



**The Vodec Voice**

A Publication of the Vocational Development Center, Inc.

Realizing **Potential**

**January-February 2020**

## SAVE THE DATE: Annual Valentine's Day Dance Feb. 13

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COUNCIL BLUFFS – Are you ready to celebrate? Vodec's annual Valentine's Day Dance for metro area consumers will be held Thursday, Feb. 13, from 6:00 to 8:00pm at the Mid-America Center, 1 Arena Way in Council Bluffs. Tickets are \$10 per person at the door.

The evening will include a DJ, food and a whole lot of fun. The event is sponsored in part by Avila Bank in Carroll, Iowa, and American National Bank in Council Bluffs.

"Our consumers look forward to this event every year," said Vodec CEO Steve Hodapp. "It's a chance to dress up, get out in the community and have fun with friends and Vodec staff." To R.S.V.P., email [vodecevents@vodec.org](mailto:vodecevents@vodec.org).



Red is a popular color at the annual dance.

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# Join or Donate to Our Polar Plunge Team

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polar plunge (noun and verb): 1. the act of chilling your body and warming your heart to raise money for more than 16,000 Special Olympics Athletes and unified partners in the State of Iowa

COUNCIL BLUFFS – Are you ready to brave the frigid waters of Lake Manawa or donate to support the Vodec Vikings, our Special Olympics team? The 2020 Polar Plunge in Council Bluffs will be held Saturday, March 21, at the Lake Manawa Yacht Club in Council Bluffs.

The event kicks off at noon. Jade Donovan, Vodec's residential services manager in Council Bluffs, is serving as captain of the 2020 Vodec Vikings Polar Plunge Team. "This annual event is a cold, but fun one, and we encourage anyone with an interest in our Special Olympics squad to consider joining our team," Donovan said.

The post-party, which includes food, prizes and music, will be held at Barley's, 114 West Broadway. The minimum fundraising level for a team member is \$75 – also known as the BBBeginning Level.

For more information about joining or donating to the Vodec Vikings team, email [jdonovan@vodec.org](mailto:jdonovan@vodec.org).



Vodec loves participating in the Polar Plunge!



# Vodec Annual Report | FY 2019

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*by Vodec CEO Steve Hodapp*

This report is a summary of significant events occurring during fiscal year 2019 – July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019. It was a year full of activity with little time to catch our breath. During it all, I was curious to see how things would play out. Overall, they played out nicely.

I need to note that decisions made are weighed on their impact on services to consumers and on consumers directly. We want to make sure consumers have every opportunity to reach their full potential. Our intention is to be ethical and meaningful in what we do.

So, let's begin.

## **Change in Transportation Services**

We were shocked early in the year with news from the Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities that we would not be able to continue accessing subcontracted transportation for our Nebraska consumers in our day services. This practice would have to stop when the Division's proposed Medicaid waivers were approved by CMS (Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services).

The wild card was the anticipated approval date kept moving, so planning was challenging. Approval finally came and was effective Oct. 1, 2019.

To transition from using subcontracted services to internal provision service, we added 21 vehicles – including four mini-buses – to our fleet, we hired drivers and a transportation supervisor, and we



invested in routing software and hardware.

Outside of a couple of bumps in the first week or so, the transition was successful. Kudos to all the folks who rose to this challenge!

### **Elm Facelift**

Our Omaha Elm program at 7110 F Street got a facelift. Some interior walls were removed to create open space.

Flooring was replaced, lighting was updated, and warm and bright color was added to the walls following a palette 'borrowed' from Omaha Public Schools' beautiful new J.P. Lord School that opened in 2018. The result was improved visibility and fewer barriers to mobility. I thank our internal design team and the construction crew for this enhancement to Elm service.

### **3-Year CARF Re-accreditation**

We hosted a Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) team of surveyors who reviewed our pre-vocational, supported employment, administration, Cares and Elm programs across Omaha, NE, and Council Bluffs and Urbandale, IA. Not surprisingly, the outcome was a maximum three-year re-accreditation! We were pretty happy with this.

### **IME Reviewer Visit**

We also were visited by Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME) reviewers who explored our Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) in Council Bluffs and Urbandale, IA. The result of this review was a maximum three-year re-certification, about which we also very happy.

### **New Tiered Rates**

During the year we learned new rates for services in Iowa would roll out in March 2019 and in Nebraska on a date tied to the Division's proposed Medicaid waivers being approved. In both states, these are tiered rates, representing varied levels of need determined by a consumer's skills' assessment. Based on consumer census, we anticipated a net increase to service fee revenue in Iowa and a net decrease in Nebraska.

### **UHC Exits Iowa**

In Iowa, another managed care organization (MCO) – United Health Care (UHC) – announced plans to leave the state before the end of the fiscal year. UHC was replaced by Iowa Total Care July 1, 2019.

This activity meant the reassignment of thousands of consumers who had been assigned to UHC and again when consumers were reallocated between Amerigroup and Iowa Total Care. Our role was to try keeping services in force to consumers in transition between MCOs.

This was challenging, as gaps in funding developed. This has forced us to become more business-like in our administrative services while remaining consistent in the provision of quality service to consumers.

One challenge facing us and Nebraska consumers interested in our employment training services was created with the Division's assumed position of payor of last resort, meaning that it would not fund a perceived duplicate service provided by Nebraska's Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Though the position was challenged through the year, it was not until October 2019 that there was softening in the position supported by CMS. The gap of referrals for employment training negatively impacted not only potential consumers who wanted the service but providers, including us, who had the services to provide.

### **Supported Employment Services Gets Highest Rating**

Vodec's supported employment services in Council Bluffs received an overall CRP (Community Rehab Provider) highest rating of 10, placing Vodec first among Community Rehab Providers throughout the State of Iowa. According to data collected during the federal fiscal year ending in early 2018 by the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), Vodec was the *only* CRP to have an overall score of 10. Data was collected on 76 CRPs across the state.

Once again, congratulations and thank you to our Council Bluffs supported employment team. Certainly, there were other significant events, and you may ask about them. These are just those that were high points or particularly challenging.

### **Thank You**

I thank the board of directors for another year of support of our mission. Directors volunteer their time and talents to provide guidance and direction to Vodec. I sense they do this in the spirit of being community minded. They are invaluable.

I offer appreciation to all the families and other stakeholders who entrust Vodec with serving consumers. They chose Vodec as the service provider. We all work very hard to maintain that trust.

I must also praise Vodec employees. These people care immensely about what they do. I observe them treat consumers respectfully and patiently. I hear their laughter and concerns.

There are not enough words to let you know how good they are, nor how appreciated they are.

### **Financial Annual Report FY19**

*The link above is a summary of the audit report for FY19 prepared by Schroer & Associates, P.C. The summary shows a statement of financial position and a statement of activities for FY19 in comparison with FY18. Vodec ended FY19 in strong fiscal health. This position comes from being prudent with resources while providing quality services to consumers. Financial oversight is done monthly by the board of directors. Monthly financial reports are reviewed in open-book style with the management team. There are strong fiscal practices and policies to assure prompt and accurate payments are made and an accounting for collections.*



# Vodec in the Community: Meet Jennifer Ueding

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COUNCIL BLUFFS – If you're ever at Taco Bell and in a quandary about what to order for breakfast, Jennifer Ueding has a suggestion for you – the Breakfast Crunchwrap with sausage, a grilled tortilla filled with breakfast fixings that fits in the palm of your hand.

Jennifer, a Vodec consumer, is somewhat of an expert on the subject. She works the morning shift three days a week with other members of the Taco Bell crew on East Broadway in Council Bluffs. "I like to make it clean for customers, and I like to make my boss happy," she said.



Jennifer (at right) with Nikole Howard, her manager at Taco Bell.

The Glenwood native is responsible for cleaning the restaurant, including keeping the grounds free of cigarette butts – a position she's held for two years. "I'm excited and happy I have this job," Jennifer said. "It helps me pay bills and buy the groceries I need."

Jennifer is picked up at 6:45am each work day by her job coach, who remains on site, oversees her work efforts and delivers her home at the end of her shift. On a recent trip to work, she told her job coach, "I'm going to work hard today, no buts about it."

Jennifer first honed her job skills on the work floor at Vodec in Council Bluffs. Staff taught her the importance of being on time, staying on task and asking your supervisor for help if you're struggling with something. The experience helped build Jennifer's confidence and led to her eventual placement at Taco Bell. "I was really nervous about the interview, but everyone was so nice that I was able to get through it okay," she said.

On her days off, Jennifer attends Vodec's day habilitation services in Council Bluffs, where she enjoys hanging out with her friends and participating in all the activities the program offers.

When she's not on the job or at Vodec, she likes to draw and paint at her Council Bluffs home with her roommates. She also likes to spend time with Richard, her fiancé, and visit with her mother, Mae, who works two jobs and cooks for local veterans' groups as a volunteer. "I love my mom because she takes care of me, and I'm proud of her," Jennifer said. In the future, she's thinking about attending Iowa Western Community College to pursue her interest in art. But for now, her days are full of life and community experiences.

For more information about Vodec's supported employment program, contact Erin Gantz at [egantz@vodec.org](mailto:egantz@vodec.org).



# Vodec Launches Community-Based Work Program

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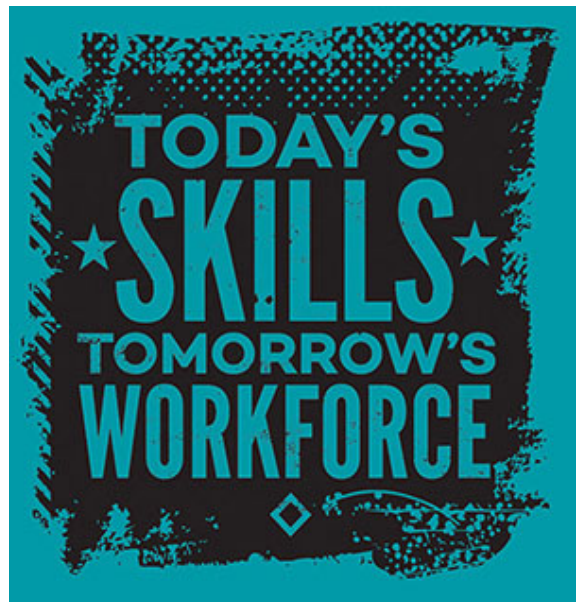
COUNCIL BLUFFS – Oftentimes, the best way to learn something is to practice doing it.

Starting this January, students from three Iowa school districts will be given firsthand exposure to the workplace through *Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Workforce*, Vodec's new community-based employment program.

The program, which launches Jan. 20, will give participants the opportunity to explore different work environments and experience what it's like to have a job.

Council Bluffs Community School District officials approached Vodec last summer to discuss the possibility of expanding the district's community-based work options for students with mild or moderate intellectual disabilities, said Vodec's Western Iowa Services Operations Director Mark Stromer. "Transitioning from school life to life after graduation is an important step in the growth and development of all students, and we're pleased to be able to add this program to our existing services," Stromer said.

When school is in session, those enrolled will spend one two-hour session with the program Monday through Friday. One of the sessions will involve classroom work, and the remainder will be spent at a job site. Vodec staff will be present at each site to train, supervise and evaluate the students with input from job site staff. Each job site will offer a number of rotations related to specific jobs, including custodial, clerical, food service and front desk service, among others. Each rotation will last about six weeks. All students will receive minimum wage for the hours they work.





The students won't displace regular employees, Stromer said. They must be at least 16 to participate, and enrollment in the program does not ensure the student a job when it concludes.

The Council Bluffs, Lewis Central and Tri Center school districts will participate in the program's inaugural sessions at two job sites – The Healthy Living Center at the Y and Planet Fitness in Council Bluffs. "Our goal is to grow our job sites and have a variety of rotations available so schools can assign their students to get training in a specific area," Stromer said. The program also will work with the job sites to create courses for job-specific certifications like Serve Safe, a certification exam for food service professionals.

Jenny Salsbury, day services supervisor for Vodec's Adult Transition Program (ATP), will oversee *Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Workforce*.

For more information about becoming a *Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Workforce* job site, contact Stromer at [mstromer@vodec.org](mailto:mstromer@vodec.org). If you're a school district interested in receiving more information, contact Vodec Services Development Director Daryn Richardson at [drichardson@vodec.org](mailto:drichardson@vodec.org).

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# Briefly

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## **HSAC to Meet Twice Yearly**

Vodec's Human Services Advisory Committee will begin meeting two times a year starting in 2020. The HSAC is organized for the recipients of Vodec services covered under Nebraska Title 404. Current members include:

- Consumer Sean Sobilo
- Consumer Jose McDermott
- Shana Frodyma, Omaha Public Schools supervisor
- Erick Maxwell, Redler's Pharmacy
- Marcia Riley, parent
- Miles Havekost, parent

Micky Jackson, Vodec's Nebraska services operations director, chairs the committee.

## **Thank You For Your Support**

The following list reflects donations to Vodec from Dec. 2 to Dec. 23, 2019:

- Donna Bush
- Miles and Crystal Havekost
- Scott and Alisa Glienke
- Availa Foundation
- David and Maureen Sobilo
- Jeremy Dunkirk
- Jacque Evans
- Steve Hodapp
- Maria Mabe

- Andrea Smith

You can donate via PayPal, visit [www.vodec.org/donors](http://www.vodec.org/donors) or send checks and money orders to:  
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