

## Inside:

Page 2: Act Today to Protect Medicaid

Page 3: Omaha Consumers Take the Stage in the Wizard of Oz

Page 3: Hodapp Wins IACP Executive of the Year Award

Page 4: Wishlist

A Publication of the Vocational Development Center, Inc – May 2, 2025

## Celebrating 26 Years of Dedication: Mary Shines at Target

Mary Dickson has worked at the Omaha Target on 132nd and Maple for 26 years as a Front of Store Attendant. Mary's role includes keeping the checkout lanes fully stocked and organized, but her impact goes far beyond her daily tasks. When asked what she enjoys most about her job, Dixon reflects, "The people," she says with a smile. And based on the remarks of her co-workers, it's clear that the feeling is mutual.

According to Service & Engagement Team Leader Rebecca R., Mary brings positive energy to the team. "Mary always comes in every Monday and shows everyone her new nails that she gets—it just makes it fun for everybody up front, and with a great attitude," Rebecca shared. Jessica C., Front of Store Attendant, agrees. "She brings in the medals she wins from all her athletic events, and it honestly inspires me to pick up a hobby. She's always doing something exciting outside of work, and yet she's always here—never calls in, always on time, and working hard," said Jessica. "She is efficient and organized at the checkout lanes, always ensuring that supplies are ready for both team members and guests. She greets customers with a warm smile and is always willing to go the extra mile. Mary continues to be a source of joy and inspiration to everyone around her," adds Jessica.

On days she is not working at Target, Dixon takes steps to keep active and maintain her work skills. Some consumers who have community-integrated employment like Dixon also participate in Vodec's Employment Training Services program. Located at Vodec in Omaha, NE, the ETS program is a structured work environment that supports consumers with

*Continues on next page*



Above left to right : Service & Engagement Team Leader, Rebecca R., Service & Engagement Executive Team Leader, Jessica C., Front of Store Attendant, Mary Dixon, Store Director, Tim G. , and Service & Engagement Team Leader, Sue P. (Full last names are redacted due to Target's policies)



Above: Mary assembling screws at the Employment training Program .



their personal workforce goals, such as staying on task, positive social skills in the workplace, and maintaining confidence in their daily work responsibilities.



Left, left to right: James Williams Employment Training Assistant stands next to Mary in the Employment Training Production Area.

"Mary is a hard worker; she is always eager to learn and continues to motivate her co-workers. Mary works on numerous job tasks while here at Vodec such as heat-sealing products, assembling different products, and weighing finished products that are ready to be boxed," explains James Williams, Vodec Employment Training Assistant.

According to Micky Jackson, Services Operations Director, the ETS program plays an integral role in Dixon's continued success. It's always great to see consumers utilize the skills and support they have gained at Vodec to keep successful in the community. Mary can maintain successful community employment while continuing to be supported by employees in the ETS program," states Jackson.



Steve Hodapp, CEO

## Act Today to Protect Medicaid

Medicaid funding still has a target on it unless something has changed from the time this article is being written and when this Voice Issue went to the printer. The target has a number: \$880 Billion. That's how much is being expected to be cut from the budget controlled by the U.S. House committee which oversees Medicaid. Analysts and anyone with a calculator knows that much cannot be cut from the budget without going after Medicaid funds.

This sort of broad approach is purportedly to solve a waste and fraud problem which is not nearly as big as the Elan Muck's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) would have it be. There will be horrific impacts on this country's most vulnerable people if this cut actually happens.

A search for waste and fraud, if necessary, needs to be done more surgically through audits of Medicaid expenditures and regarding who is receiving Medicaid benefits. Certainly, there are opportunities for savings to be discovered without a wholesale nearly across-the-board butchering.

No doubt you know one or more people honestly benefiting from Medicaid support for their health care, mental health treatment, and more. This extends to many of the people receiving services in Vodec programs: more than 93 percent of Vodec's current funding is from Medicaid.



Above: a screenshot from a recent PBS news hours program that highlights the people behind the fight to safeguard Medicaid, featuring Martha Haythorn, a 25-year-old from Georgia with Down syndrome. Use the QR code a (right) to see the broadcast.



If it's not too late when you read this, if Congress' actions have not by now approved the amount to be reduced and Medicaid has not been protected, then please take action today to keep Medicaid preserved. Reach out to your Congressional delegation and tell them to PROTECT Medicaid, to NOT approve any cuts to Medicaid. If you need to learn who your Congressional delegation is got to this website: <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>. If it's not already too late, then do this today.

Thank you on behalf of all the people you know who are supported by Medicaid benefits. If you don't join me in doing this, it will hard to look those people in the eye if the worst happens.

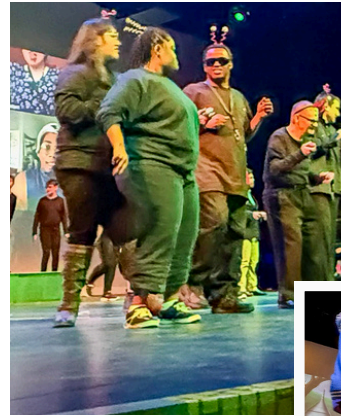




# Omaha Consumers Take the Stage in the Wizard of Oz

Consumers from the Omaha Cares Day Habilitation program performed in the spring production of the Wizard of Oz produced by Circle Theatre of Omaha. The production was held on the 5th and 6th of April at the Jewish community theater. Consumers have performed in two performances in front of a live audience. "Performing arts there's a way to increase a consumer's confidence and self-esteem while working on skills such as annunciation, body language and facial expression," states Kellie Katelman, Day Services Manager. "Circle Theater is a wonderful partner in supporting consumers as they become integrated into the community."

The consumers were directed by Courtney Cairncross, Co-Artistic Director for Circle Theatre, who also organized and facilitated rehearsals leading up to the performance. Cairncross worked side-by-side with Vodec Direct Support Professionals, (DSPs) Courtney's background is in theatre, dance and music, with a specialization in cultural dance and ethnomusicology. Courtney has experience working with many different populations, including individuals with disabilities. "It was such a thrill to be with everyone getting to watch themselves perform!" exclaimed Cairncross, "I'm so thankful to the Vodec DSPs who have been so



Left: Justin, (in the middle with the sunglasses on) performs on stage at the Jewish Community Center Theater.



Below: Tynette (Far left in blue) performs with her fellow cast members from the Circle Theater Production of the Wizard of Oz .



Left: The Audience rises to their feet during the curtain call at the close of the Wizard of Oz production

supportive in workshops and at the shows. We are very grateful for this partnership."

Vodec and Circle Theater are making plans for another production in the fall of 2025. The consumers will perform in a Japanese play "Momotaro: The Peach Boy of Japan" where consumers have the opportunity to use a lot of percussion, puppetry, and Japanese songs.

## Hodapp Wins IACP Executive of the Year Award

Steve Hodapp, CEO, was honored with the Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) Executive of the Year award. Hodapp is recognized for nearly 30 years of leadership at Vodec, during which he has guided his organization through countless changes and challenges. According to IACP's CEO Ben Shurberg, Hodapp is known for his humble approach and dedication. Hodapp has played a pivotal role in providing excellent services to lowans with disabilities.

IACP CEO, Ben Shuberg, commended Steve for his longstanding commitment to the field. "Steve has been a pillar of leadership in our industry. His reliable engagement and humble approach are admirable and reach beyond his own organization. Steve provides valuable feedback and leadership, and is



Left, left to right: Steve receives the award from Ben Shuberg at the 2025 IACP Conference.

committed to helping the industry navigate challenges," said Shuberg.

Each year, IACP presents this awards to an individual who goes above and beyond his or her professional roles to make a lasting impact in their communities. Hodapp was celebrated for his unwavering commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable lowans.





612 S. Main Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
www.vodec.org

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 (consult your tax preparer for specific information about this).

#### **We appreciate these generous donors.**

- **Donation in Honor of Austin Feinburg**
- **Jeremy Dunkirk**
- **Miles and Crystal Havekost**
- **Steve Hodapp**
- **Knights of Columbus Council 10805**
- **Stacey and Brooks Jenkins**
- **Andrea Smith**



**Left: Daron Kruse (left), a member of the Knights of Columbus Council 10805, presents a donation for Vodec to CEO Steve Hodapp.**

#### **Wish List      To make a donation call 712-328-2638 today.**

- Picnic table(s)
- Yard games like badminton, maybe horse shoe game (real or rubber), bocce ball game, croquet, etc
- Flower plants (annuals or perennials), bushes, mulch, planting dirt, wheel chair accessible gardening tables, gardening tools

#### **Vodec is accredited by:**

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)

#### **Vodec is certified by:**

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

For additional information about Vodec, please get in touch with Daryn Richardson at drichardson@vodec.org or call (712) 328-2638.

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

Wellpoint  
Iowa Total Care  
Molina Healthcare

#### **Vodec is a contracted Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) with the Iowa Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.**

#### **Vodec Entrance Criteria**

Have behavior which 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;  
Be at least 16 years of age for employments services;  
Be between 13 and 19 years of age for the Iowa Youth Services Program;  
NE Family Support Waiver eligibility is up to 21 years of age.

