

LETTER FROM A PARENT

On behalf of the Johnson family and parent of Elijah Johnson, I'd like to commend the leadership and staff on the outstanding transition my son made via your programs and services. We are actually a family, whose members are divided into three different states, therefore my son moving from one of those states (Illinois) to Iowa created some sense of anxiety. From our initial meetings with Director of Admissions, Jerry Postma, to our meetings and sessions with counselors/staff who would be working with my son, everyone has been caring, professional, and responsive to our needs, especially any individualized support needed for my son. I have worked with health, counseling and support services for young adults for thirty years and clearly see the VNU team as some of the most skilled and knowledgeable providers I've witnessed. Through the care taken through the intake process, securing of federal and state funding sources and placement in appropriate residential environment, my son has grown, prospered and more importantly, has an extremely bright future as he continues to embrace adulthood. Thank you to the VNU team and special shout out to Harlan Bousema, who has been a consistent ally in support of my son's transition!

- Levester Johnson, father of Elijah



villagenorthwest.org



Fax: 712-324-4877



Phone: 712-324-4873

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Village Northwest Unlimited
330 Village Circle
Sheldon, IA 51201



VILLAGE NORTHWEST UNLIMITED // Winter 2021-2022

VILLAGE VOICE



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ICF/ID CURRICULUM

In July, the new ICF/ID (Intermediate Care Facility for the Intellectually Disabled) day habilitation program started. The new program allows residents to pick what activities they would like to participate in and is focused on getting residents out in the community rather than spending most of their time on the VNU campus. Some of the new community activities are fishing, coffee club at local coffee shops, swimming at local pools, library visits, bowling and walking the trails in surrounding communities. Some of the opportunities now offered on campus are spa day, independent art, music groups, baking, games, crafts, golf cart rides, and aerobics. Of course, we still have all of the necessary therapies (speech, physical, and occupational) offered every day to those who need them.

Being that this program is new, we have just scratched the surface of what we can do. In the future, we have ideas to do so much more. Some of those activities include, coordinating community outings with residents who currently receive services at the VNU Summit building. We hope to do more half day and full day outings as well. Offering a full day outing will give us more opportunities to go places further away and see more than what is just around Sheldon and the surrounding communities.

We are excited for the future and all the new opportunities waiting for our ICF/ID clients.



OUTSTANDING STAFF OF THE YEAR

Our 2021 Outstanding Staff of the Year is Karma Funk. The Northwestern College graduate began her career at VNU as a House Counselor at Free Wheelers (House #358) in 1990. Later, Karma became a Senior Counselor/Advocate at House #342. Karma has served as a Waiver Home Manager, Vocational Trainer, a C.S.I Instructor, a Job Coach and a Registered Behavior Technician/Autism Program Instructor. In 2020, Karma returned to the Waiver program to serve as the Community Skills Supervisor at 1545 S. 9th. Karma continues in this role today. Karma has been part of the Village community for more than 31 years.

Karma demonstrates the Village's mission of Purpose, Privacy and Dignity through her commitment to the individuals served and wanting them to experience success and have opportunities to do things they will enjoy. In a home that features some residents with rather large personalities, Karma has found a way to provide purpose, privacy and dignity to each resident, while maintaining their individuality. Karma has learned to train and mentor the residents. She recognizes that everyone is unique and brings a different perspective to each situation. Karma uses teachable moments to help residents find success.

One word that describes Karma is dedication. She gives her time and energy to do whatever it takes to see the VNU residents are successful. She is willing to try new, creative things to maintain the success of those around her. Karma recognizes the strengths of each person and she uses these strengths to build her team.

When thinking of the Village, and our desire to provide Purpose, Privacy and Dignity for all people, it is easy to see that Karma is a great asset to the Village. Karma has demonstrated the Village values in all her interactions with others. She works hard and is a huge part of the Village family!



VOCATIONAL SUCCESS

The VNU employment team continues to work hard at keeping our clients on track with their personal work goals and desires. We continue to have inquiries for services and are pleased to be able to meet many of these requests. Linda Van Meeteren and her team continue to do an excellent job of matching individuals with jobs that are a good fit for their abilities and interests. Recently, Linda was able to find two great jobs for a young man named Colby. Colby had great family support from both of his grandmas but wasn't involved socially with anyone outside of that. Over the past year, Linda has been heavily involved with getting Colby a job at a hardware store as well as a job on the VNU campus. As with many of our individuals, Colby needed a bit of support when he first got started with his new jobs. Linda worked hard at providing these supports at work, but also with life in general. There were definitely some bumps in the road, but Linda kept encouraging Colby and working one on one with him to coach him through some challenging situations.

Linda shared, "Colby has made so much progress building his self-confidence, achieving at his job, and learning to live more independently. He is realizing his own potential for success!"



RETURNING STAFF

Patty Horstman returns to VNU after completing her schooling and training. Patty has rejoined the VNU team as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). BCBA's work in organizations, schools, clinics, homes, and residential care facilities to improve people's lives and help them achieve their goals. Although Patty's training emphasis was in autism, she'll be working with all the residents here at VNU, regardless of their diagnosis. The focus of Patty's work will be on reducing and controlling behaviors that interfere with an individual's engagement in the broader community, skill-building, and providing staff training on behavioral principles and interventions that will help staff and residents to be successful.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteering can add a purpose to your life and give you the wonderful opportunity to serve others. You can make a valuable contribution to VNU by becoming a volunteer. There are many volunteer opportunities at VNU where we depend on volunteers to work with our staff to help enrich the lives of adults with disabilities and fulfill our mission to provide Purpose, Privacy and Dignity. Along with volunteering with residents, we also have volunteer opportunities at the Village Treasure Chest in Sheldon. Volunteers help sort items, add items to the store floor and check people out at the register. For more information about volunteer opportunities, go to www.villagenorthwest.org/volunteer



FALL FESTIVITIES

We take spooky season very serious around here. At the VNU Summit building, different fall curriculums took place throughout the month of October. Classes included Fall Foliage, Fall Crafts, Fall Baking and Pumpkin Painting. On October 29th, two Halloween parties rocked VNU. One party was located outside of the VNU Summit building and the other was located inside the Wansink Center gym. Both parties included costumes, dancing, games, prizes and a lot of fun! The biggest hit was the face painting station with Creative Arts Instructor, Maggie Gisch.



GIVING THANKS

Throughout the year, so many incredible people give contributions and volunteer their time to VNU. When thinking of November curriculum, the staff and residents decided to make a class where they could give back to the community. The class of seven residents and two staff decided to put together a food drive. They made posters and decorated boxes which were put in different VNU buildings. The food drive lasted two weeks and at the end they were able to deliver 742.3 pounds of food and household items to Upper Des Moines Opportunity Inc.

