

## VODEC Consumers Travel the Country



(Above L to R) Janet Summers and Consumer Taggart Schumacher.

“I think they look forward to it as much as Taggart does,” says Taggart’s mom Mary Schumacher about Janet Summers and Reed Smith, Taggart’s aunt and uncle and godparents. Each year Taggart travels to Arizona to visit them in Tucson. Taggart flies on his own from Omaha to Phoenix where Reed and Janet pick him up for a long weekend. “It’s really cool. I get to fly on a brown plane,” says Taggart of his flight. “They are really nice to me.” And his mother adds, “both Southwest and USAir have been so wonderful about getting Taggart to the place he needs to be and staying with him until someone is there to pick him up. This year VODEC staff member Michael Clark is helping us out by picking Taggart up from the airport when he returns.”

Taggart’s mom and dad help him get ready for the trip by helping with packing and scheduling transportation to and from the airport. Each year they walk him to the gate and send him off on another adventure in Arizona.

Usually Taggart goes in February and attends one of the largest rodeos in the country but due to

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## Aspiring Photographer Captures VODEC Moments

“They set the camera in front of me so I could take photos. It was a lot of fun,” says VODEC consumer Greg Renfro when he was asked about his most recent bout behind the camera.



Recently, he and others in the IA CARES day program went to (Above)- VODEC Consumer Greg a local bowling alley Renfro to spend a couple of hours bowling a few games. Greg was given the special job of documenting the event for them, and he was very excited to have the opportunity to do it.

Greg has had a camera since he can remember. “My mom gave me a Polaroid camera to use and I was always taking photos,” he says about the early days of his photography career. Greg loves taking photos because it allows him the chance to capture a moment in time. It’s one of his favorite pastimes. “I have always wanted to be a photographer and now I can do that whenever we go on outings,” he said. Greg will be taking photos on outings with the CARES program so keep checking back for more photos like the one below.

*More photos by Greg and others on page 4.*



(Left)- Consumer Adam Doner and staff member Jeremy Henry.

## Thank You to our Donors

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*This list reflects donations received between  
3/15/2013 and 4/20/2013*

## **Community Worksite Honors VODEC Consumer with Award**



*(Above) Consumer LaQuita Wilson and VODEC staff member Jan Schulke display LaQuita's employee award.*

Recently, consumer LaQuita Wilson was honored by her coworkers and staff as the March Employee of the Month at one of our Omaha Community work sites. In order to qualify for the award, consumers must meet some requirements. They cannot have been absent from work within that month, need to display good work habits, have a high level of productivity, be a positive role model for their fellow employees, show safe work habits, and follow the work site rules. LaQuita displayed all these traits as well as many others to become the work site's employee of the month. In addition to receiving the award, she was also given a gift from the community employer for her efforts. "LaQuita's smiling attitude is the light of our team's torch," says Jan Schulke, VODEC staff member.

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



Sometimes we have to stop and smell the roses. Sometimes we need a reminder. Several years ago one of my daughters gave me a reminder: she said it was a mold-  
ed hand in a pose of relaxation. Her instructions were to this effect: remember to slow down and breathe deeply occasionally. She knows I have tendencies to keep plowing through stuff while multi-tasking. So I keep the hand in a prominent place in my office. And when I see it I remember (most times) to stop a moment and breathe deeply.

When I need more than a quick deep breath I begin to plan for maybe even just an extended weekend at a special place which brings me peace and tranquility. At this place there are Ponderosa pine trees which whisper to me in the breeze; small friendly lakes which are comforting to sit by; and trails to walk on which rejuvenate me. . . . Um, sorry, I got lost for a moment.

My point is this - we all need to stop and smell the roses in a way that makes sense to us. "We all" includes consumers. I think at times they are overlooked when there are roses to smell. Of course at VODEC there are always some fun activities in the works with them. But what about true time off? Time when no one is teaching, coaching or otherwise moving them towards program plans' goals? Do I like to be 'helped' all the time? Do you? Then don't assume any consumer likes it any better.

When a consumer has a chance to get away with friends or family for a few days he or she should be encouraged to go. He should have a chance to find his own place with Ponderosas or an equivalent. She should be helped with a plan to get to a place where it's OK to breathe a heavy breath without being asked if she's feeling well. My challenge to all of us is, how can we help make that happen?

*(Right)- Relaxation pose statue.*



## Nebraska ELM Program Goes to Lauritzen Gardens

In April the Nebraska ELM program visited Lauritzen Gardens to view the Lego exhibit. Our consumers began their outing with a lunch at the garden followed by a tour of the Lego exhibit. They saw a giant rose, dragonfly, and bumble bee made of Legos as well as some smaller animals such as a fox and a rabbit. The consumers also had the opportunity to play in a special area full of loose Legos. They built many different things and spent time working on motor skills while out. After the gardens, a few of the consumers walked up to Kennick Park and saw the large train engines that welcome visitors to Omaha along Interstate 80. "It was a great opportunity for our consumers to get out into the community and experience all the sights and sounds of the gardens," said VODEC staff member Anna Strandberg.



(Above)- Consumer Patrick Shields and Staff member Michaela Scallorn enjoy the gardens



(Above Right)- Consumer David Christian creates a work of art with the Legos.

(Right)- Consumer Sarah Thrall takes a head shot with one of the Lego picture screens.



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weather this year it was rescheduled to April. When Taggart sees them in February, they will attend the rodeo. They have front row seats. Taggart doesn't like heights so he is right in the action.

During his visits Taggart has a full schedule of outings and social events. They do everything from swimming at the University of Arizona campus to bowling, going to movies and either going to some of Reed and Janet's friend's house, or inviting them over for a BBQ. Each year, Taggart also visits the local Harley Davidson store and usually walks out with a souvenir or two. He has many shirts and other momentos from that location as well as others.

Taggart is very excited to go this year because he is going at a different time of year and he wants to do different things. "I want to see the Grand Canyon," he said when asked about what he wanted to do differently. "It's a great experience for Taggart to not only see his family but also do something on his own and be as independent as possible," added his mother Mary.



(Right)- Taggart getting a look at the service department at the Harley Davidson Shop.



(Above)- Consumer Kate Klemmensen and VODEC staff member Anna Stradberg enjoy the Lego area.

## IA CARES Goes Bowling



*(Above)- VODEC consumer Brian Majors celebrates a great throw.*



*(Above)- Consumer Janelle Schwaniger is all smiles at the bowling alley.*



*(Above)- Consumer Rhonda Rodgers is ready to go!*

*(Right)- Consumer Kelly Berg and Staff member Travis Porter celebrate a great throw.*



## Nebraska Consumers Compete in Special Olympics

by: Cindy Bruneteau, Community Relations Director

“The higher you go the farther it flies!” said Brandon Blesh, VODEC consumer, about his experience training for the Special Olympics. He’s not only talking about the tennis toss, he’s also talking about the aspirations and goals he and his friends at VODEC have during this exciting time of year.

Brandon recently participated in three events at a Special Olympics regional event at Boys Town in an effort to qualify for the state competition (to be held at Creighton University). He qualified in the tennis toss, the relay, and the 25-meter sprint. He will now be competing in May, and if he wins there then he will move forward to the national competition. While he trained hard for over two weeks to prepare for his events, Brandon admits there was a lot of fun involved, saying, “I really enjoy working with my team, and my coach Jesse is great.”

Brandon was not alone in training for the Special Olympics. Many other VODEC consumers participated in the games, showcasing their skills in running, walking, shot-put, and relay events. Ribbons were awarded to all—and many in the group won ribbons for first place!



*(Above)- VODEC Special Olympic athletes (back row l to r)-Jason Crane, Ryan Madsen, Justin Wilson, Shannon Anderson, and James Telshaw. (l to r front row) Bryan Allison, Brandon Blesh, and Scott Wright.*

## Prom Party with NE Residential

On April 23rd the Nebraska Residential program held its 1st annual Prom for consumers. The event was held at the Omaha Firefighters Union Hall on 60th and Grover. Consumers were able to take photos with life sized Oscar statues and a Hollywood sign. The entire theme of the event was Hollywood Glamour. Consumers danced for nearly two hours and there was also a Prom Court in which those on the court were given honorary Hollywood celebrity names like Angelina Jolie, Denzel Washington, Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn and also music stars like Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire, and Beyonce.



*(Above)- VODEC consumer Maurice Haywood takes his photo with a lifesize Oscar statue.*



*(Above)- Consumer Nicole DeWeerdt enjoys dancing with staff at the VODEC Prom. (Below) Scott Wright poses with his Oscar.*



*(Above) Consumer Ryan Damm is ready for the next dance.*



Happy  
*Father's*  
Day

# 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.



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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:

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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)