

**OPPORTUNITY  
KNOCKS**

# 2015-2016 **ANNUAL REPORT**


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February 2015  
**After Opps Celebrates 5th Anniversary**



March 2016  
**OK-RFCC Fitness Room Renovation Completion**  
After grants from the Oak Park Community Mental Health Board, equipment donations from the OPRF Tennis Centre and a series of in-kind donations from several other friends and neighbors, we completed a major upgrade to the space, providing a hub for fitness activities.



July 2015  
**Knockout Pickles Expands to Bulk Sales**  
Kinderhook Tap in Oak Park commits to become the first restaurant partner of OK's first social enterprise, Knockout Pickles, marking the launch of bulk batch sales.




September 2015  
**Success in year 2 of Walk to Run Club**  
The conclusion of year two of the Walk to Run Club logs 106 miles and counts 32 unique members, significant growth, and engagement from the pilot year in 2014.




July 2016  
**OK inks 5-year lease extension with River Forest Community Center**




August 2016  
**Life Shop Celebrates 3rd Anniversary**



December 2015  
**Warriors Jobs!**  
Through the establishment of two social enterprises, Knockout Pickles and the Warrior Catering Company, OK created our first vocation opportunities. See right for the first Warriors on the payroll on their first payday.




# letter from our DIRECTORS

In February of this year, we celebrated the 5th anniversary of Opportunity Knocks. Can you believe it!? Those who have been with us since the start know that this thing started well before 2010, likely dating back to our first fundraising effort in 2007 at the KG Classic, or maybe earlier depending on which Carmody you ask.

The mission that began with a challenge within one family now impacts more than 100 Warrior families each year, providing nearly 16,000 hours of direct support annually, while also creating countless other connections through partnerships, volunteering and community events. The momentum of our mission has been awesomely energized by new families, volunteers and staff. And all of this has evolved throughout some very challenging financial times and in a state that ranks at the bottom in terms of providing services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Impacting over 100 Warrior families.



Providing nearly 16k hrs. of direct support annually.

Since opening the doors in 2010, enrollment in our After Opps program has grown more than 34%. The Morning Opps program at OPRF HS continues to thrive and we are in year 3 of our highly successful day program, the Life Shop, which continues to innovate and engage. Our focus on the culinary arts, as well as a firm foundational belief in health and wellness, has led to the development of two new programs and two social enterprises, which have coincidentally evolved into our first vocational initiatives, Warrior Catering and Knock-Out Pickles.

The shape of this organization is ever-evolving but always focused on our fundamental purpose. We have been moving at a very fast pace over the course of the past 5 years. While such momentum is exciting, it is often difficult to sustain. With that pace and our longevity in mind, we recently committed to re-visioning our strategic plan. Our process has been to engage every part of our organization to help us plan for reaching our full mission. In the portion of the process dedicated to Program Development, we made some great revelations and crafted

a statement of OK beliefs that will serve as the basis for our program's goals. Built into an acronym, VIEW, our goals are expressed through the following beliefs:

## VOICE

We believe in the strength and power in the Voice of each Warrior.

## INTERDEPENDENCE

We believe in the Interdependent connection between each Warrior and their community.

## EXPERIENCE

We believe in a fearless exploration of life's Experiences unhinged by abilities.

## WELLNESS

We believe in the importance of living with Wellness in mind, body and spirit.

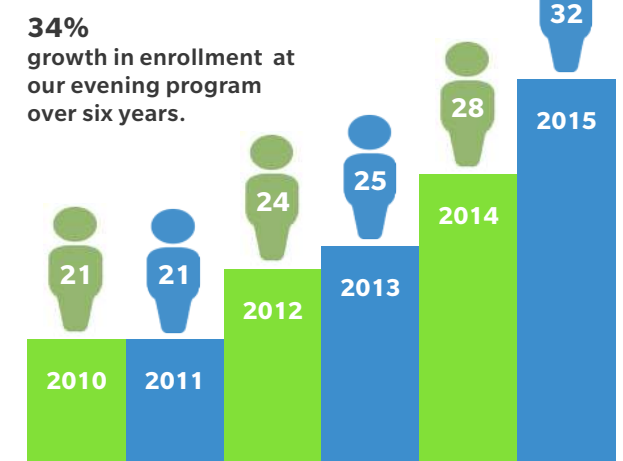
These beliefs are our foundation. How they manifest will take many shapes, but the one common denominator will be our Warriors leading the way. In a short time, we've had great success together. We're grateful to have you with us on this journey and excited in all that lies ahead. Thank you for supporting this mission.

  
Phil Carmody,  
President

  
Mike Carmody,  
Executive Director

## after opps program participant

### ENROLLMENT PER YEAR



# VOICE INTERDEPENDENCE EXPERIENCE WELLNESS



## voice NICK

**N**ick appeared to be a shy, introverted teenager when he began participating in After Opps. Initially, he spoke only when directly spoken to, and experienced several bouts of tears when things weren't going as he expected, only speaking up to ask for his mom. However, he soon became comfortable in the environment, and thru constant efforts of staff, volunteers, and Warrior-leaders, he let go of his anxiety while at programs. We realized Nick was not actually an introvert, as he became really loud, shouting words throughout activities. While his improved comfort level was important, we still knew that spontaneous shouting wasn't any more of an effective communication tool for Nick. Finally, after continued efforts and coaching, Nick has found his sweet spot. He now can be found joking around, very appropriately, and using his words intentionally to request assistance, make suggestions, participate in conversation, and recently even to deliver an improv comedy routine with a fellow Warrior.

*"This progress is miraculous," raves mom. "Nick's rare genetic disorder diagnosis came with an expectation of 'absent speech.' We're thrilled that he has found a place where he feels comfortable and confident in using and expanding his voice."*

Nick's increased confidence in - and enjoyment of - After Opps is a marvel to his family, and a testament to the magical atmosphere created by Opportunity Knocks staff and peer-led interactions, which provides Warriors with a true discovery of their voice.

**4:1** minimum ratio of Warriors to staff at After Opps programs to foster engagement in activities

**2:1** ratio of Warrior to staff maintained on average at the Life Shop to foster engagement in activities

**8** peer-planned and peer-led programs offered at After Opps in 2015



## interdependence MAX

**R**outine and stability are extremely important to many Warriors. The anxiety produced by unplanned or unfamiliar events cannot be overstated, particularly for Maxwell. This anxiety kept Maxwell from participating in new activities, including After Opps, due to the fact that he would have to rely on PACE public transportation. Even a brief schedule deviation by PACE was enough to send him into a severe panic.

However, something remarkable happened when his OK Life Shop Life Coach began to work with him in this area. Maxwell's peers at OK stepped into the gap for him. His fellow Warriors who ride PACE helped him create a system of coping mechanisms and supports to manage the unpredictability that is the definition of public transportation. By building their own peer Community, the Warriors have enabled Max to become a participant in the greater Community through PACE. He is still taking risky and adventurous steps into the new

world - he recently planned his first meet-up with fellow Warriors outside of normal OK activities. Max and company headed to a movie theater which presented him with plenty of unexpected experiences, but also rewarded Maxwell with an even greater connection to the community at large and his community of peers.

Opportunity Knocks places a huge emphasis on interdependence among Warriors, not so that they are a self-contained unit, but so that the opposite occurs.

*As Maxwell's story indicates, a strong peer community is the first step in becoming more established in, and interdependent with, the community at large.*

This interdependent connection plays out in every area of a Warrior's life, from the community of their own family, to their school, their neighborhood, and their world.

**40%** of partnerships in programming were with businesses and organizations that had no experience with people with I/DD in 2015

**85%** of partners reported the Warrior experience improved morale in the workplace in 2015

# VOICE INTERDEPENDENCE EXPERIENCE WELLNESS



## experience JACKIE

**J**ackie definitely enjoys performing and competing. She sings, swims and even recites poetry. However, the boundary of fear or anxiety has tried to keep her away from her favorite experiences. She may initially sign up to perform, but is challenged to follow through. Over the past several years the Opportunity Knocks team has witnessed a significant transformation in Jackie. Two factors have contributed to overcoming her fears:

First, constant encouragement by her Warrior friends and Opportunity Knocks staff support. Second, frequent opportunities to overcome - everything from peer-led programming and leadership training to galas and parties.

Unlike other programs that might seek to just make participants comfortable, Opportunity Knocks seeks to help participants experience life to the fullest, whatever that means for each individual.

In Jackie's case, pep rallies before her swim meets have provided the courage to win gold medals. Jackie finds frequent opportunities to take the lead during weekly activities: Welcome Warrior in the Life Shop, peer leading of water-color painting, and peer leading the nutrition club are among her recent experiences.

These all reinforce the confidence and courage that enable Jackie to shine in the big moments. The difference between a shrinking violet at her first gala, to the diva singing BRAVE into the microphone at the 5th gala is dramatic - and a more true expression of who Jackie really is. Exploring her passions has been made possible to a much greater extent because of the support provided by Opportunity Knocks.

*Every warrior has dreams of new experiences, and the walls that would keep them from those experiences are constantly challenged at Opportunity Knocks.*

**94** After Opps activities were offered in 2014

**95** After Opps activities were offered in 2015

**55%** of Warriors are more willing to try new foods because of life shop programs



## wellness ELIZA

**R**unning or walking a mile can be intimidating for people from all walks of life, and even more so for Warriors who often have medical and genetic conditions that limit their physical strength and abilities. The lovely Eliza was one such Warrior. Eliza has Down Syndrome, which affects her coordination and general athleticism among other areas of her life. But this didn't stop OK's Health & Wellness Director, Jeni from inviting her each and every week to join the "Walk to Run" club.

Half the season came and went, with unanswered weekly invites, until one Thursday night Eliza showed up! The emphasis placed on wellness by Opportunity Knocks (OK) coincided with her doctor's recommendation to go Gluten Free and improve her physical fitness. Her first time, Eliza went the full mile. After that night, Eliza only missed one meeting for the rest of the season. She ended up walking a total of 7 miles over those next 8 weeks. Jeni was particularly encouraged by the happiness Eliza exuded at the end

of each mile. She seems to increase in self-confidence and satisfaction with each step.

Over the past year Eliza has successfully followed her doctor's orders resulting in about 10 pounds of weight loss. Changing her lifestyle has been difficult, as she can no longer enjoy some of her favorite foods, but OK has provided invaluable support, encouraging her to embrace being gluten free and living a healthy life.

*Her brother, Kurt says "For the first time, Eliza is mindful of her own wellness. Opportunity Knocks impacts the choices she makes each day". OK enables participants to take control of their own health.*

**40%** of the 95 After Opps activities in 2015 were dedicated to Health & Wellness

**70%** of Warriors report feeling healthier because of the Life Shop program

**100+** miles were walked, ran, or rolled at Walk to Run Club in 2015

# social enterprise KNOCK OUT PICKLES

**K**nock Out Pickles are artisanal pickles that are produced, marketed, and distributed by program participants (also known as Warriors) of Opportunity Knocks, a local nonprofit that serves young people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. Knock Out Pickles are a revenue stream for the privately funded organization while providing meaningful and gainful employment opportunities for the Warriors.

In 2015 and 2016, not only were we able to expand community partnership for distribution, development, and marketing, but also have been able to hire our first Knock Out Pickle employees!



## employee profile PATRICK

**S**ome people just have a personality larger than life. Patrick O'Rourke is one of those people. When you first meet him you realize he is doing something right. He is constantly smiling, joking, and having a great time. It is infectious to his peers in the Life Shop as well as the volunteers and staff members.

When we first started teaching the Warriors in the Life Shop the skills needed to produce our Knockout Pickles, Patrick made it clear he wanted in. He wanted part of every task. From washing and chopping the cucumbers to measuring the spices, he wanted to learn and he wanted to be involved. He was also the first person to volunteer his free time on the weekends to come to our events and help us promote our new project.

From passing out samples to putting on the amazing pickle costume, Patrick took each task on with that amazing attitude. There was something we realized about Patrick pretty quickly after he got involved in our pickle enterprise. Behind that smile, with that laugh, and with his good nature stood another amazing quality, his work ethic. Patrick took on his role in the enterprise with complete commitment. Over the course of time he went from

performing supervised tasks in the Life Shop with a job coach, to doing everything independently. The whole time with that grin on his face, enjoying every second of it. Everyone noticed how much he enjoyed going to make pickles.

*"Patrick truly enjoys making pickles", according to his mother, Margaret O'Rourke.*

*"The job gives him such a sense of pride and accomplishment."*

When our Knockout Pickle Enterprise reached the point at the end of 2015 where we were going to hire Warriors as paid employees, Patrick had clearly asserted himself as a key candidate for the position.

*"He is the ideal employee," said Joe Hart, Culinary Director at OK.*

*"He wants to be there each day because he loves it. He is always on time and ready to go with enthusiasm."*

So when you see Patrick, you still notice that larger than life personality. You see someone who enjoys every second of each day, but you also now see his hard work and dedication as a pickle craftsman. Patrick is the perfect man for the job and Knockout Pickles would not be where it is without him.

## employee profile SONYA

**S**onya Taylor is a different person today than she was just a few short months ago. She is still one of the most caring people you will ever meet. If she ever has a friend who is a little bit down, she is the first one to give her a hug and stay by her side until she is feeling better. She is still one of the funniest people you will ever meet. She will say some of the most absurd and hilarious stories while showing off her charming smile just to get a laugh out of you. She is still one of the sassiest people you will ever meet. She will confidently tell you her opinion with a hand on her hip and a lively tone.

What makes Sonya different today is the pride she takes in a job well done and a paycheck in her pocket.

Sonya is one of the newest paid employees of our Knockout Pickles Enterprise. She has been an ideal employee who earns every cent she makes. Learning the skills to the job was not always easy but she has persevered to be where she is today.

About a year ago while in the Life Shop, the Warriors were being taught the skills to make our Knockout Pickles with the assistance of several job coaches. The job coaches were hopeful that the Warriors could take the skills they learned and independently produce our Knockout Pickles. The Warriors would need to learn the correct ways to wash and cut the cucumbers as well as memorize the recipe and correctly measure the ingredients.

Sonya had a difficult time learning the steps needed. But she kept trying and she kept showing up. After much perseverance, it finally paid off. Each day, she got a little better, and each day the job coach would back off a little more, until the day came when her supervisor realized how much she had learned and told the job coaches to completely back off and let her go alone. Sonya did each step independently and



make sure she was doing it correctly. When she realized her job coach was not there, she shrugged her shoulders and kept going. That day, Sonya produced a delicious batch of pickles independently. It was an easy decision to offer Sonya a paid position when we hired our first employees for our pickle enterprise. She worked hard to get where she was and she earned that position.

*Sonya's mother, Joanne Taylor, is thrilled to see Sonya employed. "It's great", she said. "Sonya is so excited to be a part of the work force."*

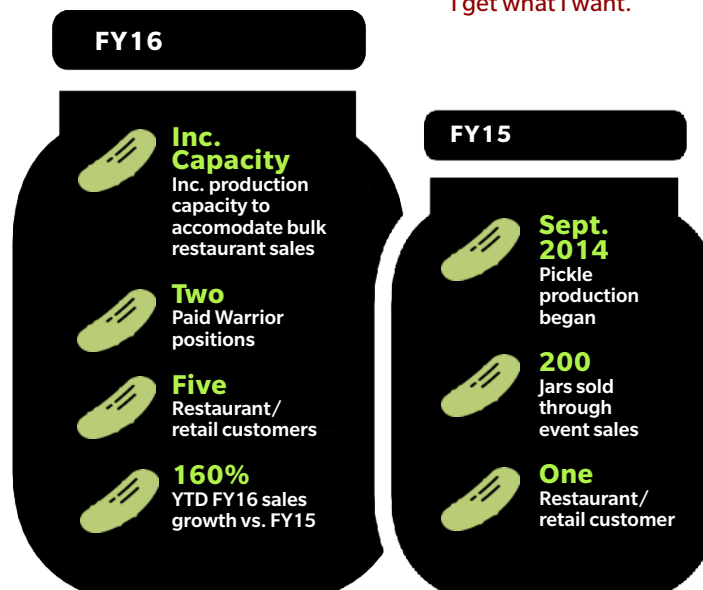
*And it is so great to see her go to work at a place like Opportunity Knocks where everyone knows her so well and can help get the best out of her."*

Today, Sonya is still the same caring, hilarious, sassy person we all know. But she also has a new look of pride every other Friday when she receives her well-earned paycheck. The first payday was a special moment for all of us, but especially Sonya.

*"I feel so proud," she said.*

*"I cannot wait to show it to all my friends and my mother and my brother. And it's my money so I get what I want."*

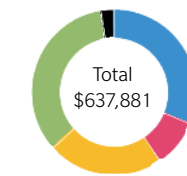
## sales & operations



# financial HEALTH & STABILITY

fy15 | July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

## REVENUES



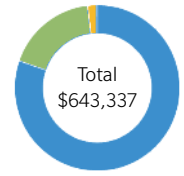
- Local Government Support
- Private Contributions
- Special Events, Net
- Program Income
- Grants

**65%** Strong donation generation through private sector sources (private contributions and special events)

**9%** Continued strong relationships with our foundation partners

**<3%** Minimal reliance on government funding sources

## FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE



- Program Services
- Management & General
- Fundraising Costs

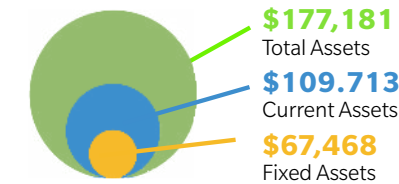
**80%** High program efficiency; majority of our expenses directly support our programs

**27%** Self-sufficiency ration (program income/program expenses)

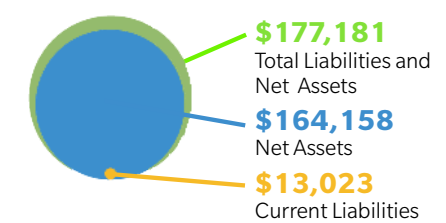
**>2%** Modest resources dedicated to fundraising activities

## financial stability

### ASSETS



### TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS



**Excellent Liquidity** (ability to meet short-term obligations)

**No Debt Obligations**

## balance sheet summary

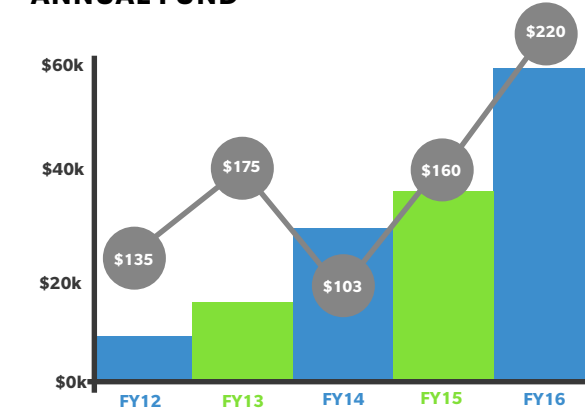
Details on Opportunity Knocks financial statements are available at: [www.opportunityknocksnow.org/about/financial-reports](http://www.opportunityknocksnow.org/about/financial-reports)

# development STATS

**W**ith sincere gratitude, we are proud of our fundraising efforts and the many partnerships that we have forged throughout the past 7 years. Together, we successfully have weathered turbulent economic times as well as the ongoing budget crisis in our state. And we have YOU to thank!

fy12 - fy16

## ANNUAL FUND



**GIVING TUESDAY**  
The Annual Fund includes the Giving Tuesday Campaign

**\$1,200,000+** Total support through contributions, foundations and special events since 2011

**\$338,000** Total support through contributions, foundations, and special events in FY15

**1,500+** Number of donors who have supported Opportunity Knocks through contributions, foundations and special events

**WHO ARE WE?**

Opportunity Knocks is an Illinois 501c.3 non-profit organization that serves young people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) through social, recreational and life-skills programming.

**WHAT IS A WARRIOR?**

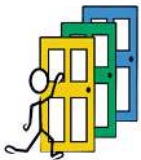
The people we serve are Warriors and it is our belief that their place in the community is both valuable and necessary. Because of their perseverance and strength we endearingly dub our participants as Warriors.

**PROGRAMS**

Opportunity Knocks provides several programs including **After Opps** (an evening, after-school/work, person-centered, social, and recreational) program, the **Life Shop** day program, and the **Morning Opps** program which is in partnership with the Oak Park River Forest High School to provide structured activities for students in the special education classrooms during late arrival days. All of our core programs incorporate **Health & Wellness** (safety, nutrition and fitness), **Community Opps** (community service and engagement), and Peer-planned and **Peer-Led** programming.

**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

Opportunity Knocks has two social enterprises which provide a revenue stream in addition to meaningful and gainful employment for the Warriors. They are Knock Out Pickles and Warrior Catering.



**OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS**  
8020 Madison Street  
River Forest, IL 60605

Non-Profit  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
**Permit 102**  
Oak Park, IL 60302

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