

# The VOICE

*A VODEC Publication—Reach Full Potential with VODEC today!*

## Teaching Kitchen Opens

**Now three times the original size, VODEC's expanded teaching kitchen is handicapped accessible with space and equipment needed to teach cooking skills to support proper nutrition and healthy living.** The kitchen now serves VODEC's Cares habilitation program and the Adult Transition Program (ATP) in Council Bluffs.

On January 15, the teaching kitchen ribbon cutting ceremony was lead by CEO Steve Hodapp with the Council Bluffs Ambassadors and special guests including Council Bluffs Mayor Matt Walsh, Ron Dickinson, CFA/CPA and co-owner of Dickinson & Clark Associates, P.C., Kathleen Rapp and Deb Debbaut from the Iowa West Foundation, Superintendent Dr. Martha Bruckner of the Council Bluffs Community Schools, and local business leaders.

Prior to the remodel the kitchen space was very small and provided limited access for proper nutritional literacy and was not accessible to persons in wheelchairs. The expanded kitchen is now fully wheelchair accessible.

Many people with disabilities struggle with weight related illnesses. The remodeled kitchen will enable effective lessons on safe weight loss, stabilizing cholesterol levels, blood sugar, nutrition choices, as well as safe and healthy cooking lessons.

The Iowa West Foundation awarded VODEC a substantial grant in 2014 to complete the project. In 'The Ride for Full Potential,' VODEC board member Ron Dickinson and his son Matt rode bikes from Virginia to Oregon in the summer of 2014 to raise matching funds for the grant and advocated for those with disabilities.



*(Left to Right) Angela Blain, Day Services Assistant, provides hands on cooking techniques to Adam Kjos, Aaron Wellnitz, and Jonothan Bryen in the new teaching kitchen.*

## Holiday giving program makes impact

**In its inaugural year, Jim's Jingle Bell Sleigh program, brought joy to 121 VODEC Consumers during the 2014 holiday season.** Jim's Sleigh was the idea of Jayne Balch of Midwest Impressions and Cassie Taylor of Black Belt Movers; created in memory of Jim Hoing, VODEC's former Business Development Director who sadly passed away in 2014, whom Balch and Taylor knew from various networking groups.

One of the consumers who received a gift, let's call him Bob, deals with extreme anxiety. Generally during the holiday season his anxiety worsens as he has no family or friends to speak of, other than his caring staff. For the Jim's Sleigh program he requested one item, a new coffee pot. Bob's gift was delivered on December 23, 2014. On the 26<sup>th</sup> Bob spoke with his Residential Services Supervisor, Kelsey Preston,

and stated that this year he had 'no negative thoughts on Christmas Eve or on Christmas day.' This simple gift brought the joy of the holiday season to Bob. His thanks were echoed through the number of consumers who also received gifts.



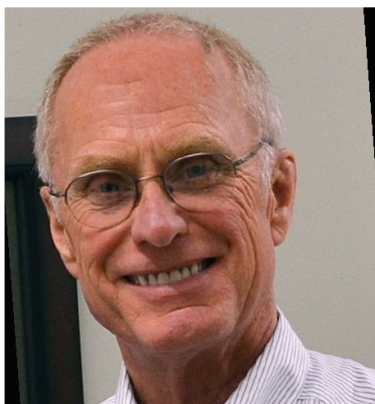
*Consumer Tim DeWolf, seated, receives a gift donated through the Jim's Jingle Bell Sleigh program. Also pictured Wendy Elliott, Day Services Coordinator.*

## From the CEO's Desk:

*This is a continued dialogue with a composite 'Consumer Joe' from Volume 15, Issue 1.*

Joe, recently I shared with you a little about your expanding integration in your community, and how this will replace some of the *protection* some services afforded you. From this point forward we will work together with you, your family and your services team to move the integration along as seamlessly as possible. You, them and us are not always going to be in agreement on how and when and where this happens; change can be difficult. But just because it will be different does not make it bad.

So here is another word you will hear more: **INTERDEPENDENCE**. It means members of a community are mutually dependent on each other. Interdependence differs from a dependent relationship, where some members are dependent and some are not [1] and, Joe, in the services example so far **you** would be the dependent member. **That's about to change.** Interdependence "suggests a connection or partnership between these entities in an effort to maximize a potential for both groups", says advocate Al Condeluci [2]. VODEC's continued mission is to help you reach your full potential.



Risk is a concept you need to get familiar with. You have a right to risk. Just because you have a disability does not mean you should be protected from risk. You can handle it like the rest of us who attend the 'school of hard knocks'. All that means is we take risks and sometimes we gain something while other times we don't. So, Joe, it's time to get you enrolled.

This will lead to less control by others over **your** life choices. Where do **you** want to live? What kind of job do **you** want, or even do **you** want to work? How do **you** want to get around? Who do **you** want to be your friends, and where will **you** meet them? **These and more are your life choices.**

But that doesn't mean you need to make them alone. You can have help making decisions. I ask for advice, guidance and other information before I make a lot of decisions. Why does

that need to be different for you? I don't think it does. This is where we circle back to interdependence. You will begin to expand your circle of influencers beyond providers whose intentions are pure but yet restrict your personal growth to reach full potential. Sometimes VODEC and others get in your way. This is not because we necessarily want to, it is because the 'system' of service provision requires us to. We and other service providers are beholden to the funders and their rules attached with their money. While we may have wanted to step outside those restrictions all they did was underscore the restrictions.

But . . . things are changing! Joe, you are going to have more clout in decisions about your life than ever before. This is really exciting for me to have the opportunity to watch you up close and personal become more of a fully realized individual, recognized beyond your disability. While you navigate the new freedoms brought on through integration supported through interdependence you will still have help. **But you will even have more choice about who helps you and how!**

[1] Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interdependence>

[2] <http://alcondeluci.com/documents.DisabilityIssuesOverview>

## VODEC

### Entrance Criteria

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.

For more information or to apply contact Daryn Richardson at [drichardson@vodec.org](mailto:drichardson@vodec.org) or call 712-328-2638 to set up a guided tour.

## THANK YOU....

*to all of our valued supporters*  
(This list reflects donations received 12/20/14 to 1/7/15)

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# ABLE Act set to ease financial burden

*Major victory for persons with disabilities and their families*

**Achieving a Better Life Experience Act** will ease the financial burden for individuals with disabilities creating tax-free accounts that can be used to save for disability-related expenses.

## 1. What is an ABLE account?

Tax advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities and their families.

## 2. Why ABLE accounts?

It will secure funding for disability related expenses that will supplement benefits provided through private insurance, Medicaid, SSI, and the beneficiary's employment and other sources.

## 3. Who is eligible?

Individuals with significant disabilities with an onset of disability before 26 years of age. If you are receiving

benefits under SSI/SSDI and meet the first criteria you are automatically eligible. Documentation of disability prior to age of 26 is required.

## 4. What is the contribution limit?

A total of *\$14,000 can be contributed annually*. The first \$100,000 would be exempt from the SSI individual resource limit. SSI benefits would be suspended if the ABLE account exceeds \$100,000.

## 5. What expenses are allowed?

Qualified expenses could include education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology, personal support services, health care expenses, and financial management.

## 6. Where do I go to open an account?

States will begin accepting applications

before the end of 2015.

## 7. How many accounts can I have?

ABLE accounts are limited to *one* account per disabled individual.

## 8. Will states offer options to invest the savings contributions?

Account contributors or designated beneficiaries are limited to modify the way the money is invested in the account up to two times per year.

## 9. How does this differ from a special needs or pooled trust?

The cost of starting an ABLE account will be significantly less and will provide more choice and control for the beneficiary and family.

Courtesy of the National Disability Institute  
To learn more go to  
[www.realeconomicimpact.org/news.aspx?id=460](http://www.realeconomicimpact.org/news.aspx?id=460)

## Cosmetic changes happening at VODEC—Consumers Benefit

Consumers are #1 at VODEC. With that in mind, cosmetic changes and facility upgrades are happening which will benefit them and their daily experiences at two VODEC locations.

At the Council Bluffs location what is currently an open common space is being converted into more usable spaces. In the space was an industrial cardboard baler which had to be re-

moved. This will provide an additional conference room for consumers, their families and caseworkers as well as space for employee training.

At our F street location we have repainted the ELM area and are in the



New wall protection in ELM

process of adding wall protection along some of the corridors to minimize damage from wheelchair traffic. Plans over the next year include a renovation of the ELM kitchen as well.

at F street into additional space where consumers will be able to relax and learn effective ways to cope with daily issues. This space is currently being retiled and will open by the time you are reading this issue.

Three large projects on the horizon for the F Street location include the removal and replacement of the parking lot, upgrade of the bathrooms on the employment training area as well as the refurbishment of the current loading dock which will become an additional production area. All of these projects are pending at the moment as we are searching for funding sources.

All of these projects will be completed with consumers and their health and safety in mind. Watch for the VODEC e-blast to see all our wonderful changes taking place. If you're not currently receiving the VODEC e-blast, please contact Clarissa Conolley at 712-328-2638 or email [cconolley@vodec.org](mailto:cconolley@vodec.org) to be added to our e-blast.



Baler Removal in Council Bluffs

We are expanding the CARES program



612 S. Main Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

Return Service Requested

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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.*

*Consumers (Left to Right) Donovan Carbaugh, Adrianna Espinoza, Shawn Douglas Holmes and Darian Smith, look on as Sydney Turner helps CEO Steve Hodapp cut the ribbon for the new teaching kitchen. Also pictured, Daryn Richardson, Becky Zorn, Kathleen Rapp and Ron Dickinson.*



*Cassie Taylor, Jayne Balch and CEO Steve Hodapp (above) stand beside the Jim's Jingle Bell Sleigh prop. For every gift donated a bell was attached to the sleigh. Consumer Susan Linsey (right) opened her gift, a porcelain angel for her collection.*



VODEC

REACH FULL POTENTIAL

February, 2015