

## Partnership with Ralston Arena Win Win for VODEC Community Employment Program



(Above)-VODEC community employment consumer Donna Thompson (L), employed at Ralston Arena, helps a spectator get into an Omaha Lancers game at the Ralston Arena.

“I get to scan tickets for guests and answer questions,” said Donna Thompson, a VODEC consumer who’s employed at Ralston Arena. Donna, along with two other VODEC consumers are employed with Ralston Arena as part of VODEC’s Community Employment Program. This program helps persons with disabilities find jobs. Donna participates in team meetings before her shift and also interacts with her fellow Ralston Arena employees during breaks. She has worked many events including hockey matches and tournaments, basketball and wrestling events, and concerts. “I really like the kids that come in here,” she stated.

While she really enjoys working at Ralston Arena, Donna also has to interact with customers that are not always so nice. “I get frustrated with people who are impatient especially if my scanner is not working and I have to manually check their ticket,” she said. While this can be upsetting for Donna, she just remembers to keep smiling. When she gets a moment to herself she takes a deep breath and remembers the help

and training her VODEC Community Employment Assistant, Kimberley Morrison, gave her. “She reminds me that not everyone will be nice and the only thing I can do is smile and be as professional as possible,” commented Donna. Donna’s work has not gone unnoticed by Ralston Arena. Community Employment Supervisor Kathryn Maxwell said, “Donna’s experience at Ralston Arena has been an incredible one! I frequently get compliments about Donna’s ‘go-getter’ attitude. We are all very proud of Donna’s accomplishments with her new position!” Rachael White, Ralston Arena Event Manager, added, “Working with Donna and the other ladies has not only been rewarding for me but my staff enjoys having them here. Their smiles are contagious and they welcome everyone who comes in. They are all ticket takers at the arena so they get to be the first face people see and I think it put people in a good mood. I love how excited they get to come to work, they are always early and ready to go. I am glad we have the chance to work with VODEC and I hope to bring on more people in the future as we continue to grow.”

## From the Desk of CEO Steve Hodapp



We believe it is important to keep you informed. And for the most part we do a pretty effective job. It does become a more challenging job as there becomes more of you in the VODEC community, as more tools for communication become available and as the number of things about which to inform you continues to grow. Some days we score high while on other days, well not so much.

For example, recently I thought we should move to exclusively using electronic media to reach you with the VODEC *Voice*, Facebook and E-News. I had to be reminded that 'most' of you accessing the Internet doesn't mean 'all'. I humbly back-pedaled to re-introduce traditional non-electronic communication tools for those who prefer such tools. I do want VODEC to communicate with 'all' of you. Each of you is too valuable to be omitted. And what we have to share is too valuable for you not to get it. If you do have an email address please let us know what it is; otherwise we'll continue to reach you in print.

Another learning moment came on January 6th. Most area schools were back in session after the holidays but announced they'd be closed on the 6th because of extremely cold temperatures. Confusion set in as Omaha Public Schools (OPS) were not back in session as they were already scheduled to be 'closed' that day for a teacher in-service day. Our winter weather procedures have our Nebraska development centers close if OPS is closed for winter weather. But the teacher in-service day closure caused some confusion I did not anticipate. So we added to our procedures that we would post on our website, [www.vodec.org](http://www.vodec.org), what our status would be in similar situations. Hopefully this helps.

Communication from VODEC ultimately sources through my guidance to people actually doing the communicating. If the ball gets dropped please let me know so I can improve my guidance. I'd like the number of days we score high to increase. With your help I can get better at this.

**To sign up for our digital version of the VODEC *Voice* please visit our website at [www.vodec.org](http://www.vodec.org)**

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*This list reflects donations received between  
12/17/2013 and 1/17/2014*



## Donations Made in Memory of Erin Hunt

Richard and Cheryl Henkenius

## Annual Valentine's Dance Coming in February

VODEC's annual Valentine's Dance will be held February 6th, 2014 at Ralston Arena in Omaha NE. The dance will start at 7pm and end at 9pm. Music will once again be provided by EJS Sound and Lights. The **nacho bar** will also be back and we will have a **photo area** for you and that special someone. Sponsors for this dance include Access Bank, American National Bank, and Council Bluffs Savings Bank. For more information or to RSVP please contact Michelle Nelson at 712-328-2638 or via email at [mnelson@vodec.org](mailto:mnelson@vodec.org).



## Artists with Disabilities creates a NEW Opportunity for VODEC Consumers

“This program focuses on the artist’s potential first, the disability second. It’s how we think and we want the arts community to think the same way. It’s the core of our mission,” said Services Development Director Daryn Richardson. VODEC has once again partnered with WhyArts? to create the first of its kind project in the Omaha/Council Bluffs Metro areas. Consumers from VODEC are being given the opportunity to interact with artists at HotShops in Omaha.

HotShops is an artist collective that offers studio and gallery space to professional and semi professional artists in the region. WhyArts? artists are providing workshops at the HotShops facility for consumers in VODEC day programs. “WhyArts? has been bringing arts activities to VODEC for several years. Our artists are looking forward to their workshops at the HotShops. They love working with VODEC

### VODEC to Participate in Mural Project

“With the help of a great group of professional artists, we hope that the mural will become a symbol for our community,” said Services Development Assistant Michelle Nelson about the recent opportunity which VODEC consumers will play a part. VODEC, along with Munroe Meyer Institute, Quality Living Inc, and the Ollie Webb Center are partnering with artists from WhyArts? to create a mural that will be installed at the Tip Top Thrift Shop in Benson. This project is being spearheaded by mural artist Mike Giron. Mike has been creating murals for many years. Some of his work can be seen along Leavenworth Street in Omaha on buildings such as Jim’s Seek & Save Antiques and Maria Bonita Restaurant. He is also the creator of an installation at Creighton University.

This project will consist of many workshops involving VODEC consumers and WhyArts? artist Lisa Kalantjakos. “I am especially glad to have been chosen to facilitate the VODEC artist’s participation in this project. We have worked together many times in the past, and their talent and enthusiasm is always a joy and inspiration to be around. There is no doubt that their contribution to the project will be significant and pertinent,” commented Lisa. Lisa will be meeting with consumers from all three of VODEC’s locations to get ideas and artwork from the consumers that can be enlarged for the mural space. Creations from the VODEC artist workshops and artists workshops from the other project participants will be put together to create

clients!” commented Carolyn Anderson, director of WhyArts?.

Consumers can participate in workshops including painting, sculpture, poetry, and drawing. There are a total of 8 sessions between January 31st and April 21st. Consumers will also be given the opportunity to display their work in one of HotShops galleries as part of their spring show which coincidences with the Berkshire-Hathaway conference on May 3rd. “Every individual should have the opportunity to be creative and participate in activities including music, theatre, writing, visual arts, dancing, and telling stories. WhyArts? artists are experienced in working with a full range of abilities and physical needs and adapt their workshops and activities so that each individual can succeed,” continued Anderson.



*(Above)- Consumer Bryan Allison works on one of many projects during a WhyArts? artist workshop.*

the large-concept mural. Once the concept has been created Mike and the artists will begin the final drawing and installation processes. Everyone is encouraged to join VODEC and the other providers in creating this mural.

“The Mural Project is an opportunity for artists with disabilities to showcase their talents in a public forum, and to illustrate issues that concern them,” said Kalantjakos. The goal is to have the mural finished so it can be shown the first Friday in June for the First Friday Art Walk in Benson. For more information or to get involved and help with the installation process please contact Carolyn Anderson, WhyArts? Director, at (402) 333-4450 or via email at [carolyn.o.anderson@gmail.com](mailto:carolyn.o.anderson@gmail.com).

# Vocational Development Center, Inc.

## VODEC

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Contact us @ 712-328-2638 to  
sign up for the digital  
version of the VODEC Voice  
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The mission of VODEC 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 a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Donations may be tax deductible. VODEC is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants for services or employment are considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability. We are a certified provider of day and residential services by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. We are approved by the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise to provide waiver services to individuals with intellectual disabilities, brain injuries and we are an approved habilitation service provider. We are a provider of Host Home services in Iowa and Extended Family Homes in Nebraska. We have accreditation from CARF for Community Employment Services, Organizational Employment services and Community Integration.



VODEC is a proud member of:

arsdon@vodec.org

For more information on VODEC services please contact Daryn Richardson or Michelle Nelson at 712-328-2638 or by email at drich-

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VODEC IS ON GoodSearch!

An applicant must meet the following criteria to be considered eligible for any VODEC service:

1. Be at least 16 years old for any vocational program
2. Have behavioral needs within VODEC's scope of service
3. Have medical needs within VODEC's scope of service
4. Have transportation needs within VODEC's capability to provide
5. Have adequate funding in place (including service hours' authorization or private payment in place) for services being requested
6. If applying for an in-home service, the applicant's home must meet basic health and safety requirements



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