



Vodec Consumers Have a Voice in Outing Selections

There's a simple yet direct reason why consumers in Vodec's Omaha, NE Cares program enjoy visiting Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium during their scheduled outings.

They want to see the animals.

"The zoo appears to be a special outing for our consumers, something they are always excited to engage in," said Megan Davidson, Day Services Coordinator in Nebraska.

During their zoo visits, Vodec employees ask consumers for their input on what they would like to see. Then, putting a plan together as a group helps the outing run smoothly. As a part of the plan, employees promote and assist in applying sunblock as needed, reminding them to increase their water intake, and short breaks to sit and relax a bit between exhibits.

"With excess walking, it can be tiring for our consumers," Davidson said. "Luckily, the fun makes it worth it."



Above: Enjoying the Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium in Omaha, NE is Omaha Nebraska Cares consumer Michaela and Megan Davidson, Day Services Coordinator.



Above: Nebraska Cares consumers Michael (front) and Jonathan (behind) hang out with friends in the Lied Jungle at the Henry-Doorly Zoo & Aquarium in Omaha, NE.

In the Cares program, there is a routine for outing selections.

Each month, employees distribute an activity/outing calendar to each consumer. The calendar provides consumers with three outing options for each day, all of which are a mixture of preferences communicated by consumers or by employees' observations of positive reactions by consumers.

Each morning in Cares, employees and consumers review this calendar and put together an outing plan between the preferred options offered for the day.

"We consistently encourage consumers to voice which outing options they enjoy the most and encourage consumers to suggest new outing options they would like. This self-advocacy allows us to continue providing consumers with outing options that will bring them joy," added Davidson.



Steve Hodapp, Vodec CEO

The Importance of Person-Centered Planning & Consumer Choice

In serving persons with developmental disabilities, we hear a lot about person-centered planning (PCP). PCP is a focal point at Vodec. PCP gives opportunity for a person with a developmental disability to be engaged in decision-making about his or her life.

PCP treats the person with dignity and respect. It empowers the person to set personal goals with a right to make informed choices, and to take responsibility for those choices and associated risks. The focus is on the person, not the disability.

PCP is supported by a team which should be chosen by the person, and should include family members, legal guardians, friends, caregivers, and others the person would like to be involved. But key to it is the person with the disability being involved to the maximum extent possible, even if the person has a legal representative.

Why mention person-centered planning? As mentioned, it's an integral tenet at Vodec.

Unfortunately, some caregivers, legal representatives or service providers do not honor this tenet.

Sometimes decision-making is done for the consumer. When this is the practice despite the person's ability to understand the outcomes and risks, then it infringes upon the person's opportunity to experience choice. Choice adds value to a person's life.

There are anecdotes about infringements since the COVID-19 pandemic started. These involve choices made for a person about whether or where they can attend a day program, or whether a person may participate in programs offered by multiple providers. Such infringements are restrictions on the person's ability to enjoy the benefits of PCP. If the person is not involved in the decision-making process, it is not PCP.

At Vodec you should not see restrictions like these. Vodec supports PCP. I hope you do, too.

Norma and Conner -- A Match Made at Vodec



Above: Norma and Conner

When they met at Vodec in 2016, Conner Lott and Norma Hammers quickly formed a friendship. More than five years later, that friendship has evolved into love, and they are engaged to be married this July.

They will be getting married in the clubhouse at Cutty's Camping Club in Des Moines. Many of Conner's family members live in Des Moines," said Collin Hames, Southwest Iowa Residential Services Manager.

"There will be a ceremony and a reception, and they will have Harley Davidson orange and black decorations, a caterer, and dance music."

Conner's aunt and father helped plan the wedding. Also involved were Norma's and Conner's case managers. Additional assistance came from the host home families for both of them, indicating the strong bond and commitment between them all and fostered by Vodec.

Both Conner and Norma have completed Vodec's pre-vocational program and are working community jobs – Norma at Pizza Ranch and Conner at Ameristar Casino.



Above: Enjoying a break after the concert at Prairie Meadows Casino in Des Moines, Iowa, (left to right) are consumers Connie, Edna, and Sharaya

Opportunities for outings increase for consumers as restrictions from COVID-19 mandates eased. Due to the restrictions, consumers could not attend some of their favorite locations, such as Prairie Meadows Casino in Des Moines, IA. The Des Moines, IA casino is a favorite place because consumers love watching live music and hitting the dancefloor.

Live Music Tuesdays is a Favorite Outing

As a result of the eased restrictions, Vodec consumers are resuming their visits to Prairie Meadows for dancing and music every Tuesday.

According to Vodec Urbandale, IA employees, Prairie Meadows' employees are as excited to have the consumers return as the consumers are. "The consumers had a wonderful experience," said Dawson DeVaney, Day Services Coordinator for Vodec in Urbandale, IA. "The Prairie Meadows staff make all our consumers feel right at home."

We are thankful for these generous donors.

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- 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 or call (712) 328-2638.



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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.
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