

THE VOICE

Volume 16, Issue 2

A VODEC Publication

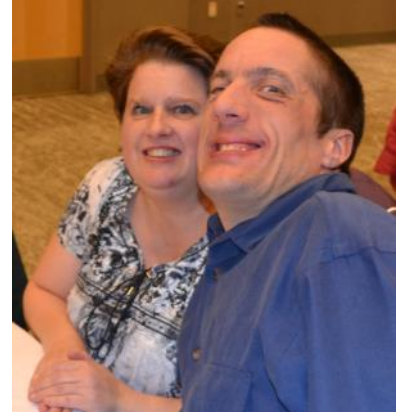
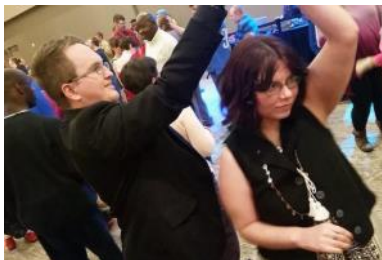
February 2016



Valentine's Dance a Huge Success

It's no surprise to discover that consumers from across the Metro area LOVE to dance. We welcomed more than 350 to our Valentine's Dance. They partied like rock stars; grinning, shaking their groove thangs, and having a great time at the Mid-America Center.

The event would not have been possible without the financial support of American National Bank, Access Bank, and Council Bluffs Savings. We extend our thanks to the sponsors who made it possible, and the consumers who made it fun.



From the CEO's Desk:



February 19th was the last day of operation for the Vodec work center at Millard, Nebraska.

Over the past few months, we have gradually reduced the number of consumers and staff assigned to Millard.

But we realize that shuttering the place for good

is a significant disruption to the 50 or 60 consumers who were still receiving vocational services there. Each of them now has to weigh their option of either transition to Vodec's 72nd and L Street location, or making some other adjustment to their daytime service plan.

Closing this location at 150th and Old L Street is purely a business decision. There's nothing wrong with the building, the environment, or the location. The staff has been exemplary, and production numbers are good.

You'll find the underlying reason in the ebb and flow of the advocacy debate swirling around sheltered vs. community sponsored work.

This debate hasn't made a big national media splash, yet. But how it resolves is one of the driving factors in whether other work centers around the country — just like this one — remain productive or lock their doors.

Some people believe *every* person should have and work a job in his or her community. From their perspective, every disability can and should be accommodated in the traditional work place.

In recent years, the champions for this point of view have grown increasingly loud and persistent. They want sheltered work spaces

gone and every person with a disability matched to a job offered by a local company.

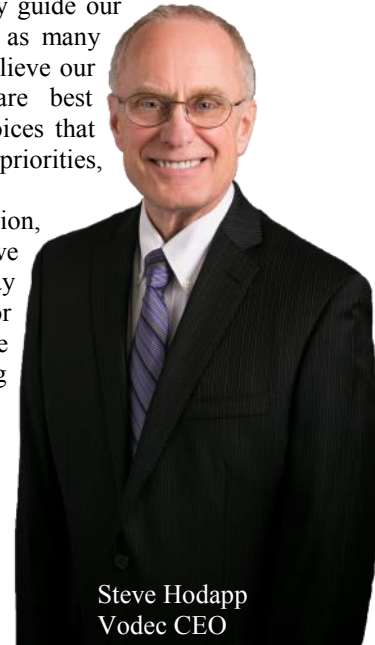
Vodec has been in the business of offering safe, accommodating space for adults with intellectual disabilities to learn and practice work skills since 1968. Walk our work floors today, and you will meet a few who have been with us for a number of years.

We have also made a strong and concerted effort to prepare consumers for the traditional work force. Our pre-vocational services, off site partnerships, and community employment programs have always had preparation for competitive work as one of the possible outcomes for consumers who choose to pursue that path.

Vodec's 48 years in this industry guide our belief there is value in providing as many service options as possible. We believe our consumers and their families are best served by having and making choices that best fit their individual potential, priorities, and situation.

We are very aware of the discussion, BUT, we are not a debate team, we are a service provider. Every day more than 600 people rely on us for some of their most basic needs. We don't have the luxury of joining that fray.

Maybe the louder voices will win the moment. Maybe one day the pendulum will swing back toward more options. In either event, we are shrinking our sheltered work footprint, and waiting to see what happens next.



Steve Hodapp
Vodec CEO

Vodec Entrance Criteria:

1. Be at least 16 years old for any employment training program.
2. Have behavioral needs 2 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. For in-home service, applicant's home must meet basic health and safety requirements

For more information, or to apply for Vodec services, contact Daryn Richardson; drichardson@vodec.org, (712)328-2638

Our Accreditations and Affiliations



VODEC is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. 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.

Iowa CARES Mixes Organic Foods with Pizza



What could have been an ordinary, run-of-the-mill CARES outing turned into something special on February 16th.

The calendar called for a morning trip to Whole Foods, and movies about organic foods in the afternoon. CARES reached out to the natural foods specialty store and asked for an

assist.

They came through like gang busters. Instead of a chance to walk around the store and spend a couple of dollars, Whole Foods turned it into a learning session about where our food comes from, the role of organics and fair trade practices in how much food costs, and threw in a delicious pizza feast to wrap it all up.

The CARES group sampled fruits they'd never tasted. They asked a butcher, a produce specialist, and a fish monger a dozen questions they probably never saw coming. Things were a bit quiet at first, but once the questions started — they never stopped coming.

It can be difficult to gauge how much interest a particular outing will spark with a group of adults with disabilities. Sometimes you expect a trip to reach its peak on the rides to and from a community event, and it turns into the best day ever. Other times you expect an activity to be exciting only to discover that it doesn't generate the level of engagement you anticipate.

Whole Foods was a hit! VODEC consumer Norman said "I've always wondered about goat milk. Why do people drink it? I'm glad Cassandra explained it, and I got to see it for myself."

He wasn't alone. Of the ten consumers who walked the aisles, each

seemed particularly captivated by at least one of the areas being explained.

The event couldn't have come at a better time for Vodec. Until the end of March, we are still the recipient of the Whole Foods Market "One-Dime-at-a-Time" program.

In their effort to reduce the waste component of transporting groceries from store to cabinet, they place an emphasis on using recyclable bags. For each reusable bag a customer uses, the grocery offers a ten cent rebate.

That discount can be applied to a grocery bill, or donated to a local organization. Vodec is proud to be that organization for another month.



Of course we are excited to reap the benefit of a community's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint.

We are also super-stoked to have Norman's question about goat milk answered in a way that puts a

smile on his face.

Vodec couldn't survive without moments like this. Having a business go out of its way to bring what could be a mundane event to life, and help our consumers walk away with an experience they will remember for awhile is its own reward.

Thanks, Whole Foods Market!

Thank you!

To all of our valued supporters.

(This list reflects donations received 1/15/2015—2/15/2016)

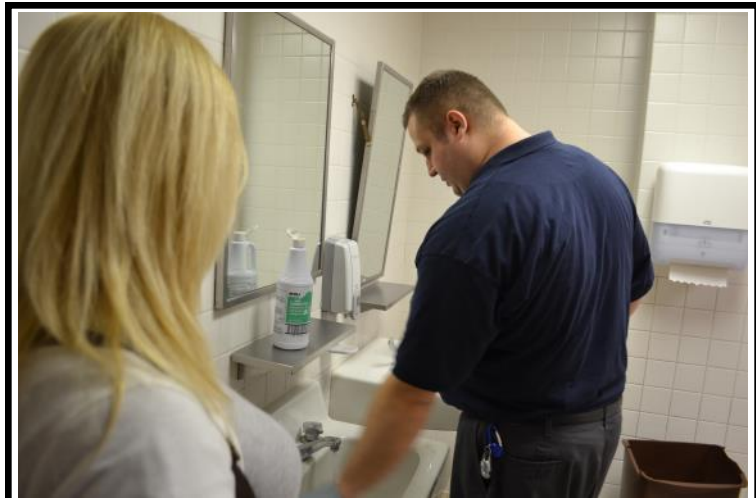
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Vodec CEO, Steve Hodapp accepts a donation from **, representing American National Bank



Vodec CEO, Steve Hodapp (C) accepts a donation from the Knights of Columbus. Pat Ryan (L) and Brian Bowers (R)



Vodec consumer Max successfully completed the Project Search job training program. He's now working in Environmental Services at Nebraska Medicine. Here, he's pictured with his job coach, Vodec Staff, Crissy. Good job, Max! We're proud of you.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

(Check <http://www.vodec.org> for more information)

- Mar 11-12**, Iowa Special Olympics Mid-Winter Tournament (Iowa City, Iowa)
- Mar 19**, Special Olympics Polar Plunge (Lake Manawa)
- May 7**, Vodec Night at Omaha Storm Chasers (Werner Park)
- May 19-21**, Iowa Summer Special Olympic Games (Ames, Iowa)
- May 25**, Omaha Gives (Cyberspace Event)



612 S. Main Street
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

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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.

Artists in Transition Program Underway



“We are going to create a constellation. It starts with these stars in the box.”

Artist Paula Wallace reached into the cardboard box, fished out the first of dozens of cutouts, and grabbed a nail from a pile on the art table.

“You too! Get a star!”

With those words of encouragement, four sets of eager hands started pulling cutouts in star shapes out of the holder, punching holes in one end, and pushing fishing wire through the holes.

A new year of Artists in Transition was underway.

The program is designed to expose high school students in Special Education classes to various forms of art. Funded by the Omaha Public Schools Foundation, Artists in Transition is one of several programs that make up the partnership between Vodec and WhyArts; a local organization committed to ensuring visual and performing arts experiences in Omaha are open to people of all ages and abilities.

The first series of sessions is held at Hot Shops; a collection of art studios and artisanal spaces just north of Omaha’s Old Market.

Over the course of the school year, the young artists will observe and create a range of art involving color, movement, and sound in various locations.

In this session, what started as slight hesitance in a new place quickly melted into concentration and focus when the paint came out.

By the end of the session, the first of the stars had taken on racing stripes, polka dots, and broad, vivid color swaths. The artists gathered around the table were talking about their experiences, their motivations to using certain colors or what their designs meant.



These are very small steps on the path to using art to open up creativity and communications avenues for young people. This group is already developing skills to adapt to a world that doesn’t always accommodate for disabilities.

The desire is to show them that as a form of expression, art can help them communicate to people who might not hear them in other contexts.

Artists in transition continues until early April.

The program is open to High School students who have gone through the OPS eligibility process. For more information contact Daryn Richardson at (712) 328-2638.

