

Community Partnerships Vital to Businesses and VODEC



(Front Row L to R): Shontae Sanders, Kasie Rafferty, Tammy Wisit, Rebecca Nibbe, Ernest Robinson and VODEC staff member LaQuita Johnson. (Back row L to R): Cheryl Lux, David Elafros, Ramadhani Duff, Kenny Valentine, Paris James and Joe Montenegro. Missing is staff member Betty Donaldson.

“The VODEC consumers are a fine example of dedicated and efficient workers who appeared to like what they do and are happy to come to work everyday,” said Humbolt staff member John Samson.

During a four week on-site work opportunity with Humbolt Specialty Manufacturing, VODEC consumers were fully integrated into the plant and worked along side Humbolt’s employees on a daily basis completing a job for one of Humbolt’s clients. Consumer Rebecca Nibbe said “It was really good working with Humbolt employees. It was something different for me to do and made me feel more independent.”

Initially VODEC consumers were to be on-site for six weeks completing the seven step process of creating and assembling filter kits for a furnace system but they were so quick and efficient with the task that it was completed two weeks ahead of schedule. The

consumers also had a zero errors in processing the order. “They did a great job, picked up on the different steps and adapted quickly,” continued Samson.

Projects like this one give VODEC consumers the opportunity to work in a fully integrated setting along side other employees to not only learn the work skills needed for a community job but it also gives them the chance to experience and hone the interpersonal skills needed to work with others in a professional setting. While teaching the tasks of assembling parts or putting an order together may be easy to master for most of VODEC’s consumers, other skills like social interactions and personal conversations can be a little more difficult and can really only be taught and practiced in a community setting with other employees from many different backgrounds and experiences.

Continued Pg 2

From the Desk of CEO Steve Hodapp



It's never too early to plan for the future. Usually that's said about retirement. But in this case I mean for you to consider the time between a student's high school graduation and his or her retirement.

Specifically, if you have a child with intellectual disabilities who is in school today, then today is not too soon to plan for post-graduation, no matter the student's current grade level. Sooner is better to learn what services may be available. I have heard too often from parents of students graduating soon who ask, "What services will be available after graduation and how do I access them?" Waiting to plan closer to graduation, or even after, is not a good plan. It may unfortunately lead to a waiting list for services, and languishing there for some years.

Under today's services delivery system the guidance is to make sure there is planning for post-graduation services' access in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). At least plan when the student is a freshman, but even earlier is better. Typically today available services will include employment training (sheltered work), community supported employment, day habilitation services, and residential service. In a likely future services delivery system the choices may not include sheltered work at first or at all, but that leads to a different topic which has been written about here previously.

The main awareness for you as a parent of a student with intellectual disabilities is to plan . . . today . . . for whatever the services delivery system offers regardless of when your student plans to graduate. Don't find yourself and your student looking in when you could be looking out for a more positive outcome. Plan. Talk to the teachers at an IEP meeting. Begin a relationship with a service provider (with VODEC or another). However you do it, make a plan to plan. It's not too early.

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Continued from Pg 1

"When an opportunity arises to work at business location, outside of any of our employment training centers, the consumer gets an element of real-world experience and chance to show exactly what he or she can do for the business owner. It really is a win-win proposition which could lead to a great hire for the business and a great job for the consumer," said VODEC CEO Steve Hodapp. "Humbolt is looking forward to any future orders that we get to be able to bring VODEC in and have them once again light up our offices with their smiles and positive attitudes," finished Samson.

Susie Reaches Full Potential with the help of VODEC and Heartland Therapy



(Above)- VODEC consumer Susan McIntosh spends another eventful day at VODEC's Elm program.

Susan McIntosh began her adventure with VODEC and the Elm program ten years ago at the beginning of the program for students who were aging out of the Omaha Public School system. At the time there was no program out there that catered specifically to Susan and her needs. Her parents wanted to give her a social atmosphere where she could interact with others and work on her mobility. "Cari Allen has been at the helm of this program since the beginning and has done an amazing job. She holds everyone and every concept of the program to high standards," said Susan's mom Karin McIntosh.

Throughout the years Susan has had her ups and downs just like any other adult. There have been times when she has been able to crawl commando style, reach for items, and interact with the world around her. That however is not always the case and three years ago she had her biggest setback to date. Susan, or Susie as she is affectionately called, stopped moving forward at all. She would no longer make the effort to crawl, reach for items that once brightened her day, or make any progress with her physical therapists. Both Susie's parents, Pat and Karin, and VODEC staff noticed this change and realized that something was very wrong. She was seen by multiple doctors and finally a Neurologist who discovered that Susie had damaged her spine in her neck causing her limited mobility. Susie had surgery on her neck and then began the long road back to being able to move and experience new things. During her recovery and before returning to the Elm program Susie had many visits from VODEC staff including Elm program coordinator Robin Stix. "How great it was for us to see a familiar

face! We received cards and balloons from her peers and upon returning to VODEC was also received much needed suggestions and help," continued Karin.

Susie now works with an occupational therapist from Heartland Therapy. With the help and support of her PT Kerry and VODEC staff, Susie was able to walk with the assistance of a walker. This was the first time she was able to walk since beginning with Elm over 10 years ago. "Susie is growing leaps and bounds and it has taken a phenomenal effort and correlation between home, therapy, and Elm, and lots of communication," said Karin.

One other priority for Susie by her parents is for Susie to reach her full potential both at home and while in VODEC services. Developing her program with skills to reach and maintain, journeys around the city, along with her physical and occupational therapy.

Without the help of VODEC staff, like Robin and Miss Ida, who is a mainstay of the program since its inception, and Heartland therapy Susie would not be where she is today. "Susie has made great progress over the last couple of years. From army crawling across the floor to climbing up into her wheelchair, bearing weight with staff assistance to taking steps while using a walker, Susie continues to show growth and determination. With support of Elm staff and her family, she continues to surpass obstacles and surprise us all. We at Elm are so proud of how much she continues to grow and look forward to the many things she continues to accomplish," said Robin Stix.

To see the video of Susie taking her first steps visit VODEC's Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/vodecinc>

VODEC

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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:

drichardson@vodec.org

For more information on VODEC services please contact Daryn Richardson or Michelle Nelson at 712-328-2638 or by email at



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- 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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