

## Elm Blows Out 13 Candles!



[L-R] Margaret R., Vodec Staff Ida Bryant, Jae M. and Megan R.; ELM pioneers, each has been with Elm since Day 1.

Those notes are stored in colorful tubes that are saved and opened on special occasions — time capsules.

"[Consumer A] loves music and bright colors. This year he wants to paint more."

"[Consumer B] likes animals. He loves to tell stories about his pet dog at home."

Elm is a happy place. The rooms buzz with activity, sound and engagement. Vodec CEO, Steve Hodapp recalls those early meetings that led to Elm's creation:

"They knew what they wanted. It was one



Vodec Staff Alesha Sturm reads notes from the time capsules

Elm is a teenager! Can you believe it?

The Day Habilitation program, started at the request of parents who needed new options for their children with multiple disabilities, celebrated its 13th birthday on July 1st.

Staff and Elm consumers celebrated with cake, ice cream and the annual opening of the time capsules.

Every year, the staff make notes about progress, likes and dislikes, and goals of each Elm consumer.



A year's progress, captured and preserved via time capsules

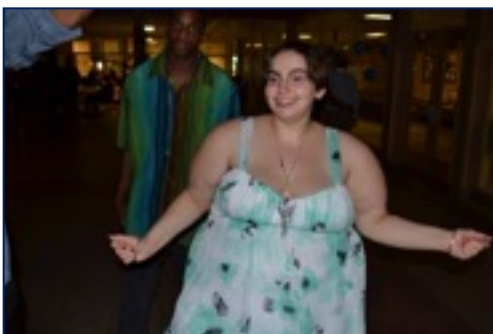
of those times we chose to say 'yes,' even though we weren't sure how it would all turn out. I'm happy with the results."

The day program that started the summer of 2003 with five consumers has grown to a hive of activity that involves more than 50 participants today.

If you haven't visited Elm lately, you should. It is an incredible program providing service to a lively bunch of incredible people.

Happy Birthday, Elm! Welcome to the teen years. Can't wait until you're old enough for a driver's license. 🎉

## Nebraska Residential Prom



Let's dance. It's prom! Shawna D. cuts a rug. Maurice A. provides the photobomb

"Let's dance! How many proms do you get in your life?"

Words from a Vodec consumer headed for the dance floor, snapping her fingers to the beat booming out of the speakers, surrounded by her friends at this year's Nebraska Residential prom.

This year's dinner and dance was a celebration of "A Starry Night" at Burke High School.

Why a prom?

For a variety of reasons, many of our

consumers never attended their high school dances.

Vodec's annual prom is part of our commitment to providing space and opportunity for people with disabilities to reach their full potential.

In this case, that means hosting an event where people with disabilities can have the experiences that everyone else takes for granted.

It's a community effort — you may have even donated a dress or tie to the effort. We are grateful for that support.

Remember YOUR prom? Your date, the flowers, the meal, the slow dance that ended the night?

Vodec's Residential Prom offered all of that.

Seeing the smiles, the laughs, the flirting; you could almost forget the wheelchairs, the medicine, the challenges produced by every new day for this courageous crowd.

"Let's dance! How many proms do you get in your life?"

## Vodec Entrance Criteria

- ▶ 16-years of age for any vocational program
- ▶ Behavioral, medical, and transportation needs inside Vodec's scope of service and capability to provide
- ▶ Adequate funding in place for requested services (including private pay or other options)
- ▶ For in-home services, applicant's home must meet basic health and safety requirements



What would prom be without pictures to capture the moment? Ashley O. and Jim T. pose for a memory.

## Interns Learn Restaurant Skills at 'Table Grace'



Table Grace Cafe offers "pay what you can" lunches for anyone who wants to eat.

Vodec interns are learning how to work in the restaurant industry, thanks to a new partnership with Table Grace Cafe.

The innovative eatery on 16th and Farnam, near Omaha's Old Market District, has already established itself as a "must-visit" location with its "pay what you can afford" business model.

Every day volunteers prepare a lunch meal; some in exchange for eating, some as an act of community service, and some — like our participants, for the job experience and training.

Those meals; typically valued at about \$7

each are provided to customers for whatever price they can afford to pay. For the city's homeless and poor, it is a chance to get a hot meal in a sit-down establishment at least once a day.

For the better off, a Table Grace meal is a chance to "pay it forward." Businessmen and women often pay substantially more than the value of the lunch, to make sure the hot, restaurant-quality meals will continue to be available for anyone who needs one.

Vodec consumers who express an interest in food service industry work can learn the cleaning, food preparation and service skills that make working at a fast food joint or other restaurant an achievable goal.



So far, one Vodec/Table Grace intern has already successfully transitioned from the partnership, to steady work at a local fast food restaurant. We believe this represents another solid model for moving people with disabilities into stable community jobs. We tip our cap to Table Grace Cafe. Have you had lunch today? We know a place! ▾



Table Grace staff walks Donna T. through meal preparation standards as part of her internship shift.

### Vodec's Mission:

We provide **services** to persons with disabilities in order that they may **live, work and participate** in the community in the least restrictive environment to achieve their **full potential.**

### Vodec's Certifications



### Vodec's Affiliations



## More NE Res Prom Photos



## Thank you!

To our valued June and July supporters...

- Miles and Crystal Havekost
- Ak-sar-Ben ARS Heating, AC & Plumbing
- John Aliano, Gen Mgr
- Cheryl and Richard Henkenius
- Kroger Stores, Cincinnati, OH

## Candid Moments



Scarlet L. and Gerry M. watching the water balloon baseball game at the NE Res picnic.



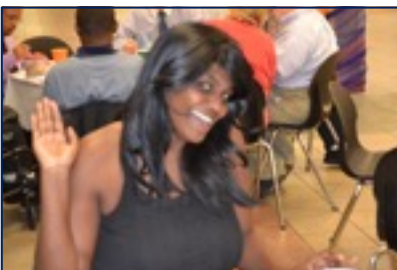
Batter up!!!



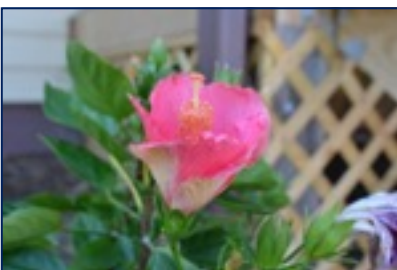
Vodec staff Pam Wyzkowski and Scotty W. discuss the finer points of water balloons strategy



Vodec staff Sarah Bennett and Matt W. pause their prom dance to smile at the camera.



Hello from Ruth D. at the NE Res Prom



First blossom at the 4th Street Residence in Council Bluffs.

## Notes From The ~~CEO's Desk~~ Marketing Department

Hi. I'm Stew, Marketing Director for Vodec. This space belongs to Steve, but it's been a busy few months here, so he has offered it up in a "one time special opportunity" for me to fill in. I don't want to skip. :)

I would like to share some thoughts with you about Elm. The program's 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary is our front page item in this edition, but there's a lot more than "Happy Birthday" that needs to be said.

I'm new to the human services community. Most of my career has been spent in military and government work. I didn't really know what to expect, signing on with an outfit that serves and advocates for people with disabilities. It has been a delightful education.

Elm serves men and women with multiple disabilities. Some of these consumers are immobile. Others non-verbal. Many require semi-constant, hands-on assistance for functions that you and I think nothing of performing — taking a bite, taking a step, sitting down or standing up.

For someone like me, the first visit to Elm requires a moment of adjustment. It was a foreign environment.

These are our neighbors and friends who face some of life's most daunting challenges. My initial instinct was to be sad for them.

It took me a few minutes to push past that reaction.

And there was this ... instant, when I snapped out of my preconceived notions and into the reality of what's happening in Elm, and realized it is a beautiful thing.

Elm is a very happy place. The consumers are engaged to the best of their individual abilities. They're active, they're participating. This is a place where "full potential" on a given day might be as basic as making a choice, and being able to communicate it effectively. We don't like to talk about it in polite society, but these are the people who we used to 'put away' in institutions. They're doing very well with a little bit of attention and tender loving care.. I'm proud to be part of an organization that provides it.

The staff is attentive, responsive, and VISIBLY competent. I dropped in to take pictures of the birthday celebration, and once again had the chance to watch them handle their routine; a constant flow of encouraging words, thoughtful deeds, predicting and staying prepared for the next need, managing minor mishaps with humor and patience. There's a lot of love in those rooms.

Elm is staffed by a special team with special skills. We don't say "wow, what you do is **INCREDIBLE**" often enough.

They aren't alone in their commitment to service. I am still finding Vodec to be a company filled top to bottom with people who genuinely take pride in how much they care. Assistants who celebrate the small victories on the work floor, Specialists who stay hours after their shift to coordinate special requests and solve real problems, Managers who beam as they tell you about the moment they first "got it," Directors and staff who pitch in at a moment's notice to create special moments, "just because." You already 'know' us, that's why you're reading the Voice. I don't know if it still hits you as hard as me that these Services make a very real difference to people's lives. I hope it does. If not, it won't be my first time preaching to an already converted choir.

I'm a newbie. I hope you'll indulge my moment of wide-eyed amazement.

Vodec is special. Yes, there are other companies that do what we do. Honestly, I'm sure many serve just as well as we do, and with as much competence and love. This isn't a brand message, or a moment to brag. This is just a gentle nod of admiration of the work to which this team has committed itself. Service.

Service in the cause of helping someone whose skills lie in a different dimension than your own. That's what we do here.

To the parents/guardians and loved ones of our Elm consumers, the incredible leadership and staff team that makes Elm work: Happy Birthday. Here's to many, many more.

Cheers,

—Stew.



Kenneth "Stew" Stewart, Marketing Director



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## “Heart of Iowa” Update

Vodec’s expansion into Central Iowa is proceeding, and making good progress.

Iowa Operations Director, Mark Stromer says the initial start up of Residential and Community Employment Services is where the bulk of the work is happening right now. “We’ve stood up group homes, host homes, and are providing hourly and daily Residential supervision right now. Community Employment teams are on the ground, making contact with businesses through Dallas County.”

So far, Vodec has hired almost 30 new employees, with new offers expected to continue going out as new referrals come in.

“We are getting inundated with referrals. I’m getting calls and e-mails almost every day from people and agencies looking for service,” Stromer elaborates. “We don’t want to start advertising for too many new openings as we are in-processing new

consumers, but I feel that we are in a very strong position to have a positive employment impact on these communities for a long time.”

As Operations spin-up, so far the challenge has been finding a suitable and available space for Vocational Services.

“We have seen a few good possibilities, but we are still searching for the best fit.”

Dallas County was the original entity that coordinated with Vodec to bring new Services to their residents. Ideally, the new location won’t require consumers to be transported across that County’s lines.

As referrals pour in from Des Moines in Polk County, and the other counties that surround the capital city, Stromer says expanding the management infrastructure is the other key component of continuing a smooth transition.

“That operation is going to be big enough that we need to establish a stand-alone management capability.

We don’t want to strain our Human Resources and Finances teams. We need to be able to handle Dallas County concerns without having to dispatch teams from Council Bluffs.”

Right now, the plan is to focus on the I-80 corridor between Council Bluffs and Des Moines, but future demand could result in new Service offerings for areas across the State. ▾



Vodec’s Iowa Operations Director, Mark Stromer says Heart of Iowa expansion is going VERY well.

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