

# Contributions to Local Workplaces Measure Up



Burt Meendering  
10 years at Dollar General



Kirt Moseman  
10 years at Hy-Vee



Eric Weaver  
15 years at Sanford Health



Suzy Faber  
25 years at Sanford Health

In 2025, four individuals were recognized by their respective employers for their length of service. With the competitive integrated employment program at VNU, 47 individuals and local businesses are served. It's a mutually beneficial arrangement as individuals interested in working and employers needing help are paired together. By definition, the program requires the job to be for an employer in the community, earning at least minimum wage, and having opportunities for advancement. The goal is for people with or without disabilities to work side by side, with the same pay, benefits and promotions. Besides the obvious perks, this program provides individuals with disabilities the important opportunity for social interaction with community members. VNU congratulates Burt, Kirt, Eric and Suzy on their milestone anniversaries realized through this program.



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# VILLAGE VOICE

VILLAGE NORTHWEST UNLIMITED // Winter 2026



## Winkel Celebrated for Dedicated Service

On December 4, 2025, when Village staff gathered for the annual Christmas party, there was one employee unaware she was about to be given the highest honor awarded to a staff member.

"We are thrilled to recognize Tracy Winkel as the 2025 Outstanding Staff of the Year. Tracy's co-workers believe she has demonstrated the mission of the Village and feel she should be recognized for her commitment to meeting the needs of the individuals served," announced Brian Robyn, Director of Human Resources.

Winkel began her career at VNU in December of 1996, after graduating high school in May. Her initial position with the Village was working as a substitute at Northwest Enterprises, now The Summit.

"This was supposed to be a one-year job before I went to college. I stayed because I felt valued, supported and surrounded by co-workers and residents who became like family," stated Winkel.

In 2004, Winkel became a Community Skills Trainer in one of VNU's community-based homes. When the residents moved to a new home, she moved with them. She has worked with two Village residents for 21 years, helping them to grow in their independence.

Winkel works hard to ensure that the individuals served by VNU have the tools to obtain the highest levels of success. She is instrumental in helping them to fulfill their dreams and goals.

Upon notice, Winkel said, "I am honored to receive this award. It shows hard work and dedication make a positive impact. I am grateful for the support of my co-workers too. I'm blessed with the best."

# Our Recent Destin-ation: Florida

There's a reason people like to travel to sunny places. It's fun! With that simple idea in mind, a plan was hatched to offer a Florida vacation to the people we serve. On October 12, 2025, a group of fourteen people headed to Florida for some time away. Here's a recap.

We flew to the Destin/Ft. Walton airport, picked up our rental vans and headed to Majestic Sun Condo Rentals in Destin. We stayed in a penthouse suite, which was everything we could have wanted and more. It was spacious, had plenty of bathrooms and amazing views of the gulf! After getting settled a bit, we unloaded some of our gear and then took off to stock up on a few groceries and grab dinner at Firehouse Subs.

Our first full day was focused on the beach. After some breakfast on Monday morning, we packed up for the beach... which was literally across the street! Our suite came with six reserved beach chairs and a giant umbrella right next to the water. We spent time looking for seashells, watching fish swim by in the crystal-clear water and sifting through the sugary sand. Later that afternoon we tried out the indoor/outdoor pool at our resort and spent some time sitting in the hot tub. Who knew a hot tub would feel so good when it was 80 degrees outside?! That evening we went out for an early dinner, did a little souvenir shopping and then visited Gator World where we saw some baby alligators.

On Tuesday we went to Panama City where we ate at a Waffle House – a first for many of us! We explored their downtown area called Pier Park and then headed over for our airboat gator ride. There we learned a little about alligators, held a small alligator and then rode in an airboat. It was loud, fast and so fun! After our ride, we returned to Pier Park where we ate dinner and took in a beautiful sunset on the pier.

The next day, we headed to Pensacola Beach where we caught the Blue Angels doing a practice flight. It was pretty cool to see them up close! Due to the government shutdown, we were unable to go onto the Air Force base, but we were thankful we could still see them fly. We then ate a picnic lunch at a wildlife



sanctuary and saw several animals that go through rehab or now permanently reside there. Afterwards, we visited the Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Rescue. We learned about sea turtles and met Sweet Pea, who had been rescued. Baytowne Wharf in Sandestin, just a few minutes from our resort, was our next stop because there are a variety of shops there, including a candy shop. Unsurprisingly, that was a favorite!

On Thursday everyone was able to sleep in a bit before we began another beach + shopping day. One of the places we checked out was Pecan Jacks where we tried some homemade brittle, ice cream and other goodies. A little souvenir shopping followed and then it was time for the beach to enjoy the water and beautiful weather.

We spent our last full day at St. Andrews State Park where we had a picnic lunch, explored the beach and enjoyed a catamaran dolphin cruise. During the cruise, we stopped at Shell Island. There some tried snorkeling while others walked to the gulf side of the island to collect shells. Others just enjoyed the water and view. Following the cruise, we returned to the resort and ordered pizza, packed our suitcases and went to bed early to prepare for our early morning flight home.

In summary, we're thankful for a fun week that was full of sun, seafood, beaches and no fingers or toes missing from the alligators!

