



THE VOICE | #realizingpotential

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2020

Vodec provides 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. We are 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 classification protected by state or federal law.

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## Vodec Hosts First Virtual Dance Party Series



*1 - The party box, which included a blow-up microphone, was a hit with virtual dance party participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 85.*

Vodec consumers love to dance. So when COVID-19 forced the cancellation of Vodec's annual Halloween dance, staff put their heads together to come up with an alternative.

The solution - a virtual dance party, one that would allow consumers to see and chat with their friends, request songs and dance to current hits, all from the safety of their homes.

The first ever Vodec Virtual Dance Party series debuted Nov. 12-14 via Zoom. Each of Vodec's development centers in Omaha, Council Bluffs and Urbandale hosted its own virtual event. Fifty-four consumers participated in the dances. The \$10 admission fee included a party box with limited edition swag, snacks, party favors and props.

Those who questioned the idea at first grew to see its value. Here's the feedback from one parent:

"When she bought the paper home, I thought it was a crazy idea to have a virtual dance and make them pay \$10 to sit at home for two hours on the computer with a virtual dance. Little did I realize how much this would mean to her. She was so excited from the time we signed her up until Saturday night. I hope you continue to promote these kinds of things. Last year that would have been a crazy idea. But with the life we are all living now, it provided a safe activity for them to enjoy. I did not have to worry about her exposure or what situation she was in. So from a previous doubter, I want to thank you for giving her something to enjoy and look forward to. We don't have enough of that right now."

Watch for more virtual events soon!

For more information about virtual services at Vodec, contact Services Development Director Daryn Richardson at [drichardson@vodec.org](mailto:drichardson@vodec.org).

*Click on the clip below to view a snapshot of the virtual dance party in Council Bluffs.*



<https://sway.office.com/adBkPEHmDOSX3thp#content=J0RuTihJ98IS7J>

## UV Sterilizers Now in Place at Urbandale Development Center



*2 - Sanitizer boxes use ultraviolet light to sanitize a host of items, anything from cell phones to credit cards.*

It looks like a microwave oven. But instead of heating up your coffee or last night's leftovers, it sanitizes whatever you place on its shelves.

Vodec's Urbandale Development Center is now home to a pair of sanitizer boxes that use ultraviolet light to sanitize items, anything from cell phones to credit cards. The acquisition is the latest effort by Vodec staff to create a safe, physical environment for consumers who attend day services.

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*"We take the health and safety of our consumers seriously, and we're constantly researching new ways to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the flu, now that we're entering the colder months," said Sheila Stoneburner, Vodec's services operations director for the Urbandale Development Center.*

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Sanitizer box technology is nothing new. Barber shops, tattoo parlors and hair/nail salons have been using them for years to sanitize the equipment they use to perform their services.

Vodec is adopting this practice to sanitize craft supplies, wooden puzzles and sensory items like manipulating blocks and fidget toys that a consumer attending day services may use.

During the last hour of services each day, Vodec staff begins collecting and sanitizing items from that day's programming so they are ready for use the next day. The process takes about eight to 10 minutes. When the timer goes off, gloved staff place the sanitized items in bags that are stored until the items are needed.

"It's just become a daily part of our routine cleaning processes here," Stoneburner said.

In addition to the sanitizer boxes, Stoneburner has instituted a number of new sanitation practices in recent weeks:

- ServiceMaster does a microbial spraying of the center every 60 days with a product that's been proven to kill the COVID-19 virus. In between sprayings, the company stops by the center to do swab testing of various surfaces to see how the product is performing.
- The Urbandale Development Center has begun using Goldshield 24, a hand sanitizer that's not alcohol based. It creates a barrier of protection that lasts all day - even after washing your hands with soap and water.
- New triangle tables designed to seat individual consumers have been purchased that allow the center to provide services in its existing space while still adhering to six-foot social distancing guidelines.

"Vodec has always worked hard to bend, never break, when faced with challenges," said Vodec CEO Steve Hodapp. "I'm proud of our staff who come up with ways to successfully meet them."



*3 - New triangle tables seat individual consumers to maintain safe social distancing guidelines.*

For more information about Vodec services in Central Iowa, contact Stoneburner at [sstoneburner@vodec.org](mailto:sstoneburner@vodec.org).

## A Look Back at Halloween 2020

All of Vodec's development centers got into the spooky spirit last month. More photos are available on our [Facebook page](#), and watch our Haunted Hall video below!













<https://sway.office.com/adBkPEHmDOSX3thp#content=e9OMxnfYzFzKnP>

4 - The Haunted Hall at Vodec's Council Bluffs Development Center is an annual tradition - watch if you dare! See more Vodec videos on Vodec TV, our YouTube Channel. [Subscribe today...it's free!](#)

## Giving Tuesday Dec. 1



Nonprofits the world over will celebrate Giving Tuesday on Dec. 1. The event was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. During the past seven years, Giving Tuesday has grown into a global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate and celebrate generosity.

This year, metro area nonprofit [SHAREOmaha](#) is powering this day of doing good in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metro. Vodec is participating in **#GivingTuesday712**, and all donations received Dec. 1 will benefit Vodec's supported employment program at the Council Bluffs Development Center.

[Click here to access Vodec's SHAREOmaha profile.](#) You can make a donation or purchase an item for Vodec from our Wish List. You also can donate directly to Vodec via PayPal at [www.vodec.org/donate](http://www.vodec.org/donate).

If you [follow us on Facebook](#), you can like and share our **#GivingTuesday712** posts leading up to the event. Every action counts. Thanks for your time and consideration!

## Support Vodec with Amazon Smile



As the holiday season approaches in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, growing numbers of customers are turning to their computers to get their shopping done. If you're an Amazon user, you can use AmazonSmile to benefit Vodec with your purchases!

AmazonSmile is available at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) on your web browser and can be activated in the Amazon Shopping app for iOS and Android phones. When you shop at AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same shopping experience that you do at Amazon.com.

The difference? When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice.

It's easy to make Vodec your charity of choice! If it's your first time on [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), just log in with your existing Amazon account information and select "Vodec" as your charitable organization. Vodec will receive a .5 percent donation for each eligible purchase you make.

If you initially selected another charity and would like to change it to Vodec, that's easy, too! Visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and log in with your existing Amazon account information, then select "Change your Charity" in "Your Account." You can also visit AmazonSmile under settings on your Amazon Shopping app and select "Change your Charity."

Here's to happy holidays for all!

## Special Holiday Message from the CEO

Hello, everyone. You know Thanksgiving is this month. A month later, there'll be Christmas. Both holidays just scream family gatherings.

I shouldn't have to remind you we're in a pandemic. COVID-19 has been part of our lives since March. Some of our consumers and their family members, maybe you, have had the virus. Most of those who have had it will tell you it's nothing to mess with.

So, I am asking you to be very careful during your activities during the holidays. Maybe some families, not just mine, will decide to postpone a typical family gathering. But if you do join a holiday gathering, please err on the side of caution:

- Wear a mask

- Wash your hands often
- Practice social distancing
- Have hand sanitizer available and use it

I just ask that if you participate in a gathering of any sort or have a consumer do so, to please use cautionary strategies that are advised by the CDC. Doing this will help us get through the holidays without more hardship than already experienced and will enable us to continue providing quality service to our consumers.

Thank you, and happy holidays!

## Work Experience Program Expands to Lakin YMCA









It's a facility that commands your attention, whether you're entering the gleaming two-story incubator for wellness on foot or driving past it on West Kanesville Boulevard in downtown Council Bluffs.

The Charles E. Lakin YMCA, one of the largest in the United States at 78,000 square feet, is as impressive today as when it first opened in 2017. This semester, it's also work headquarters for a group of Vodec student consumers.



They are part of *Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Workforce*, a Vodec program that provides students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities with the opportunity to do real work in a real work environment under the instruction and supervision of Vodec staff.

Vodec's Council Bluffs Development Center launched the program last January with eight students and one work site - the YMCA Healthy Living Center across the street from Vodec's Council Bluffs headquarters. It then expanded to the Lakin campus this fall.

Here's how it works: students work at a local business several hours each day up to five days a week during the school year. They perform a variety of roles, depending on the needs of the business. At the Lakin Y, Charity, Andrew, Precious and other program participants are doing everything from helping out at the front desk to cleaning and sanitizing to serving as a greeter in ChildWatch - free, drop-in childcare for parents who want to work out or make use of the Y's other services.

Throughout the year, the students rotate through each job so they can experience everything available at that work site.

The students are paid an hourly wage for all work completed.

Vodec staff reports on the progress of each student to their respective teacher/IEP (Independent Educational Programming) team. "We work with each participating business to ensure that students and Vodec staff are following all the safety rules and precautions," said Mark Stromer, Vodec's services operations director for Western Iowa.

Vodec's job coaches are there to help the students succeed. "Not all students have the same learning style, so you have to be patient," said Angel Brooks, a veteran job coach at Vodec. "You have to give them time to learn, and you have to take the time to listen to what they need. If you can do that, you're increasing their opportunity for success."

On the other side of the equation, the businesses involved in the program gain the experience of working with a diverse group of individuals, which can lead to future jobs for the students, said Jenny Salisbury, day services supervisor at Vodec.

At the end of the year, participating businesses can offer employment to students but aren't obligated to do so. "In any case, the students gain valuable experience that can be noted on their resumes and/or employment applications," Stromer said.

As the program continues to grow, Vodec will add additional businesses to serve as work sites. If you're a business interested in becoming a work site, email Stromer at [mstromer@vodec.org](mailto:mstromer@vodec.org). If you're a school district interested in participating in the program, contact Vodec Services Development Director Daryn Richardson at [drichardson@vodec.org](mailto:drichardson@vodec.org).

## Steve's Corner: Reducing the Spread of COVID-19



*by Vodec CEO Steve Hodapp*

Ever since March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a health emergency in this country, life got different. For a while, household supplies and grocery items were absent from store shelves. Some folks had to isolate or quarantine. Families got angry about not being able to visit sons and daughters in long-term care facilities. People got sick. People died.

Vodec has not escaped the pandemic's wrath. We are in this together.

We've heard that phrase a lot since March. I guess it's supposed to make somebody feel better. Misery loves company. I guess if one person has to be miserable, it's better if we all are? I don't know that I buy that. I think it's an excuse to see the negative.

I tend to see things in a more positive light. My viewpoint is not a Pollyanna viewpoint. It is a frame of mind. It's looking at how things are and realizing they could be worse, but they are not. So, I figure things are not so bad so long as they are not worse. At Vodec, we are working hard to keep COVID-19 from making things worse here. How are we doing that?

Well...

- If you visit any Vodec space, you will be required to wear a mask and have your temperature taken.

- Social distancing is practiced here.
- Surfaces in conference rooms, break areas and common areas are cleaned often and thoroughly with appropriate disinfectants.
- Hand sanitizers are strategically placed for ease of access.
- Sneeze guards are installed on tabletops. We're also experimenting with sneeze guards in Vodec's vehicles, looking for units that are the best for our need.
- Employees are masked up when social distancing is not possible, but really, masks are on most of the time to be safe.
- We are becoming quite the aficionados at Zoom and learning more to be able to serve consumers unable to attend live programs and hold meetings that do not need to be in person.

And many more things. My point is that Vodec is not immune from COVID-19, but we are looking at ways to continue being a premier service provider by using mechanisms and tools that make sense and reduce the spread.

Reducing the spread is really all we can do. Our consumers and employees do not live in a bubble. They all come in contact with people who use various levels of caution. All we can control is what we can control. That pretty much limits our sphere of control to Vodec spaces.

We're doing the best we can, and I ask that you support our efforts by complying with guidelines we're following. Your help will be most appreciated.

Thank You for your Continuous Support



The following list reflects donations to Vodec from Sept. 1 through Nov. 9, 2020:

- Donna Bush

- Jeremy Dunkirk
- Jacque Evans
- Teresa Gleason
- Miles and Crystal Havekost
- Steve Hodapp
- Maria Mabe
- Andrea Smith

You can donate to Vodec via PayPal at [www.vodec.org/donate](http://www.vodec.org/donate) or send checks or money orders to:

Vodec

ATTN: Donations

612 S. Main Street

Council Bluffs, IA 51503

## Omaha Development Center Receives Two-Year Certification from Nebraska DHHS



Vodec's Omaha Development Center at 7110 F Street has received a two-year certification from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

"We are so proud of our team under Nebraska Service Operations Director Micky Jackson's leadership," said Vodec CEO Steve Hodapp. "Micky and her team really did a lot of work in preparation for this review over the prior couple of years, and it paid off."

For more information about available Vodec services in Nebraska, contact Jackson at [mjackson@vodec.org](mailto:mjackson@vodec.org).

## Contact Us

Do you have a question or a comment? We'd love to hear from you!

Vodec

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