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# VILLAGE VOICE



## INSIDE THIS EDITION

- Special Olympics Awardees
- Colorado Springs Vacation
- Shining on Our Purpose Recap
- Lunch Bunch & Coffee Cruisers
- Run, Walk & Roll Results
- Monthly Newsletter

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS RECOGNIZES ARENS FAMILY AND DEB MIDDLE

On Thursday, May 16, 2024, during the 2024 Special Olympics Iowa (SOIA) Summer Games Awards Ceremony, both a Village Northwest Unlimited staff member and a family received awards. The 2024 Outstanding Family of the Year Award was presented to Arens Family. Nicole Arens participates in many SOIA events such as basketball skills, soccer skills, softball skills, volleyball, bowling and track and field. Nicole's mother Dorothy along with her brother Matt, his wife Rachel and their two children attend all of Nicole's events to cheer her on.

Dorothy, Matt and Rachel's support for the Special Olympics athletes extends to all of the Village Panthers. The Arens help the Panther athletes by providing meals at the competitions, carrying equipment, assisting the athletes during their events, and encouraging every member of the team. In addition, Dorothy has written letters of appreciation and support to the Panther athletes and coaches, making a huge difference in all of their lives.

Along with the award given to the Arens family, Village Northwest Unlimited's Special Olympics coach Deb Middle was named the 2024 Coach of the Year for using her high degree of technical skill, commitment and compassion to motivate and train athletes for competition and life. Deb not only teaches athletes the skills needed to compete in their chosen events, she also mentors them concerning manners and appropriate public behavior. She has also been encouraging Panther athletes to try new sports since becoming a coach in 2008. Congratulations to the Arens Family and Deb Middle on their Special Olympics of Iowa awards. Our Panther athletes are proud to have your support. Thank you for all you do for Special Olympics at Village Northwest Unlimited.



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# COLORADO SPRINGS VACATION

At 6 a.m. on Monday, May 20, eight HCBS residents and two Day Habilitation staff members embarked on a long-anticipated journey. They were bound for Colorado Springs, CO, a destination more than 700 miles away and abounding in beautiful mountains and cliffs. After stopping for lunch in Grand Island, NE, they drove another eight hours or so before arriving at their VRBO where they unloaded the van. Once they found a quick bite to eat, they settled in for a good night's sleep. They awoke to beautiful mountain views the next morning and later went out to explore the town.

During their four-day stay, the staff and residents visited Manitou Springs. There, they shopped for some souvenirs and rode the cog railway up Pikes Peak where the elevation was 14,300 ft. They also drove and hiked through the Garden of the Gods State Park, took in the beautiful scenery at Red Rock Canyon, visited cliff dwellings, and stopped to shop in Old Colorado City. One highlight for many residents was when they spent time at the Museum of Gold Mining and learned how to pan for gold and gemstones.

At the VRBO, the whole group enjoyed cooking, but they also loved venturing out into town for burgers, pasta, and BBQ. They spent time in the evening together around a fire pit enjoying s'mores, recapping the fun they had that day and setting up the plan for the next day.

By Saturday, May 25, it was already time to travel back to Sheldon. But though they may have wished for more time, the memories they made together, the smiles they shared and the places they explored will stay in the minds and hearts of these HCBS residents and Day Habilitation staff forever.



## SHINING ON OUR PURPOSE RECAP

On March 22, 2024, "Shining on Our Purpose" provided an evening of elegance, camaraderie, and celebration. This formal dinner and dance event was an opportunity for VNU to honor and recognize the indispensable contributions to VNU made by those we serve. The event hosted 96 VNU residents and they were assisted by over 40 volunteers, who helped make this special event possible.



## LIFE SKILLS LUNCH BUNCH AND COFFEE CRUISERS

Every week without fail, two Life Skills groups are embracing Village Northwest Unlimited's primary goal of providing purpose, privacy and dignity. One group, Lunch Bunch, has been taking different ICF/ID residents to restaurants around Sheldon and beyond for the past three years. Since its creation, almost every ICF/ID resident has experienced a Lunch Bunch meal at least once. Many have gone multiple times. And everyone is excited when it is their turn next.

Though Coffee Cruisers, the second group, has only been around for a couple of months, it aims to build this kind of anticipation amongst ICF/ID residents as well. This group has been traveling around Northwest Iowa on a coffee shop tasting tour, going as close as Sanborn to as far as Lake Park, and discovering hidden gems all across the region. Coffee Cruisers gives residents the opportunity to explore new places and flavors.

However, for both of these groups, the experience is catered to each individual resident. In one Lunch Bunch group, a resident explained how soup was her favorite food, therefore, the group went to a brunch place serving the best soup around. In the Coffee Cruisers group, some residents do not like coffee at all. Instead, they drink shakes or simply enjoy the aroma and atmosphere of the shop. Depending on the time frame, some groups have time to walk around a city park after enjoying their lunch or coffee, discovering new towns. Whatever the desired experiences, the Life Skills staff are dedicated to making them happen.

The Life Skills staff are also committed to creating a sense of independence and community within these groups. Everyone in the group chooses the restaurant or coffee shop; everyone chooses their meal or refreshment; everyone consumes their food and drink as independently as possible; and everyone is encouraged to talk about shared interests. Lunch Bunch and Coffee Cruisers are opportunities for ICF/ID residents to further integrate into the community and build stronger relationships with Village staff and other residents. And in the case of Lunch Bunch and Coffee Cruisers, their goal is to grow closer as a group while they explore places further and further away.

## RUN, WALK & ROLL RESULTS

*Saturday, June 1, 2024*

### Overall 5K Winners

M	Cormick Logue Erie, Kansas	17:33	5:39 min/mile
F	Ava Monier Ashton, Iowa	25:53	8:19 min/mile

### Overall 10K Winners

M	Tyler Drenkow Sheldon, IA	36:59	5:57 min/mile
F	Catherine Schreur Sanborn, Iowa	1:00:06	9:41 min/mile

