



## Vodec Consumers Express Themselves through Making Ceramics at Hot Shops

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The value of arts for individuals with disabilities is crucial.

The arts are healing and meditative and provide an outlet for expression and help foster self-esteem. With this in mind, consumers from Vodec's Omaha Cares program participated in a series of workshops at Omaha's Hot Shops Art Studios located at 1301 Nicolas Street in March and April to not only explore their personal creativity but also find new ways to find their voices.

"Art activities strengthen cognitive and physical skills such as oral, tactile, visual, sensory, and motor skills," said Kim Sellmeyer, executive director of Hot Shops. "It teaches how to advocate for an idea and listen constructively. Artistic expression is a necessary part of finding happiness in one's life. Tim Barry served as the instructor for these workshops having taught ceramics for 40 years. Barry is one of the founders of Hot Shops.

They started with a tour of the Hot Shops so they could see all the possibilities and generate ideas about what they wanted to do when they came back.

A two-part clay session was ultimately chosen because it was something very unique. "Their first session involved working with wet clay," Sellmeyer said. "Everyone was able to design their own unique drinking cup by using carving and molding techniques. They came back two weeks later to learn how to glaze their now bisque-fired cups."



From Left to Right: Thomas, Maggie, Rebecca, and Jonathan glaze pottery at Hot Shop's artist's lofts in Omaha, NE.

Sellmeyer said this project originated from Carolyn Anderson, formerly with the Why Arts program and a huge advocate for programming for the special needs community, who came to Hot Shops last year regarding the need for more arts programming for this population.

She encouraged Hot Shops to apply for a Nebraska Arts Council grant that would help cover 50% of the programming costs. They were granted funding for six months of programs.

"We've heard one participant say that she really feels like an artist when she comes to the Hot Shops, and another, a consumer who is quadriplegic and learned to paint using her mouth, said that being at the Hot Shops made her feel like a real person again." Sellmeyer said.

Sellmeyer added that creativity gives individuals of all levels of abilities hope and a feeling of "real." "Being a part of doing something so profound for another – well, it just doesn't get much better than that!"



Steve Hodapp, CEO

## We're Looking for Someone You May Know

Ever since COVID-19 was declared real in early 2020 there have been challenges for many employers to meet their labor needs.

During the first phase, it was layoffs as customers slowed down purchasing and recreational activities. Then, businesses began opening up again and challenges became recruiting and retaining employees.

Vodec has not done layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic. We tried to be proactive to future needs by retaining as many employees as possible and letting natural attrition manage the rightsizing to handle labor needs. For example, in our day programs, the daily consumer attendance dropped from consumers' and guardians' fears around exposure to COVID-19. Employee attrition eventually gave us the correct number of employees in day programs.

We've also made some business decisions to meet labor challenges. For example, we thoughtfully transitioned consumers in most of our 24-hour group homes to contracted family-centered host homes (Iowa) or shared living providers (Nebraska).

This reduced our need for labor and enabled consumers to be in more of a community setting. We absorbed as many of the employees into other areas as wanted to be transferred.

Now there are vaccines for COVID-19. It seems fewer people are getting sick, there are fewer deaths, and cases are not as severe for many as were at the beginning. As a result, we are experiencing a resurgence of consumers wanting to return to day programs and an influx of new consumers, as well.

So now there's an invigorated effort to recruit additional employees and retain them. We're using all the tools at our disposal in this effort. We promote a positive culture at Vodec. The opportunities for movement into other positions through lateral and upward mobility are talked-up. Training is offered for new skills and strengthening existing skills. And we offer competitive hiring, referral, and retention incentives.

I'm asking for your help with recruitment. If you know someone looking for a meaningful job, whether first time or for a change, please mention that Vodec is looking for them. I'm using this space as a recruitment tool. Please route interested persons to our HR group (712-328-2638) or refer to Indeed.com. I'll really appreciate your help. Thank you.

**The whole world is short on staff.  
Be kind to those who showed up.**



**Vodec is experiencing the same labor challenges as most other employers. We're all just as frustrated by it as you are, although for maybe different reasons. If you have occasion to interact with our employees, please be kind to them and express your appreciation for them showing up. After all, they're caring for your loved one here.**

## Greg Wenninghoff Celebrates 10 Years of Work

Greg Wenninghoff is celebrating his 10th year of employment at the Amelia House. Amelia House is an assisted living facility in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Vodec's Council Bluffs, Iowa Supported Employment Supervisor, Tiffany Foley accepted Greg into the Supported Employment program in Council Bluffs, Iowa in the fall of 2011. With the assistance of Vodec's supported employment employees, Greg applied and interviewed for a maintenance position in April of 2012. Amelia House hired Greg, and he has been working there since.

Greg enjoys performing housekeeping and maintenance duties around the facility. He cleans rooms each week and assists residents when they



Above: (left to right) Katey Mikels, Supported Employment Coordinator, Greg Wennighoff, and Tiffany Foley, Supported Employment Supervisor, pose with Greg's anniversary plaque.

need it. He has learned to use the dishwasher and the complex process of cleaning floors.

Tiffany Foley Supported Employment Supervisor from Vodec Council Bluffs, IA, says "Greg always has a great attitude the minute he walks in the door. He is also very willing to learn new things like using a spray painter and how to assemble furniture. Greg's supervisor knows he can count on Greg."

## We are thankful for these generous donors.

**Donna Bush**  
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### Vodec is certified by:

- The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)
- Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services
- Iowa Department of Human Services
- Nebraska Department of Education
- Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services



### Vodec is affiliated with the following organizations:

- Council Bluffs, Iowa Chamber of Commerce
- Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC)
- Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP)
- Iowa Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
- Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP)
- Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce (NE)

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

- Amerigroup
- Iowa Total Care



### Vodec Entrance Criteria:

- Be at least 16 years of age for employment services
- Have behavior that is not dangerous to self or others
- Have medical needs within Vodec's scope of service
- Have transportation needs within Vodec's capability to provide
- Have funding in place prior to service provision

For more information or to apply for Vodec services, contact Daryn Richardson at [drichardson@vodec.org](mailto:drichardson@vodec.org) or call (712) 328-2638.





612 S. Main Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

Our mission 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.

Vodec is an equal opportunity employer. There is equal opportunity for services and for employment, retention and advancement without regard to race, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability and veteran status or any other classifications protected by state or federal law.

Vodec is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Donations may be tax-deductible.

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