



The Vodec Voice

November - December 2023

A Publication of the Vocational Development Center, Inc.

Vodec Consumers and Employees Celebrate Halloween Through Dancing, Food, Music, and Festive Gatherings



Above: Left to Right: Corey McCormick, Transportation Supervisor; Tresa Smith, Employment Training Supervisor; April Krause, Production Director; Amy Titus, Residential Supervisor; Micky Jackson, Services Operations Director, Kellie Katelman, Day Services Manager; Summer Covey, Residential Supervisor; Kay Akomolafe, Elm Supervisor; and Collin Hames, Cares Supervisor

In October, the Vodec locations hosted Halloween-themed events in Council Bluffs, Omaha, and Urbandale. These festive gatherings welcomed consumers to dance and celebrate the spooky season.

These events featured participation from consumers of every Vodec program, resulting in a joyous experience for all. Vodec's CEO, Steve Hodapp, expressed his delight with the outcome, acknowledging the exceptional efforts of the organization's Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in ensuring a warm welcome to every guest.

“The success of these events can be attributed not only to the DSPs, but also to the active involvement of Vodec consumers who participated in planning every detail, including the music, decorations, and snacks.” said Hodapp, “Our DSPs provided support for the consumer's choices.”

Programs in Nebraska celebrated Halloween with exciting activities such as the Mummy Wrap game, in which participants wrapped themselves in tissue paper to resemble mummies. Along with playing games, the consumers enjoyed some delicious pizza and had a Halloween costume dance that featured the latest music and creepy tunes.

The Vodec program in Urbandale, IA hosted a Halloween-themed event that included engaging activities such as games, pumpkin painting, a Mummy Wrap and taking pictures in costumes.

The highlight of the event was the haunted hallway that was creatively designed to offer a thrilling experience for the attendees.



Above: Katrina and Tae working on their entry for “Mummy Wrap” contest during the Halloween party in Urbandale.

Council Bluffs, IA programs also hosted an evening Halloween dance that featured a DJ, a light show, refreshments, a photo booth, and plenty of fun with friends. On Halloween day, the consumers donned their costumes and relished some tasty treats along with a hot dog lunch provided by Vodec. Council Bluffs also featured a haunted hallway experience called Grim's Gate, which was full of surprises for the attendees.



Left: Mary poses at the photo booth in her costume for Council Bluffs Halloween Dance.



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Vodec's DSPs recognize that for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the party scene is more than just an opportunity to have fun and socialize. It can be a challenge for them to find a place where they feel accepted and can let loose with their peers. That's where Vodec comes in.



Above left to right back row: Brithany Moreno-Sacoto, Administrative Assistant; Amber Millard, Day Services Assitant; Ryley Schultze, Day Services Assistant; Andrea Moore, day Services Assistant; Conner Bustamante, Day Services Assitant; Tina Hardy, Services Operations Director; Michael Burres Jr, Day Services Assitant.

Left to right front row: Tristan, Sam, Annie Xamonty, Day Services Coordinator; Sarah Meyer, Day Services Assistant.

These events provide much more than just entertainment. They offer individuals the chance to develop a sense of community, form bonds with others, and refine their social skills and self-advocacy abilities. The added bonus of a spooky twist is to make the world a little less intimidating for Vodec's incredible consumers.



Left, Left to right: James, Krystal, and Shawna enjoying the Halloween dance at Vodec in Omaha, Nebraska.



Above: Tana Lidgett, Day Services Coordinator, looks on as Jason Jefferis, Day Services Assistant serves Tom at the Council Bluffs Halloween Party.

Prepare for Winter Storms by Reviewing our Policies on Inclement Weather Closings

Residing in the Midwest can be likened to a weather rollercoaster, particularly during winter. One moment, you're reveling in the pristine snowflakes, and the next, you're battling hail, floods, and even tornadoes - a sudden plot twist! Even seemingly mild weather conditions like rain and light snow can lead to substantial challenges in our daily routine. In extreme cases, our day programs may necessitate a day off to ensure the safety of everyone involved. It's crucial, therefore, to familiarize ourselves with winter weather policies and be adequately prepared to handle whatever weather patterns come our way.

Refer to our comprehensive policies for Southwest Iowa, Central Iowa, and Nebraska. Our policies cover everything from delayed starts to closures, ensuring you are well-informed and protected.

You can check our website or social media pages (listed below) for updates if you need information on our Day Programs closing due to winter weather. Additionally, you check local news outlets for any announcements.

Website: www.vodec.org

Facebook page [FB/Vodecinc](https://www.facebook.com/Vodecinc)

Omaha Consumers Master the Art of Sewing with Quilt-Making

Employment Training Coordinator Becci Cropp is a quilt-making genius! She's been inspiring consumers at the Omaha Development Center to create a quilt from scratch. They've become pros at using scissors, sewing machines, and threads. The process begins with tracing their hands, cutting the tracings, and writing their names on the fabric. They've been developing their hand-eye coordination and patience, all while putting together an epic work of art.

"The anticipation has been palpable since day one, and the final product is expected to be mind-blowing," reports Day Services Manager Kellie Katelman. "We're so grateful to Becci for sparking this creative adventure and working alongside the consumers to make it a reality. And the best part? The completed quilt will be proudly displayed on the work floor for all to admire."

Right: Left to right: James and Krystal showing off their handprint sewing skills

Left, Left to right: Becci Cropp, Employment Training Coordinator, showing Rebecca how to feed the fabric through the sewing machine



Vodec's Consumer Choice Rescheduling



Above, left to right Services Operations Director Micky Jackson reviews scheduling options with Marlo.

At Vodec, we understand that unexpected circumstances can arise. As such, we offer our day program consumers the choice to reschedule any planned or unplanned missed days. We have received feedback from our stakeholders that because our

programs support a consumer's mental and physical wellness, missing a day often causes anxiety for consumers.

As a solution, consumers have the option to reschedule a missed day. Suppose a winter weather event, illness, or any other situation causes a consumer to miss a scheduled day. The consumer can now have the opportunity to reschedule for that day. However, this option only applies to consumers with less than a full five-day schedule. For instance, if a consumer works only on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and the consumer misses Monday, then they can reschedule for Tuesday or Thursday

As a result, consumers can maximize all the benefits and experiences of a regular day program, which aligns with our mission to help them reach their full potential.





I wish you all Happy Holidays!



Steve Hodapp, CEO

When this issue of the Voice hits the streets, the holiday season will be nearly in full swing. After all, even before Halloween gives us sugar highs the retailers are having Black Friday deals! Does this time seem to come faster every year or is it just me?

Soon we'll all be busy with plans about who we need to visit and when we'll get there (how come they never visit us?), what we need to bring (clothes for two seasons? Dessert or side dish?), and deciding who is on the naughty list (not me!).

As you make your plans, please keep Vodec in mind. If you live in one of our residential settings, please include our staff and your host home or shared living provider so they can plan around your plans. Communication is key to keeping things running smoothly.

If you participate in one of our day program settings, please let our staff know about any absences you plan. This will help us schedule appropriately for staffing needs.

For those employed in the community, you'll be expected by your employer to schedule time off and to report to work as required. Being considerate like this is simply being a good employee. Don't just not go in.

To those of you who support anyone in the above scenarios, please do your part in making sure that person is following through as he or she should be doing. We're all role models for appropriate behavior.

Now, shifting gears, let's talk winter weather. I've heard the wooly caterpillars are raising anticipation for lots of snow this year. Schools close or switch to virtual studies if the weather gets too wintry. PLEASE check our website to see the Vodec winter weather policy for the Vodec location near you.

With that all said, I wish you all Happy Holidays!



Holiday Schedule

As you know, the holidays are just right around the corner. As we look forward to the celebrations and shopping, please remember that our day program will be closed on the following days:

Thanksgiving Holidays

Closed on Thursday, November 23rd, and Friday, November 24th.

Christmas Holidays

Closed on Monday, December 25th, and Tuesday, December 26th.

Consumers and Stakeholders Urged to Review Medicaid Part D Coverage for 2024

Vodec has become aware that some Medicare Part D insurance carriers for prescription drug plans (e.g., Humana) have made some changes for 2024.

Please check with your pharmacy and your Medicare Part D carrier to ensure that your medications are fully covered with the implementation of these changes.



Vodec Direct Support Professional Receives Award

Congratulations to Makaela Clemons, Day Services Assistant, for her recently receiving a 2023 Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP) Direct Support Professional (DSP) Recognition Award. Makaela is now recognized as among the top 10 DSPs in Nebraska.

The award is an integral component of the DSP Recognition Week, which spans from September 10-16. This week serves as a platform to showcase the committed and inventive direct support workforce, who are crucial to providing exemplary support services to consumers.

According to NASP's website, "DSPs at the heart of our field are part of a statewide party we throw every year to showcase the amazing and often unsung work of these incredible professionals and mark just a small fraction of the recognition they deserve throughout the year."



Left : Micky Jackson, Services Operations Director (right) presenting the DSP Recognition award to Makaela Clemons, Cares Day Services Coordinator

"Out of the impressive array of nominees from Nebraska agencies, Makaela emerged as one of the top ten brightest stars, and we couldn't be more proud of her," proudly says Micky Jackson, Nebraska Services Operation Director .

ATP Students Highlight Culinary Talents for Meeting with Vodec Governing Board

The Vodec Governing Board invited Adult Transition Program (ATP) students to attend their October meeting. The board members wanted to learn about the students and learn about their satisfaction with ATP. During the meeting, the students showcased their recently acquired culinary skills by preparing a delectable lunch for the board members. The menu comprised chili, complemented by various toppings.

After lunch, students presented the board members with insights on how the meal was prepared and their overall satisfaction with Vodec's services and support. Following the presentation, the students and board members engaged in further discussion for several minutes. Once the students returned to their classroom, the board members resumed their regular management duties at Vodec.

According to Steve Hodapp, CEO of Vodec, "These types of interactions prove to be beneficial for all parties involved. Students have the opportunity to enhance their presentation and culinary skills.

Right, Left to Right: Kristen Joslin, Day Services Coordinator. Elijah and Auston



Right, Left to Right. Elijah and Auston preparing the chili using Vodec's Adult Transition Kitchen in the Council Bluffs Development Center.

At the same time, our governing board members gain insight into the positive impact their volunteerism has had on individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities."



Vodec Transition Focus Students Have a Blast Experimenting at Iowa Science Center

The Iowa Science Center is a science lover's paradise, and the Urbandale Transition Focus Program consumers just got the VIP treatment! This science hub pumps up the volume with interactive exhibits, movies, and learning programs that could make any science fanatic giddy.

All in all, the Iowa Science Center is an absolute blast! According to Tina Hardy, Services Operations Director, "Our direct support professionals are always on the lookout for engaging experiences for our consumers, and the Iowa Science Center fits the bill! This place is a wild ride of learning and adventure."



Above left: (Charles) using a pulley system to pull up (Katrina) .
Above right: (Gage) getting a lift from a friend

Our consumers got to interact with Iowa's flora and fauna, blast off in a rocket, explore the galaxy, and understand weight and pulley systems. Each exhibit was like a mini-science world, with various topics to explore.

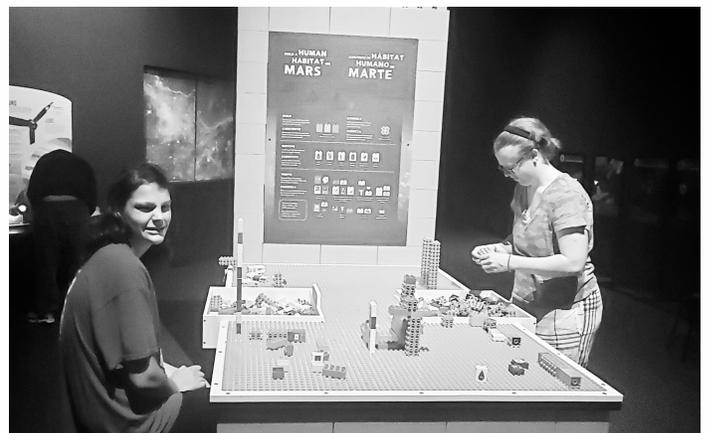
Consumers learned to build their own human habitat on Mars at the exhibit. The exhibit uses familiar building blocks that allow consumers to immediately design and construct their imaginary habitat for successful living and working on Mars. The exhibit also includes a set of challenge cards presenting real hardships people will face when establishing an outpost on Mars. Consumers learned that life on Mars is not a cakewalk! Consumers discovered the real challenges of living on Mars and possible solutions.



Above left: Katrina stacking cups with strings and rubber bands.



Above right: (Jazzmin) making larger-than life bubbles in the Center's "Bubble Bay"



Above: Kartina and Sammie building "Mars Human Habitat" model with Legos at the Science Center of Iowa.

Vodec Welcomes Fall with Pumpkin-Filled Excursions



Above, Left to Right: from left to right - consumer Greg, Collette, James, Annabel, Ryan and Kennedy on a hay rack ride at Skinny Bones Pumpkin Patch Blair, NE.

Vodec consumers from Urbandale, Council Bluffs, and Omaha recently visited their local pumpkin patches, reveling in the autumnal breezes.

Consumers based in Urbandale visited Howell’s Greenhouse and Pumpkin Patch, where they engaged with farm animals, enjoyed hayrack rides, and participated in various fall activities.



Above, Left to Right: Krystal and James purchasing Kettle Corn at Bellevue Berry Farm patch in Bellevue, NE.

All three pumpkin patches provided consumers with a chance to choose their pumpkins and relish in the warm sunlight while marveling at the changing leaves. “Our DSPs look forward to assisting consumers in participating in seasonal holiday traditions such as the trip to the pumpkin patch,” states Micky Jackson, Nebraska Services Operations Director. “I think the DSPs have just as much fun as the consumers do.”



Above, Left to Right: Krystal, Dani, and Mary enjoying the train ride at Bellevue Berry Farm in Bellevue, NE.

Similarly, consumers in Nebraska visited the Bellevue Berry Farm, which offers a myriad of haunted attractions in addition to pumpkin patches. Consumers relished the fall delicacies, such as caramel apples, pumpkin pies, apple pies, pecan pies, and kettle corn.

Finally, consumers from Council Bluffs visited the Skinny Bones pumpkin patch, which offered hayrack rides and scenic farmland views during harvest time.



Above: Corbin and Paul are enjoying the accessible hayride at Howell’s Greenhouse and Pumpkin Patch.



Above: Amber Millard, Day Services Assistant, helping Paul get ready for lunch at Howell’s Greenhouse and Pumpkin Patch.



Realizing Potential

612 S. Main Street

www.vodec.org 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.

Like our page today and help us make a difference!

www.facebook.com/vodec,inc/



We are committed to creating a supportive and inclusive community that empowers individuals to achieve their full potential. By liking our Facebook page, you'll stay up-to-date on our latest news, events, and initiatives. You'll also be joining a community of people who share our vision of a more inclusive world. So what are you waiting for?

We are thankful for these generous donors.

Donna Bush
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Marilyn Jeffery

Judy and George Eastlord

Estelle Lamb

Thomas and Virginia Marx

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

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

Daryn Richardson at drichardson@vodec.org or call (712) 328-2638.

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

- Amerigroup
- Iowa Total Care
- Molina Healthcare

Vodec is a contracted Community Rehabilitation Program with the Iowa Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

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

