

VILLAGE NORTHWEST UNLIMITED

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 330 Village Circle
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VILLAGE VOICE

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Program Encourages Independent Living

Most people familiar with the Village can readily name the first two types of residential services it offers – on-campus housing and group homes. What they may not realize is VNU also offers hourly Supported Community Living (SCL,) a program designed to help individuals who have the ability to live independently in their own apartment or home.

Supported Community Living provides “drop in” services to individuals who need assistance with personal finances, healthy meal planning and preparation, transportation arrangements for work or medical appointments and a variety of other support that ensures the individual’s physical and mental well-being. Many of the individuals supported by this program live in the Village’s East Oak or Tri-plex Apartments. Most work at jobs in the community and only need minimal support to allow them to continue to live and thrive independently.

Six staff members, known as Community Living Consultants, provide services to 21 individuals throughout the Sheldon community. The team of three full-time and three part-time employees has offices within East Oak Apartments and boasts an average length of service at VNU of **36 years**. This small but vital team allows VNU to meet the needs of individuals whom might otherwise go unserved. The program fits very well with the organizational mission to provide Purpose, Privacy and Dignity to all people.

Members of the Supported Community Living team are:

Jim Kleinwolterink – 46 years
 Libby Camarigg – 41 years
 Norma Bosma – 39 years

Pam Charbonneau – 37 years
 Carla Goergen – 34 years
 Karen Johnson – 14 years

A World with Wheelchairs

A well-known, visible fact among Village supporters, the community of Sheldon and beyond is that wheelchairs benefit the lives of VNU residents. However, the extent of importance wheelchairs play is not as commonly known. Wheelchairs give more than just mobility; they also provide independence and comfort. These are all indispensable qualities that the Village wants to provide those they serve. Here is some perspective on just how significant wheelchairs are in this world.

What wheelchairs provide

- 1. Mobility – The most obvious benefit, wheelchairs allow their users to navigate the world around them safely. They enable individuals to move about their homes, move around the VNU campus, attend its programming and get out into the community.
- 2. Independence – Many people can wheel their chairs themselves or have a power chair they can drive. This allows them to have the highest degree of independence possible. They can go where they want to go and engage in the activities they prefer and enjoy.
- 3. Comfort – Many residents spend much of their day sitting in their wheelchair. Fortunately, wheelchairs are not one size fits all. They can be modified according to the strengths, weaknesses and body types of each person to make them comfortable and supportive.



To provide the best wheelchair for each person, many hours are spent on evaluation. VNU Director of Health Services, Jo Johnson, shares, “There are dozens of different measurements and modifications to make when we order a new wheelchair for someone. It requires careful attention to numerous details.”

A few customizations include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| -Seat height and depth | -Seat cushion style and material type |
| -Backrest style | -Hip guides |
| -Chest straps and seatbelts | -Footrests and straps |
| -Brake location | |



Intentional design

Part of providing dignity to the people VNU serves who use wheelchairs is making its campus accessible. Naturally, this has been a focus in the construction of all the facilities since the beginning. This is especially noticeable, though, in the homes that have been built in the last 10 years. Features like automatic doors, zero grade entry, wide hallways, hard surface flooring, motion lighting and lift systems, are all in place to make life with wheelchairs as easy as possible.

Highlighting the significance of modifications, Johnson shared, “Our end goal is to assist the individual to obtain good posture, best pressure relief and greatest independence of mobility possible.”

Wheelchairs are key to successful living for the people who have applicable physical disabilities in our community. Not only do they help with mobility, but they aid in providing independence and comfort. A VNU social media post made on Facebook and Instagram last month said, “We don’t know where we’d be without them!”



Thoughtful stewardship

Since funding for new wheelchairs is covered only once every five years, the Village is serious about making the best selections for each individual. Maintenance and care are also priorities. To that end, the Village therapy team works with wheelchair suppliers to source replacement parts and high-level maintenance as needed. Both the therapy and VNU maintenance teams are able to do minor fixes. In doing so, the condition of the chairs is upheld.