

Long-time Residents Get the Spotlight

Two long-time VNU residents have received special attention in connection with our 50th anniversary celebration. Keith Krumm and Bob Stewart participated in our Independence Day Celebration by being the “starters” for the fireworks portion of the event. Standing together on stage with current President & CEO Barry Whitsell and former CEO/Founder Bob Hoogeveen, they pulled a ceremonial lever to indicate the fireworks could begin.

Additionally, the City of Sheldon has requested to have these gentlemen serve as the parade grand marshals in this year’s Sheldon Celebration Days parade on Labor Day. This will involve riding in a convertible and being the lead entry.

Krumm and Stewart are the only two residents who remain at VNU from when it started operations in 1975. While they differ in their level of interest in the spotlight, they are handling it with grace and excitement. We are grateful for them and pleased to see them being honored.



VILLAGE VOICE

VILLAGE NORTHWEST UNLIMITED // Summer-Fall 2025



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Village Panthers to Represent Team Iowa

The Village Panthers have been selected to represent Team Iowa in volleyball at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. They will join fellow athletes and unified partners from across the nation to compete at one of the highest levels of Special Olympics competition.

Nine Panther athletes will attend the Games to showcase their skills in volleyball. They will be guided by coaches Sara Wolthuizen and Deb Middle and assisted by Mindy Liechti.

“This is an incredible honor for our Panther volleyball team. We are all excited for them to compete and be part of the Games. The enthusiasm is high for this special opportunity,” said Barry Whitsell, President and CEO.

Occurring June 20-26, 2026, at the University of Minnesota, the Games are expected to bring over 3,000 athletes together from all 50 states. This will be the second time a Special Olympics team from Village Northwest Unlimited has participated. In 2012, the Panther softball team competed in Oklahoma City, OK, and brought home a silver medal.

In the months leading up to the Games, the Panthers will be preparing both on and off the court, holding regular practices at the Village as well as participating in training opportunities at the state level. To help offset their travel and uniform expenses, the team will be organizing a variety of fundraisers.

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Preserving the Past: 50th Anniversary Time Capsule Ceremony

Numerous activities took place throughout the summer in celebration of our 50th anniversary, including a time capsule ceremony. This ceremony took place on May 22 with staff, residents and special guests gathering together to reflect on VNU's history while preparing a time capsule filled with memories to preserve for future generations. During the ceremony, a few residents were invited to place items into the time capsule, while Barry Whitsell, President & CEO, explained the significance of each piece. Items included:

- A letter from Barry Whitsell, President & CEO
- A timeline of VNU history
- A comparison of 1975 to 2025
- A listing of all our current residents, staff members and board of directors
- A copy of our Village Fast Facts
- A letter from the founding CEO, Bob Hoogeveen
- A copy of the 50th Anniversary Proclamations from the City of Sheldon and our board of directors
- A picture of the three CEOs in the history of the Village - Hoogeveen, Jackie Kibbie-Williams and Whitsell
- The book written by Jan Fertig about how the Village started and its early years
- A congratulations card from Jan Fertig, wife of Ken Fertig, first chairman of the board
- Articles that appeared in the Sheldon Mail-Sun about the founding of the Village and Dick Wansink who donated the land to start VNU
- A picture of Hoogeveen, Ken Fertig and Wansink surveying the land Wansink donated
- A VNU employee anniversary watch
- An early volunteer pendant with year chevrons
- A copy of the most recent annual report



- A copy of the obituary of Ken Fertig
- Building on Our Promise capital campaign brochure and article
- Photos of the Village campus homes and waiver homes in the community
- Flash drive of pictures of VNU residents
- Video of remarks made by Bob Hoogeveen at the time capsule ceremony
- A copy of the VNU trivia game we have been playing weekly this year
- A VNU group picture from the time capsule ceremony
- A copy of the agenda from the time capsule ceremony

Bob Hoogeveen and Wes Fopma, Regional Director for Representative Randy Feenstra, also expressed gratitude for VNU's continued impact. The time capsule was later buried in the grass by the Wansink Center, covered by a large stone marker. The time capsule will be opened at the Village's 75th anniversary in 2050.

