

Project Search Classes Graduate



Project Search - Embassy Suites 2017 graduates

Project Search is an international vocational training program that traditionally prepares high school special education students for community employment by rotating them through several positions at one large company. Two distinguished classes of interns graduated from Vodec's Project Search programs in May.

Our six **Nebraska Medicine** interns have the distinction of being our first class to graduate with 100% job placement on graduation day.

And the **Embassy Suites Downtown** interns are the first *adult* class in Project Search history to complete a full series of rotations in the hospitality industry.

As Federal and State rules set higher work force standards for accommodating disabilities, programs like Project Search are critical to the future of community job placements for Vodec consumers.

These successes show us that we are building useful training environments for the future.

We're proud of our Project Search class of 2017. With Vodec's help, graduates are able to transition into new and exciting positions. Congratulations, graduates!

The Nebraska Supported Employment team has notified class of 2018 interns by hand delivered letter. New rotations start this August. ▽



Project Search - Nebraska Medicine 2017 graduates

Reverse Job Fair Signals New Approach to Community Employment



Vodec Consumer Derek talks to a recruiting team about his job skills

Vodec held its first annual Reverse Job Fair May 10th at Thomas Jefferson High School. The Fair is an experiment in a new direction in *presentation, preparation and collaboration* for supported employment.

We hope it will grow into part of the way the community views fully integrated employment for people with disabilities. It's a re-thinking of how to accommodate this group in the job fair environment.

Our teams have found it takes a lot of work to prepare a consumer for scenarios where they have to figure out on the fly how to reposition themselves for multiple job conversations in one setting.

Our goal was to ease that stress by having consumers prepare a presentation about themselves, and have employers rotate around the room meeting potential employees, rather than the other way around.

That plan was the result of a *collaboration* that started when a Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce Leadership Group approached Vodec in December of 2016 searching for a partner to help build a long-term community project.

As a service provider, Vodec has the challenge of developing new tools to make Iowa's WIOA rules* work to benefit our consumers. We're going to be helping a LOT more people find community employment. That will require new approaches that can

End of Year OPS Graduation Party



Transition students from OPS graduating class pick their seats for the cookout

Seniors from Omaha Public Schools are celebrating their graduations from high schools.

On May 9th, the Nebraska Employment Training Program team hosted a graduation party and cookout at the Omaha development center to mark this milestone.

OPS sends almost 60 students to Vodec each week for work-based experience.

There are graduates from six schools this year. Training Coordinator Ben Kabourek says the highlight this year was improved behaviors. "We saw students really pull it together," he says.

A few of the remaining students will use Vodec services over the summer. We're excited to have the rest back next year. ▽



Vodec Supported Employment (IA) staff and the job seekers who attended the Reverse Job Fair

assist larger groups in the job hunt.

In the months the program has been in development, our team has grown to represent a wide and efficient network of local resources and expertise. Council Bluffs Community School District expanded our pool to include graduating high school seniors. Vocational Rehab added new job categories to make it easier for our applicants to identify jobs they'd be good at. IowaWorks provided invaluable support with resume building, and elevator speech

(*'Reverse Job Fair' Continued on Page 3*)

A Celebration of 'Ms. Ida'



Ida Bryant has been the heart and soul of Vodec's Elm program for people with multiple disabilities, since it began

Our in-house celebration of Ms. Ida Bryant happened the day before the last issue of the Voice went to print. It was too important to pass up this opportunity to honor one of Vodec's most respected and "coolest" employees.

Plus, she has a story you need to hear.

Ida Bryant is the youngest of 24 siblings from Jackson, Mississippi.

Yes, 24.

She moved to Omaha in 1967 for a stint with the Job Corps. Her work with the special needs community started about two years later, as a worker with a program that combed neighborhoods for people whose disabilities were keeping them from getting an education.

She recalls exactly how those work days began. "We would put notes on people's doors: 'Do you have anybody in your house that's not able to go to school?' Because at that time, any type of special need, just a little bitty thing, and they didn't send them to school."

As families responded to the notes, Bryant and her colleagues assembled the students in the basement of a church and taught them basic skills.

In the early 1980s, legislation forced Omaha Public Schools to develop accommodations and provide education for people with disabilities.

When the School District started looking for people who had experience working with special needs students, they found Ida Bryant. She worked with OPS for 20 years, ending at The J.P. Lord School; OPS' school for pupils with multiple disabilities. That's where she met the families that first approached Vodec to develop the program that became Elm.

Miles Havekost was in that group. He says Ms. Ida's dedication to her students was the benchmark they were looking for in a program for their sons and daughters once they aged out of OPS.

"She had a heart for these kids, and she wanted that program to get started, so she left Omaha Public Schools with them. Our daughter is 35. Ms. Ida has been in her life since she was five? Six? We consider her family, and I'm sure a lot of these families do. Especially the ones who have been with her since those J.P. Lord days."

In the years since Elm got that 'thumbs up' to operate, Miss Ida has been putting her own handprint on how each person who comes to work in the program is taught to do the job.

"Treat them with respect." This is Miss Ida's mantra. "Treat them like they are your own." Her eyes light up when she recalls an evaluation where a supervisor remarked that she was "too possessive of the consumers."

She smiles when she talks about how she responded. "If that's the worst thing you can put on there, I'm sorry. Because I feel like each and every one of them is mine!"

When the subject turns to retirement, Miss Ida turns pensive. "It's time for me to rest." But she's not ready to fully let go. Her plan is to reduce her time caring for her "angels."

"I'll keep coming until I'm too tired to come anymore, I guess." ▽

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



Vodec is Certified by:

- ♦ Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
- ♦ Iowa Department of Human Services
- ♦ Iowa Medicaid Enterprise
- ♦ Nebraska Department of Education

Vodec is affiliated with the following organizations:

- ♦ Adel Partners Chamber of Commerce
- ♦ Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce
- ♦ Human Services Advisory Council
- ♦ Iowa Association of Community Providers
- ♦ Iowa Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
- ♦ National Association of Service Providers (NASP)
- ♦ Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM)
- ♦ Omaha Chamber of Commerce
- ♦ Sarpy County Chamber of Commerce

Vodec is an authorized provider in the following Iowa HealthLink networks:

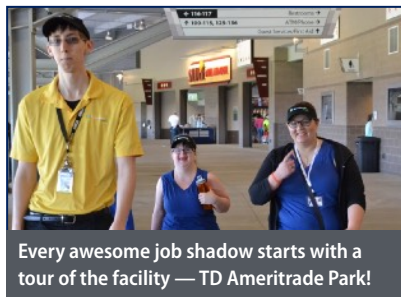
- ♦ Amerihealth Caritas
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Thank you! To our valued supporters...

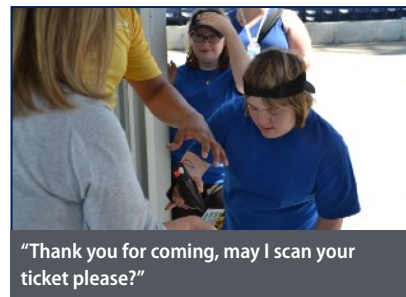
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Elizabeth Collings
Linda Steensland
Macayla McIntyre
Recebba Korth

Best Summer Job Ever?



Every awesome job shadow starts with a tour of the facility — TD Ameritrade Park!



"Thank you for coming, may I scan your ticket please?"

Who: Iowa Adult Transition Program/Supported Employment **What:** Shadowing Stadium Ushers
Where: TD Ameritrade Park **When:** Gorgeous summery day in May
Why: ATP would never pass up a chance to showcase that you can work, make money, AND have fun at a summer job. **Outcome:** Loved it!





Steve Hodapp
Vodec CEO

Notes From The CEOs Desk

A major focus these days is on inclusion, as in including consumers in their communities at more depth. The onus on LTSS providers (Long Term Services and Supports) including Vodec is to help consumers get to that greater depth.

In this issue of Vodec's Voice there is an emphasis on supported employment accessed through Project Search and a recent reverse job fair. Supported employment is one avenue for consumers to become more included in their communities. Getting a job is only the beginning.

Employment creates opportunities for consumers to learn how public transportation can answer the question, How do I get to work. Another answer is building natural supports. This could include making friends on the job and seeing if there could be transportation arranged with them quid pro quo: gas money in exchange for rides, perhaps. We've all coughed up that proverbial 'five bucks for gas' to the driver. The employment scenario could be one of them for employed consumers.

Employment can also enhance consumers' social lives. It does it for them the same way it does it for you. A paycheck helps make possible a night out with friends or to go on a date. It enables consumers to fully participate in those potlucks in their neighborhoods.

It provides a means to the forging of friendships and creating a support system.

At Vodec and other LTSS providers there's a lot of rhetoric targeting consumers' capacity to be more included in their communities.

LTSS providers are charged with facilitating inclusion from the perspective of CMS (Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services). Medicaid pays for a lot of what LTSS providers do. But who's on the front lines with us? YOU!

YOU, family member and guardian

YOU, case manager or service coordinator

YOU, business person

YOU, neighbor

WE are all on the front lines together to help consumers reach their full potential. Thank you for support provided so far. Thank you for support you continue to provide. We're all in this together.

Honoring Fallen Deputy



Iowa CARES consumers participating in community honors for Pottawattamie County Deputy Sheriff Mark Burbridge who was killed in the line of duty.

WHAT IS WIOA?

The Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act (WIOA) is a federal law signed in 2015. It mandates the workforce of the future to be fully accommodating to people with disabilities, and establishes incentives for companies to start re-tooling themselves to comply now. It makes community employment the goal for every person who can and will work.

Iowa's implementation of the law includes a restructure of vocational rehabilitation policy to make community employment the first, and a recurring option for every consumer seeking or receiving vocational services.

"Reverse Job Fair..."

(...continued from page 1)

preparation. Thomas Jefferson High School offered space. It became the kind of collaboration communities will need to create the best opportunities for people with disabilities under the new rules.

The presentation challenge was solved by a massive effort to make sure the 16 job-seekers Vodec sent to the fair looked, sounded, and **were** ready to be hired.

Right now. On the spot.

The day of the fair was one of those rainy, dark and cloudy days you probably remember from a few weeks ago.

But spirits were high in the TJHS Field House.

The job-seekers hit it out of the park!

Jennifer Smith does some of the hiring at CHI Health-Mercy Hospital. She said she was surprised at what her conversations revealed.

"I knew there would be very different levels of functionality, but this group was as well prepared as some of the employees I interview every week."

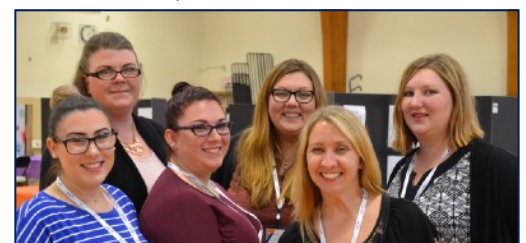
That reaction from an employer is the exact outcome our community needs to create more of, to successfully reach the workforce goals lawmakers in Washington have set.

We believe it is a bright future, and we intend to play a productive role in helping it develop.

Three consumers were offered jobs on the spot, and several more invited to begin the interview process with local companies at the fair.

We will be working on our collaboration, presentation, and preparation for the Second Annual Reverse Job Fair. Looking for the future? It's starting here and now.

Stay tuned...



The Iowa Supported Community Employment Team worked tirelessly to get the applicants ready for their job interview(s) experience. Kudos, ladies!



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Vodec is looking for ways to help cut our mailing costs.

We would like to encourage you to help us by going paperless. We will continue to deliver all the news you expect without all the paper that needs to be recycled. Please contact Stew via email at kstewart@vodec.org to let him know you're ready to go digital. You can also call Stew at 712.328.2638 to register for a text reminder. Please consider this and help Vodec go green.



Iowa Residential spends a day at the Zoo

Summer for Iowa Residential means "put on something comfy, and let's go DO something!"

Here are a few highlights from their mid-May trip to the Henry Doorly Zoo. The weather was flawless, if a bit warm. The mood was adventurous, and almost all of the animals were in a mood to be stared at.. Each picture is worth 1,000 words, but here are the two most frequent comments from the trip that the pictures don't exactly say: "Whew. This is a LOT of walking! I'm tired."

followed by...

"I LOVE animals. This is the best day ever."

Favorite exhibit of the day: Lions



Clockwise from Top Left: Vodec Consumer Tommy and Vodec IA Residential Manager Micky pause for a break from all the walking. | Vodec Consumers Elise (L) and Kathy enter the bubble for a closer look at the gorillas. | Lions resting in the shade | The group stops to watch a passing family of ducks.

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