



VOICE | INTERDEPENDENCE
EXPERIENCE | WELLNESS | SOCIAL

WARRIORS AT WORK

2018
ANNUAL
REPORT



Hard work has been key to this mission since the start. We are built from scratch, on a vision to create a community of active and engaged Warriors.



9

PAID WARRIOR
POSITIONS | 2017-18

As our organization has evolved, we have found ourselves with great opportunities to establish innovative vocational programming. Our very talented staff, coupled with the popularity and importance of our culinary programming led us to develop our circle of social enterprise that connects our work on the farm to our work in the kitchen.

Knockout Pickles, Knockout Catering and the Knockout Farm collectively create a space that has engaged Warriors in vocational skill-building activities that are embedded in our Life Shop and After Opps programs as well as being sustainable and successful businesses that create meaningful and gainful job opps for our Warriors. Additionally, these enterprise endeavors are placing our Warriors on a stage in the business community where we are being recognized as peers with ability vs. individuals with disabilities. That is the mission.

18

PAID WARRIOR
POSITIONS | 2018-19

36%

OF 18-64 YEAR OLDS WITH
DISABILITIES LIVING IN THE
COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYED*

Additionally, community partnerships have proven to be another great resource for us in developing vocational programming. We have developed great connections with local schools, universities and other non profits to help create job-skill building activities through volunteer opportunities.

We believe in abilities. We also believe in opportunities. While we have no shortage of the former at OK, we are striving to create more of the latter. It is our goal to double our workforce by the end of this year. To do that, we need better facility, more staff to support these positions, equipment, supplies, and more. We need you to help support us as we strive for this goal. Help us get more Warriors to Work.

Phil Carmody
PRESIDENT

Mike Carmody
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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*According to the 2017 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium



WARRIOR OF THE YEAR

“ELIZA HAS SHOWN
TREMENDOUS STRENGTH
THROUGH ALL OF THE LOSS
SHE HAS EXPERIENCED
OVER THE PAST YEAR AND
THROUGHOUT HER LIFE,
I AM ALWAYS INSPIRED BY
HER POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND
BY HER CONSTANT EMPATHY
TOWARDS OTHERS.”

OK Program Leader & Farm Coordinator,
Natalie Woodcock

Each year at Opportunity Knocks we set out to recognize a Warrior that represents the mission in an exceptional way. Whether it be leadership, perseverance, accomplishment or otherwise, we think it is a special way to recognize a person in the mission. This year we recognize Eliza Grahneke.

Eliza has been involved in Opportunity Knocks since the early days and is extremely active in nearly all OK programs and events. “Her love of programs is absolutely contagious,” said OK Program Leader & Catering Coordinator Joe Hart.

Outside of OK, Eliza is also a strong leader in the wider community. She holds down part-time jobs at Concordia University, Brookfield Zoo, and Grace Lutheran Church.

Another reason Eliza is a Warrior role model is because of her commitment to health and wellness through her gluten-free diet and as the most active participant in OK Walk to Run Club.

These above reasons warrant the Warrior of the Year Award on their own, but the timing of this recognition comes after an extremely challenging year for Eliza’s family. Several of Eliza’s loved ones passed away recently, including her dear older brother Kris, whose courageous battle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) inspired countless people in our community and beyond.

Congratulations on the award, Eliza! You deserve it!



LIFE SHOP VOCATION

GROWERS SCHOOL

10
TOTAL GROWER'S
SCHOOL GRADS | 2017-18

1ST
PAID WARRIOR FARMER
POSITION TO BE ESTABLISHED
IN SPRING OF 2019

The newly re-named 'Knockout Farm' has continued to grow into an awesome program and enterprise space for Opportunity Knocks. Our philosophy is to continue to engage the Warriors on the farm, by building their understanding of farming concepts. That belief led to the creation of the OK Grower's School, which is an eight-week workshop designed to educate and train Warrior farmers. Lessons cover soil composition, plant life cycles, composting, pollinators, and local food systems. By developing their understanding of farming, Warriors prepare to fully engage in farm operations on the Knockout Farm from the crop planning to the harvesting and all the work in between.



Natalie with the 1st two Grower's School Grad Classes. These ten became the first certified Warrior Farmers in 2018!

"Longfellow is extremely grateful for the opportunity to work with the members of OK. We feel that there is a huge need to connect our young merging learners with loving compassionate adults such as the ones in your program. The relationships that form in our class does not only grow inside our classes but extends to our town, our homes and our hearts. For in these types of learning experiences, everyone grows."

— Allison Lamb, 1st Grade Teacher at Longfellow Elementary School in Oak Park

MYSTERY READER

Since the beginning of 2018, Life Shop Warriors have visited Longfellow Elementary School monthly as a part of the "Mystery Reader" program. Warriors read a variety of children's books and facilitate related activities to 1st grade classrooms at the school. Not only do we have a blast, we work on our professionalism and leadership skills each trip.



"I read a story with Max at Longfellow School. I did great and it was great! It's me in the cool photo!"
— Karisa R.



250
Volunteer hours performed
with 100% Life Shop
Involvement



The food goes to people who need food and don't have it. We like going there. It's fun and we work on job skills there.

— Max W.

"The Warriors from Opportunity Knocks are one of my favorite groups to work with. They always come to the pantry with a great spirit and ready to help us with many tasks. This is integral to our mission to 'work together as a community to relief hunger locally'. It is such a pleasure to have the Warriors on the team."

— Ricardo J. Garcia - Volunteer & Pantry Manager

OPRF FOOD PANTRY

Each Thursday afternoon, a pair of Life Shop Warriors goes to the OPRF Food Pantry to help sort and package dry foods, produce, and household items.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE VOCATION

WARRIOR JOBS IN THE
KNOCKOUT CATERING COMPANY

2016 2

2017 6

2018 9

2019 12*

*PROJECTD

38

TOTAL KNOCKOUT
CATERING EVENTS

26

KNOCKOUT CATERING EVENTS
FEATURED FARM PRODUCE

3200

TOTAL PEOPLE SERVED BY
THE KCC | 2017-18

OK

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CHEF MADDY SHINES

In May of 2017, we welcomed Maddy Gancer to our Catering Team. Maddy had always showed great interest in our culinary programs in After Opps & Life Shop programming. She was an obvious candidate for consideration on the WCC team.

Our decision was a good one. Her positivity and team-first approach has been a great addition. In addition to her great attitude, she has also shined by improving her knife skills and organization. Even more than the technical skills, her greatest improvements have been in communication skills with customers.

Once soft spoken and shy now she projects confidence and comfort while talking to everyone about our menu and looking for direction on how best to do her job. Our catering continues to grow more and more.

Maddy's work has been a major reason for that.



"River Forest Kitchen and Sugar Beet Schoolhouse are eager to support Opportunity Knocks in any way possible. Their work serves an incredible need in our community and our facility does, as well. When we collaborate we can accomplish amazing things!"

— Cheryl Munoz, Founder & ED of Sugarbeet Schoolhouse



"It is hard work and community based and provides something to do on those tricky, lonely Fridays and Saturdays. We are so grateful for this in her life."

— Kate Gancer (Maddy's Mom)

KITCHEN PARTNERS BRIDGE GAP

As our catering range has grown certain jobs have created challenges for us to execute in our home facility at the RFCC. To address these challenges, we have formed a series of partnerships to help find secondary space to cater, as well as create culinary programming.

Our friends at the Sugar Beet Schoolhouse have opened their doors to us to use their commercial kitchen space so that we can take on larger jobs that require more equipment. The 19th Century Club has been so impressed by our work that they have listed us as their only preferred outside catering company, affording us the access to jobs and the use of their commercial kitchen space to cater those events.



WASTE MINIMIZATION INITIATIVE

7.5%
Landfill

38.7%
Donated to
OPRF
Food Pantry

53.8%
Compost

Potential crop waste was 315 pounds. With a focus on minimizing, we were able to divert crops to more sustainable uses in 2018.

GETTIN' HER HANDS DIRTY ON THE FARM

It's been a productive season on the OK Farm! Throughout all the hard work, one Warrior in particular has shown dedication to the success of our farm. Jonece Dansby has been a Warrior and volunteer for 6 years and we are thankful for her hard work on the farm this season. She is an active volunteer during our bi-monthly work days and rallies her friends and family to attend, as well. The work is dirty, exhausting, and difficult, yet Jonece always maintains a positive and upbeat attitude! The OK Farm would not be where it is today without the help of our dedicated volunteers.

38

CROP VARIETIES
GROWN FROM SEED STARTS

82

CROP VARIETIES
GROWN ALL TOGETHER

1,300

POUNDS OF PRODUCE HARVESTED
FROM THE KNOCKOUT FARM | 2018

CRAFTY PARTNERSHIPS

Our craft brewer partnerships have always supported our events, but more recently, these relationships have helped grow our enterprises. We are currently working closely with the taprooms at Kinslahger Brewing Co. and the Oak Park Brewing Company. We are providing the classic variety of our Knockout Pickles for Kinslahger's taproom menu, as well as a collaboratively developed batch of pickled eggs, featuring a beet infusion. At the Oak Park Brewing Co., we have become the exclusive provider of pickles for their menu. They are also using the pickle juice to power up their Bloody Marys and most recently we began preparing a variety of other pickled perishables for a charcuterie tray.

3

TOTAL WARRIOR JOBS
AT KNOCK OUT PICKLES

9

STORE AND RETAIL VENDORS
CARRYING KNOCK OUT PICKLES

1,847lbs

OF KNOCK OUT PICKLES
PRODUCED IN 2018

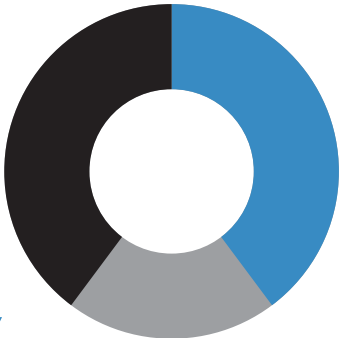


FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



14%

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
GROSS SALES GROWTH
FY17 to FY18



94%

PERCENT FROM
PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES



OUR RESOURCES: REVENUES & SUPPORT

39%	SPECIAL EVENTS (NET)	\$344,580
39%	GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS & IN-KIND DONATIONS	\$338,551
22%	PROGRAM INCOME	\$191,645
		\$874,776

HOW WE USED OUR RESOURCES: TOTAL EXPENSES

79%	PROGRAM SERVICES	\$702,718
19%	FINANCE, HR, BOARD	\$171,856
2%	FUNDRAISING & PARTNERS	\$15,752
		\$890,326

WHERE WE USED OUR RESOURCES: PROGRAMS

47.34%	LIFE SHOP
41.17%	AFTER OPPS
11.49%	SOCIAL ENTERPRISE & OTHER

For more information, please visit the Reports & Documents page on our website at www.opportunityknocksnow.org

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



ALWAYS ANSWERING THE CALL: BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES KOENIGRUBLOFF REALTY GROUP

John Lawrence, Managing Broker, has been involved in OK since inception, initially helping with real estate needs and later joining the Board of Directors in 2011. John said the cause resonated with him and his family, and he was inspired by the passion and commitment from the founders and young staff. As one of the leaders in real estate in the area, John believes that Warriors unique abilities are a vital part of our community fabric, "I love seeing the Warriors out in the community doing the gardening or the catering, or just having fun at an event - it's important for everyone to see people of all ability levels making a contribution. " Today, in addition to his contributions through the Board, John and his team always find ways to answer our calls for help- from volunteering at and supporting every OK event to working with the Warriors in sponsoring annual OK car wash fundraiser. John recognizes that doing good is also good for business and acknowledges the importance of community in both aspects.

12+
WELLNESS PARTNERS

50+
CORPORATE PARTNERS

"My business is entirely about building community and sharing the great aspects of OP, RF and FP with those who are newcomers. I also love to connect great people with other great people and OK fits that."

JOHN LAWRENCE, MANAGING BROKER

WARRIOR STARS



Through the Warrior Star Initiative, Warriors work alongside Dominican University psychology and nutrition students to perform various vocational tasks, attend social events, learn about nutrition and healthy living, and develop peer friendships on and off the local university campus. Through their efforts, Warriors have carved out their own unique, dynamic, and productive place within the DU community. At the same time, a steady stream of DU interns and volunteers have created a strong and fresh presence within the OK community.

20

WARRIORS HAVE WORKED
OR VOLUNTEERED ON
THE DU CAMPUS THRU
WARRIOR STARS

24

DOMINICAN STUDENTS HAVE
VOLUNTEERED OR INTERNEED AT
OK THRU WARRIOR STARS



WARRIOR STAR | JACKIE FINN

Warrior Jackie Finn started volunteering all over the Dominican University campus with the Trinity Volunteer Corps back in 2012. She has worked everywhere from the cafeteria to the greenhouse to the athletic department and more! With her extensive experience and knowledge of DU, she has been a great and enthusiastic peer-leader as the OK-DU partnership has evolved. Jackie has worked at the cafeteria, library, HeadStart nutrition, archive office, and native landscaping. She has also engaged as a leader in showing the newer Warriors to the DU Campus the many jobs that exist thru WSI at DU.

"I LOVE my job! I feel good and I like going there and working hard. I like working with the DU students. They are nice and helpful and friendly! Sometimes we go to parties and events and fairs on campus! I liked going to BINGO day."

— JACKIE FINN (WARRIOR STAR)

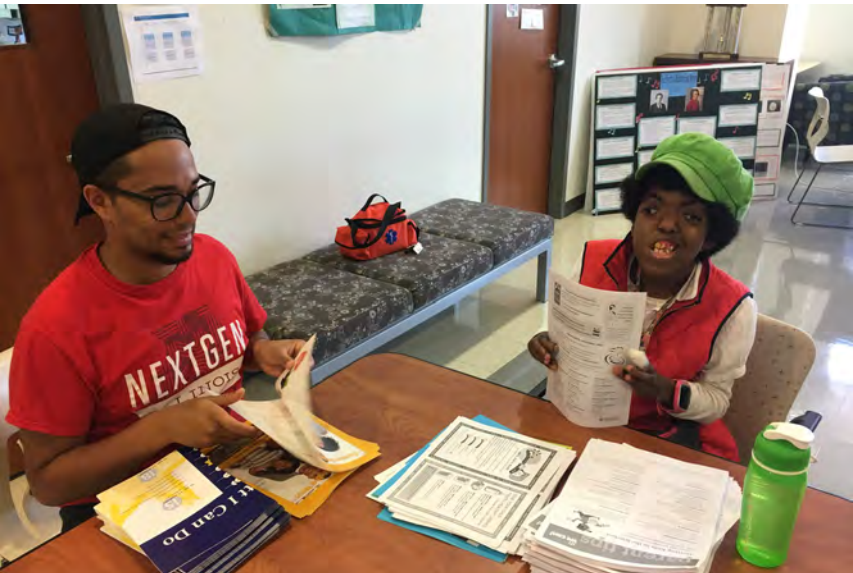


BEE KEEPING

Warriors have gotten the chance to learn about and practice beekeeping at Dominican University with students and staff during their weekly campus hive checks, as well as through hands-on tours, activities, and DU events. We get to practice vocational skills, socialize with students, learn interesting new information, and overcome our fears of bees!

"This kind of work gets everyone—Warriors, Opportunity Knocks staff, and Dominican students and staff—outdoors, collaborating on projects that everyone can learn from and that benefit everyone, as well as the environment. Next summer we hope to have a vegetable garden, where the Dominican students and staff can learn from the Warriors, whose experience working on the OK Farm will allow them to teach us new and necessary skills!"

— Ellen McManus,
DU Professor Beekeeping/Native Landscaping



DU INTERNSHIPS HELP PROGRAMS & TURN INTO JOBS

Dominican University is located in River Forest, just 1.8 miles from the OK HQ. With proximity and the evolution of the Warrior Stars Initiative a clear opportunity to engage the DU community in the Warrior Mission emerged. That connection has grown exponentially in the past few years, as we have had the privilege of establishing volunteer and intern positions for nearly 30 DU students.

5

TOTAL SECONDARY
EDUCATION PARTNERS

24

TOTAL INTERNSHIP POSITIONS
CREATED IN 2017-18

NUMBER OF INTERNSHIPS BY SCHOOL IN 2017-18			
 DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY	14	 CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY	2
 MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY	6	 UIC UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO	1
		 ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY	1

"OK has been such a meaningful and fun experience for myself, both as an academic and as a professional. The staff at OK from the start were helpful and welcoming. My experience at OK allows me to apply what I am learning in my psychology program as well as gain an appreciation for the community cultivated at OK. OK opens so many doors for the Warriors and it is an honor to be a part of building upon their vision to provide opportunities and resources for this community."

— Oscar Montanez, psychology intern and now OK Program Leader

10

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY
STUDENT VOLUNTEERS
CONNECTED TO WARRIOR STARS

14

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY
INTERNSHIP POSITIONS

6

TOTAL FROM THE ABOVE HAVE
BEEN HIRED ON TO THE OK STAFF

GET INVOLVED

Visit opportunityknocksnow.org for details.



DONATE

#GIVING NOVEMBER

YOUR GIFT MATTERS DURING NOVEMBER!

Your gift matters to each of our Warriors as they chart their own paths to living self-fulfilled lives in the community. Visit us online to help us meet multiple matches that will double your donation.

VOLUNTEER

Are you passionate and driven to make a difference in the lives of our Warriors? The gift of your time, expertise and attention are priceless to us. Volunteer opportunities are available in all our programs to support staff and engage with Warriors. It will change their life, it will change your life!

Not ready for a regular commitment? No problem! We need volunteers for short-term projects in programs, at the OK Farm or one of our 4 fun and exciting fundraising events during the year. A list of our 2018 event dates can be found at our website.

WE LOVE SOCIAL MEDIA!

Follow us to keep up with the latest Warrior happenings in programs, special events and much more. We also maintain a blog on our website where we feature the voices of our Warriors, staff and volunteers.



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

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