

THE VILLAGE VOICE IS GOING DIGITAL

Help VNU go green in 2020!

Are you one of the millions of Americans who makes a New Year's Resolution? How many have you kept? If you're looking for ideas, maybe we can help. This year, declutter your life, help the environment, and help VNU save money all with one simple resolution! Starting this year VNU is offering to deliver your anticipated quarterly Village Voice (the one you're reading right now) via email!

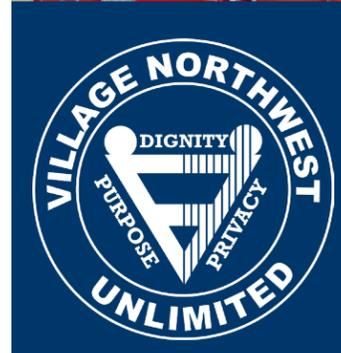
Just drop us a note and let us know you'd like to receive an email copy in place of the paper copy and we'll get you on the list! Send your request to kayceeo@villagenorthwest.org.

That's a resolution we're positive you'll feel great about!



VILLAGE NORTHWEST UNLIMITED // WINTER 2020/2021

VILLAGE VOICE



SPREADING CHRISTMAS CHEER

A whole lot of holiday icons visit residents and staff!

In 2020, VNU purchased two firetrucks from the Ashton fire department to be used for the annual Independence Day celebration in July. When the idea was brought up to use them for a Christmas parade our staff jumped at the idea and brought it to life. The fire trucks and our bus, lovingly nicknamed Fiona, were decorated with an assortment of Christmas decorations. After weeks of planning our little Christmas parade, it was time for Santa to make his appearance! The parade began on the VNU campus and then moved on to the community homes.

It was clear immediately that there was something magical about our tiny parade. With two firetrucks, a small bus and a handful of Christmas costumes, the magic of the holidays were brought to life for our residents. Sandy Kamphoff and her daughter Kacy wore matching reindeer costumes, danced in front of windows and skipped from house to house in a way that looked like they had been practicing for weeks. The smiles we saw on the faces of residents who were seeing Santa coming around the corner are priceless and something our staff won't soon forget. For those few minutes stopped in front of each house, the stress of the past year was forgotten. We hope that the 2020 holiday season brought everyone just as much joy as our little parade and cast of holiday characters did to the wonderful people we serve.



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2020 OUTSTANDING STAFF OF THE YEAR

Going above and beyond is nothing new for these ladies.

Cathy Punt

Cathy Punt began her career at VNU in 1996 as an overnight staff at House 333. She continued to work at House 333 for many years, becoming the Advocate at the house and eventually ending her career at the house as a Co-Residential Leader. After her years of experience in the ICF/ID world she transferred to the HCBS Residential Program when she took on the Manager role at 1017 5th Street. Her next transition, led her to her current position of Co-Director of Community Living. In addition to this position, Cathy teaches many Human Service Training classes and is a MANDT instructor.

Cathy lives the Village's mission of purpose, privacy and dignity in her day-to-day work with the people she advocates for and works with. She is a positive role model of what the mission is and how to carry it out each day. You'll always find Cathy dressed up for every holiday or special event. Whether it's a Halloween costume or a special flower mask for Marigold planting day, she has an outfit for every occasion. Cathy loves everyone... she has never met a stranger she doesn't like. The mission and values of VNU are reflected in her interactions with all those around her.



SPOOKY SEASON

A popular time of year on the VNU campus is autumn. Typically on Halloween, a fall festival takes place at the VNU Summit building. Staff and clients are encouraged to build scarecrows and carve pumpkins for contests, there's music, dancing and usually seasonal treats. Unfortunately 2020's fall festival looked a bit different than normal, but in true VNU fashion, our staff figured out a way to make it just as fun as ever. There were virtual costume and pumpkin decorating contests and a special "spooky" lunch was delivered to all of the clients who live in waiver homes in the community.



GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday, December 1st, was a big day at VNU. Our staff were asked to bring in food and personal care items which were donated to Love In The Name of Christ of Greater O'Brien County. A goal of donating 200 pounds of food was set, but our staff blew that goal out of the water by donating 615 pounds. VNU clients joined in on the day of giving as well by making Christmas cards for local foster families. The homemade cards were sent to Lutheran Services in Iowa to be distributed to foster families during the holiday season.



Daphne Bremer

After receiving her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Dordt College in 1992, Daphne Bremer joined the team at House 358 as an Advocate in 1993. Daphne eventually ended up at House 366 as the Residential Leader/Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional. After a few years away from VNU, Daphne returned to her previous position at House #366 in 2014, a position she still holds today.

Daphne 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 every opportunity to do the things they enjoy. Anyone who knows Daphne knows she cares deeply about the people she serves as evident by her strong advocacy for them. Daphne has been instrumental in the creation of Campus Community Church, which allows individuals served and staff the opportunity to worship together. Daphne has demonstrated the Village values in all her interactions with others. She works hard and is a huge part of the Village family!



YEARLY REPORT CARD

Another year at the "Top of the Class".

Each year, Iowa Vocational Rehab (IVRS), the State agency we partner with to match potential job candidates with jobs in the community, scores us on four different metrics. These metrics include the success rate in finding candidates jobs, the average hourly rate these jobs pay, the number of hours worked in the position and the time it takes to find candidates successful placement.

We recently received our report card for last year and we scored a 9, which puts us amongst the top of the list of all providers in the state! That is something to be proud of and another example of VNU providing premier services! Linda Van Meeteren heads up the team that works on identifying potential jobs for these candidates and has done a great job of finding the right fit for them. Linda credits the job coaches and the entire team effort with all of the job coaches. These coaches take over the day-to-day training, assisting, supporting and encouraging that help people be successful in their jobs. Thank you, employment team, for all of your hard work in helping people build successful lives through purposeful employment; and congratulations on achieving this amazing accomplishment!



In Loving Memory

This issue is dedicated to Mike Andringa, beloved VNU resident who passed away on October 27th, 2020. Mike's warm personality, infectious smile and love for the Hawkeyes and Vikings were a special part of VNU since 1975. He was among the first group of individuals to receive services from VNU. He will be greatly missed by his VNU family.

