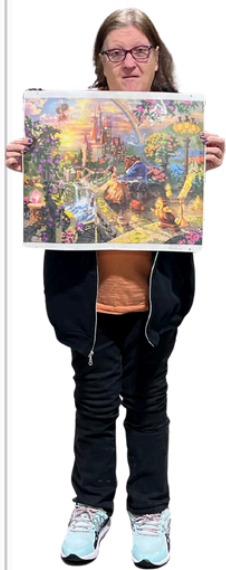


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## Finding Pride and Creativity Through Diamond Art in Council Bluffs

At Vodec’s Council Bluffs location, diamond art has become much more than a creative activity, it’s a meaningful outlet for focus, relaxation, and self-expression. Consumers have embraced the process of placing each tiny gem with care, transforming blank canvases into sparkling works of art they are proud to share with anyone around them.

For many, diamond art provides a sense of calm and helps them focus during the day. One consumer, Andrew, shared that the textures and colors play a big role in that experience. “The color textures when doing it, it helps me focus and get everything out of my mind,” he said. “It helps with stress.” Sandy echoed that feeling, explaining, “It relaxes me. I put a lot of time and work into it.”



Sandy showcases her newest diamond artwork in progress.

That time and effort is something consumers take great pride in. Sandy enjoys showing her finished pieces to others, especially when they realize how much work goes into each project.

“When people come by and look at how I’ve done, I show them how much work I’ve put in,” she said. “They’re like, ‘Oh my gosh.’ When I get it done, everyone loves it.”

The sense of accomplishment that comes with completing a piece is just as important as the process itself. Andrew shared, “I feel really proud of myself,” while Sandy added, “Yes, because I complete it and I get to see all the hard work I’ve done. Everyone says I do a great job.” That pride often leads right

into the next project. “I start a new one and people get excited,” Sandy said with a smile.

Diamond art also helps consumers build valuable skills. Sandy noted that patience and hand-eye coordination are a big part of the process. “I’ve had

people say I sure have a lot of patience,” she shared. Andrew talked about how certain pieces encourage him to slow down and stay focused. “The birds have been my favorite,” he said. “It made me take my time to do it. It took me a couple days.”

Whether working independently or alongside others, consumers find their own rhythm. Andrew prefers working mostly on his own, though he enjoys teaming up at times. And when mistakes happen—as they sometimes do—Sandy explained it simply: “Try to take it off and redo it.”

Perhaps one of the most meaningful parts of diamond art is the joy consumers feel when sharing their work. Andrew especially enjoys showing his finished pieces to staff. “I love showing my artwork to Kyle, our computer guy,” he said. “I love showing it off to staff.”

When asked what she would tell someone who has never tried diamond art before, Sandy offered thoughtful advice: “Start small and work up to the medium and the big one. Take your time doing it. It will get you frustrated, but it is worth it.”

Through diamond art, consumers at Vodec are not only creating beautiful pieces—they are building confidence, patience, focus, and pride. Each finished project tells a story of hard work, creativity, and the joy that comes from seeing effort turn into something truly special.



Left: Andrew showing off his favorite finished canvas.  
Right: Adriana showing the Canvas of a brand new art piece.



## Why Our Work Matters

At Vodec, our work is about more than programs, schedules, or services, it's about people. It's about creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities to live full, meaningful lives where they are valued, included, and empowered to be themselves.

Every day consumers come to Vodec with their own interests, talents, and goals. Some are discovering new skills for the first time and others are building confidence through routine and creativity. What they all share is the desire to be seen, to belong, to contribute. Our role is to meet people where they are and support them in ways that honor their individuality and potential.



A group of consumers are taking part of a community art program, painting clay feathers to showcase their creativity.

Work matters because it builds purpose. Whether it's participating in structured work experiences, creating art, cooking alongside peers, or contributing to daily routines, these moments help consumers develop pride in what they accomplish. They learn responsibility, patience, and teamwork, skills that extend far beyond the tasks at hand. For many, completing a project or earning a paycheck represents independence and self-worth.



Lucas soaking up the moment during a fun outing

Connection matters because no one thrives alone. Vodec provides spaces where relationships grow. Between consumers, staff, families, and community partners. These connections create trust and a sense of belonging, helping consumers feel supported and confident in trying new things. When individuals feel safe and encouraged, growth follows.

Choice matters because success looks different for everyone. At Vodec, there is no single path or definition of achievement. Some consumers may work toward community employment, while others find fulfillment in creative expression, life skills, or structured routines. Each path is equally valuable, and each success is worth celebrating.

Stakeholders consistently share how meaningful it is to know that our consumers are cared for by people who truly show up with compassion and dedication. One guardian, Stacey, described the atmosphere at Vodec as immediately welcoming, saying, "Friendly staff- everyone has a smile on their face. They go above and beyond." That sense of warmth and commitment sets the tone for the cares we provide each day.

Ultimately our work matters because it changes lives in real and lasting ways. It brings dignity to daily moments, joy to accomplishments, and meaning to work. It reminds us that inclusion is not just an idea, but an action. One that happens every time we support someone in reaching their goals.

At Vodec, we believe everyone deserves the opportunity to grow, contribute, and feel proud of who they are. That belief is what drives our mission and why our work matters, today and every day.



Consumers take part of our work programs in Omaha  
Top: (Left to Right) David M., Martina, David R.  
Bottom: (Left to Right) Justin, Amber, Micheal



## How Vodec Partners With Schools



**Steve Hodapp**  
CEO

Deep in Vodec's DNA is an intention to be of service. In our strategic plan is an intention to have a culture which supports opportunities to be of service. In our mission statement we say we

will be of service to support persons to reach their full potential.

We've exhibited all this when we were presented an opportunity to provide residential services in Council Bluffs and later in Urbandale, IA. We exhibited this when we responded to the request of parents of adults with severe and multiple challenges with the creation of our Elm day habilitation program in Omaha, NE. And again when the Council Bluffs Community School District asked us to assume operation of its adult transition program (ATP) and to create for its students an employment program to be known as Supported Employment and Academic Collaboration (SEAC) which went on to be recognized by Iowa Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

That intention in our DNA is being exhibited again with the creation of the School Work Experience Program

(SWEP) in 2025. SWEP was an idea by Lewis Central Community School District's Special Education Coordinator Laurie Thies. Thies approached Vodec because of its success in creating and operating programs for people with special needs. SWEP now serves students from several school districts in the Council Bluffs area. The program offers an alternative to the traditional education setting and has an in-the-community work experience component. Students are earning credits towards graduation from their local school district using an online platform and through work experience. In SWEP's first six months there's been a positive impact on participating students' lives as expressed by students themselves: "If Vodec was like regular school I wouldn't be coming." "Thank you for giving me a second chance on my education, my life and my future."

Given Vodec's ability to cooperatively work with Thies and the LCCSD to stand this program up, we're making a difference. SWEP is, even at this early stage, a success. If you are a student looking for an alternative setting leading to graduation and a work experience, or a school district with students who might find value in what SWEP offers, please contact us. This is in our DNA.

## Severe Winter Weather Procedures

As winter weather may be a factor, Vodec remains committed to the safety of our consumers, families, and staff while continuing to provide services whenever possible. Because weather conditions can change quickly and may impact each of our locations differently, we want to share how closures or schedule changes will be communicated.

If a Vodec location needs to close or adjust services due to winter weather, announcements will be made through the following channels:

- Vodec's Facebook Page
- Vodec's Instagram Page
- The Vodec Website (Banner at the top of the page)

These platforms will always have the most up-to-date and accurate information regarding weather-related closures or delays.

It is important to note that Vodec operates in multiple locations, and decisions are made based on local conditions. This means one location may close while another remains open, depending on weather, road conditions, and safety considerations in each area. We encourage families, guardians, and staff to check announcements carefully to confirm the status of their specific location.

Whenever possible, closure decisions are made with advance notice; however, safety remains the top priority and changes may occur as conditions evolve.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during the winter months. Please continue to monitor our social media pages and website for updates, and stay safe.





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 committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, genetic information, military or veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law. We adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local anti-discrimination laws. This commitment extends to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, hiring, promotions, and compensation.

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.**

- **Jeremy Dunkirk**
- **In honor of Austin Feinberg**
- **Steve Hodapp**
- **Availa Bank**
- **Knights of Columbus**
- **Michael & Nikki Alford**
- **Daron Kruse**
- **Andrea Smith**
- **Leslie Southard**
- **Miles and Crystal Havekost**
- **American National Bank**
- **Robert Livingston**
- **Stan & Lourie Thies**

**Wish List**

We invite you to contribute to our Wish List. Your donations will play a vital role in nurturing creativity among those we serve. For more information call 712-328-2638 Ext 113

- Art Supplies
- Craft Kits
- Board Games/Puzzles
- Baking Supplies
- Outdoor Games
- Journaling or mindful kits
- Movie Night Supplies

**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:**

Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC)  
 Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP)  
 Iowa Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)  
 Iowa DD Council

Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP)  
 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 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.