making of employers, landlords, teachers and community leaders.

History has shown us that when we find Common Ground, we find Common Purpose. This has been witnessed time and time again wherever there has been a segregated population. With a deeper understanding of our similarities, we lose focus on our differences. When we make accommodations for those with Developmental Disabilities we all benefit. We all reach full potential together. For more information regarding the Common Ground Tour or to schedule a tour or any other activity with the people we serve, please contact Daryn or Michelle at 712-328-2638 or via email at [drichardson@vodec.org](mailto:drichardson@vodec.org).

## VODEC Valentine's Dance HUGE Success

"I really liked being able to dance with all my friends and people from other agencies," VODEC consumer Bobby Steffensen said. Over 250 guests with disabilities and support staff attended VODEC's Annual Valentine's Dance at the Ralston Arena. They were treated to music by EJS Sound & Lights, a nacho bar that was a massive success, and a photo area where guests could take photos with friends, their dates, and staff members. They also had the opportunity to add props to the photos such as crown, funny sunglasses, and feather boas. "I really like the photo area, I can't wait to get my picture back and share it with my family," said one guest. "It was so great to get to see so many happy faces that truly enjoyed the night and danced until the music stopped. I am glad that one of our employees, who works here as a result of VODEC's Community Employment program, was able to show off where she works as a badge of honor. She hugged me every time I saw her. It just reminds me how special they all are. I hope we get to have many more events with VODEC in the future," said Ralston Arena Events Manager Rachael White.

This event was sponsored by Access Bank, American National Bank and Council Bluffs Savings Bank. Without these sponsors, VODEC would not be able to

host this event. Their donations allow VODEC to rent the venue and provide refreshments. "I believe a great time was enjoyed by all once again. And I am always amazed how the dance floor stays full during these events," said CEO Steve Hodapp.



(Above) L to R- Consumers Brandon Letz and Joseph Love pose for a photo.

# Vocational Development Center, Inc.

## VODEC

612 South Main Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

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Contact us @ 712-328-2638 to  
sign up for the digital  
version of the VODEC *Voice*  
instead of the print version

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.



VODEC is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Donations may be tax deductible. VODEC 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 Medicaid Enterprise to provide waiver services to individuals with intellectual disabilities, brain injuries and we are an approved habilitation service provider. We are a provider of Host Home services in Iowa and Extended Family Homes in Nebraska. We have accreditation from CARF for Community Employment Services, Organizational Employment services and Community Integration.



VODEC is a proud member of:

[arsdon@vodec.org](mailto:arsdon@vodec.org)

For more information on VODEC services please contact Daryn Richardson or Michelle Nelson at 712-328-2638 or by email at [dtrich-](mailto:dtrich-)

GoodSearch is a Yahoo! search engine that pays charities you select a penny per search! Go to [www.good-search.com](http://www.good-search.com) and add GoodSearch to your browser. Then select Vocational Development Center as your designated charity! And pass the news on to your friends and family! Over 15,000 searches have benefitted VODEC so far! It's easy and it works!



**VODEC IS ON GoodSearch!**

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

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



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