



Choice. Independence. Inclusion.

WELCOME TO THE TABLE

ANNUAL REPORT **2019**

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On the cover: Carla B. has been an Envision Unlimited member for six years. She enjoys working in the Van J. Vorhees Garden and participating in cooking classes where she creates delicious new dishes using the produce she's grown.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Sharing a meal: it's something we do all the time. Whether a sandwich with colleagues at lunch, a catered affair at a fancy venue, or a home-cooked meal with family and friends gathered around the table, the experience of breaking bread together is universal.

We didn't set out to tell a story of food in this year's annual report, but it turns out that growing, harvesting, preparing, serving, and sharing a good meal plays a big part in the life of every Envision Unlimited member whose stories are in the pages that follow.

Tony treasures the customer service he can provide to customers at the grocery store where he's a service clerk. Gianna is a cook in the Army National Guard and works at a restaurant in her civilian life while she plans ahead for college and a career in medicine. Housemates Darryl, Robert, and Tina relish the opportunity to prepare meals together in their own kitchen. And our new Idelle Kipperman Kitchen for food entrepreneurs...you won't believe all the amazing food and beverages being prepared there!

The choice to shop for our own groceries or decide what we want for dinner — actions most of us might take for granted — is not a given for many individuals with disabilities. Layer in the lack of fresh produce and limited transportation options available to our members, and the prospect of enjoying a healthy meal in the company of others becomes even more challenging.



That's why Envision Unlimited works tirelessly to remove the barriers and stereotypes that persist for the individuals we serve. We create a supportive ecosystem of members and their families, staff, supporters, and a board that is steadfast in advocating for the full integration of people with disabilities in every aspect of society. In an exciting new development, we've taken this approach beyond Chicago and over the last year have expanded our services into Central Illinois, where we have brought new respite programs to areas and families that previously had none.

Sharing a meal: it's a simple act with profound implications, and one that none of us should take for granted. We hope that the stories in this report will move you to learn more about our members, places, and programs, and to find your own way to get involved with Envision Unlimited. Won't you join us at the table?

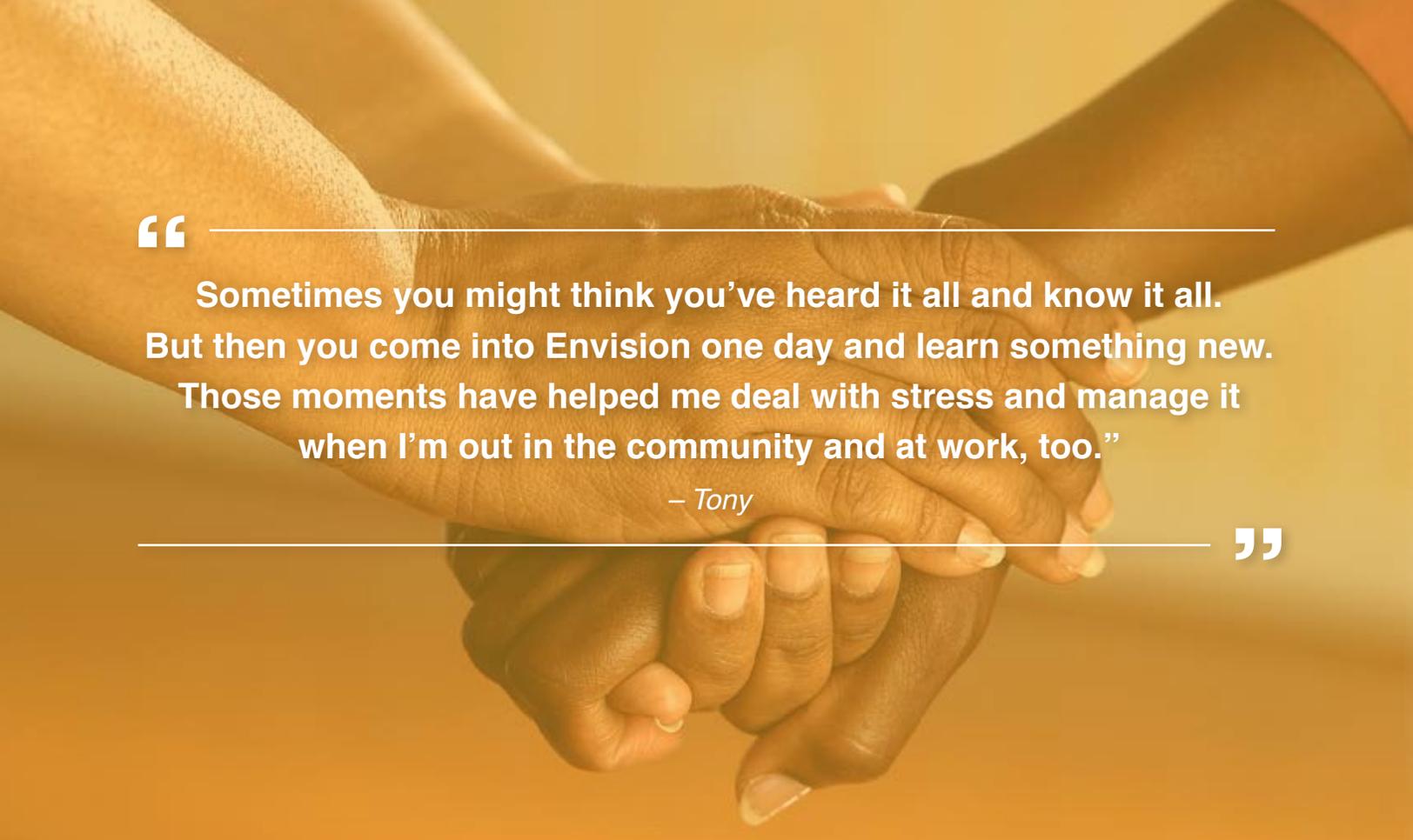
Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mark McHugh in black ink.

Mark McHugh
President and CEO

Handwritten signature of Dan Durbin in black ink.

Dan Durbin
Board Chair



“

Sometimes you might think you've heard it all and know it all. But then you come into Envision one day and learn something new. Those moments have helped me deal with stress and manage it when I'm out in the community and at work, too.”

– Tony

”

SAYING HELLO TO “THE NEW ME”

Tony knows when to step away and take a deep breath.

If he's having a bad day, he knows he can come to the staff, let them know what's on his mind, and together they can decide if it's better for Tony to maybe go home, then come back fresh and ready to go the next day.

It was not always like this.

“The ‘old me’ used to get angry, have outbursts, throw things, and scream,” Tony says matter-of-factly. He struggled to control his anger and had cycled through a number of housing and treatment programs, none of which had made a significant difference.

Then he came to Envision Unlimited, where group, art, and music therapies — combined with medication management and training — have truly transformed Tony's life. He applies what he learns in therapy to his work and personal life, taking an active role in treating his mental illness.

Before Envision, Tony didn't want to tell people that he had a mental illness. Growing up, it was difficult for Tony's father to admit that his son had a problem, but Tony's stepmother knew that something was “wrong.” Tony is grateful for her initial intervention many years ago, and today he enjoys a positive relationship with his family.

Identifying the fact that he had a mental illness was only the first step, however. Tony feared the stigma of being labeled “mentally ill” and didn’t want to be treated differently. He tried to cope on his own, but knew he was traveling a rocky road. At one of his lowest points, Tony was living in a nursing home, unable to work or even take care of his appearance.

The transition to his current state of wellness wasn’t easy. His symptoms were hard to manage, the side effects of various medications had not been clearly explained to him, and his interpersonal skills had deteriorated. The staff at Envision Unlimited changed all that, slowly. Tony learned about medications that would work for him and why, which in turn enabled him to keep on a schedule. Significantly, Tony learned the importance of advocating for himself and speaking his needs to staff, friends, and co-workers.

Tony found himself coming to his Envision program willing to learn new things every day. He realized he was fully capable of coping with being out in the community and managing his stress. Work became meaningful again.

Tony became a ComEd Ambassador for a year-long term and has worked as a service clerk at



Jewel-Osco for four years. What used to make him nervous — interaction with the public or unexpected events — are now opportunities for him to draw upon all he’s learned in therapy. His colleagues have high expectations of him, and he was recently tapped to train a new team member. After a two-week vacation, Tony said co-workers told him, “It’s always good to have you around.” And for Tony it feels great to be needed at work.

Tony praises the flexibility and structure of Envision’s mental health and wellness program, as well as its employees: “The staff here are very cool. Sometimes we have our differences — I don’t always agree with them. But I know I can always question things to make sure I’m getting everything I need.”

Today, Tony is very focused on the future, and with good reason. He’s soon returning to living independently and would like to be married one day. He’s starting to explore future career options, including a promotion with his current employer and possibly owning his own business down the road. He’s also taking the time to savor the small things: playing basketball, shopping with his girlfriend, and enjoying the art and music that have been so instrumental to his recovery.

Tony still has difficult days, but now he has the tools to tackle problems head on. Most importantly, Tony knows what he needs to do to take care of himself and succeed at his goals: “The ‘new me’ is still growing and developing. I’m becoming the person I always knew I could be.”





A CHOSEN FAMILY

Darryl, Robert, and Tina enjoy paying their bills.

Why? Because writing monthly checks for rent and utilities is a symbol of their independence. These three roommates share a spacious home on the northwest side, complete with a breezy front porch and leafy back yard. Their quiet block is like any other in their community, and that's the point.

Robert, Tina, and Darryl are all participants in Envision Unlimited's Intermittent Community Integrated Living Program, meaning that while they have staff support during the daytime, they're on their own overnight and largely independent as they travel about the city — and beyond — for work and social activities with friends and significant others.

All three are employed and cite earning their paychecks as one of their most significant accomplishments. Darryl, who is deaf but communicates via writing and some signing, has worked at the same pancake house since 1982, having started there bussing tables as a teenager. In his free time he travels throughout Cook County and surrounding suburbs to find the perfect fishing spot. His room in the house is full of fishing poles.

Tina is an accomplished seamstress and is particularly skilled at sewing shirts and jackets. Robert's career has provided him opportunities to work in hospitality, retail, and janitorial services. He's currently a housekeeper at an Envision Unlimited community hub.

Before becoming roommates, Tina, Darryl, and Robert knew each other a bit through other Envision services, and when the opportunity arose for them to be matched together as roommates living independently together, all three jumped at the opportunity. Tina says the transition was “seamless” — from day one they’ve looked out for each other and taken care of their home as a team.

Robert takes a lead on grocery shopping and cooking. Tina influences the in-home entertainment decisions, favoring scary stories and Halloween movies. A skilled artist, Darryl’s drawings of airplanes are quick to be pointed out by his roommates. It’s clear that each roommate is incredibly proud of the accomplishments of the others.

Darryl, Robert, and Tina’s relatives aren’t very involved in their lives. But the strong relationships they’ve built as roommates

have resulted in the creation of a new family, their chosen family. Being able to rely on each other in that way means everything to them.

The roommates achieved a new milestone this summer when they attended a block party for the first time. They got to know the diversity of individuals and experiences that make up their neighborhood, and, in that way, their own household is a microcosm of the community at large. Tina, Robert, and Darryl’s house is like any other on the block. And that’s the point.

“ I love it this way, having our own place and no need for overnight visits from staff. As roommates, we take care of each other.

– Tina

”

“I like this house so much, but I **love** the door to my room — it has a mural painted on the back. This community is quiet, our neighbors are friendly, and we can go pretty much anywhere we want to by using public transportation. I can relax and take it easy here.”
– Robert





EVERY OPPORTUNITY TAKEN

Gianna knows all too well the biggest misconceptions about children in foster care.

“People perceive it negatively, being in foster care. They assume I lived in a group home with strangers. They assume I don’t know my biological mother, father, or siblings. They assume my life has been a struggle, that I don’t have access to the things I need to succeed. None of that is true, though. I want people to know that foster kids are people like me.”

And who is Gianna? She’s a motivated, multi-hyphenate young woman taking advantage of every opportunity that comes her way.

At three days old, Gianna was placed with Ms. Campbell, her legal guardian. Gianna’s older sister joined them shortly thereafter. She has five siblings in total, and while her siblings spent periods of time living with their biological mom growing up, Gianna always stayed with Ms. Campbell, a decision that the family arrived at in consultation with Gianna’s mom. Conversations around visitations were open; as Gianna got older, she could visit her mom whenever she wanted, knowing she always had the stability and support of Ms. Campbell’s home to anchor her life.



“I’m just the type of person that will volunteer for anything — I will take those opportunities. That way if I decide I want to keep doing something, then I can pursue it. What’s important is that I have the opportunity to make the decision on my own.”

— *Gianna*



Gianna flourished in school, getting straight A’s, playing on the volleyball team, and becoming a certified phlebotomist when she was still in her teens. As high school graduation approached, Gianna knew it was time to embark on a new challenge. With the strong support of Ms. Campbell, she joined the Army National Guard at 17 and headed to five months of basic training. Ms. Campbell’s letters and phone calls kept her connected to home, but Gianna was relishing the chance to see new states and make friends from all over the country.

Today, Gianna juggles a full-time job at Qdoba, military obligations, and applying for college. Earlier this year her unit was activated and traveled to St. Louis to help out residents after major flooding. She returned to work and then two weeks later left for her annual training, all with the strong support of her family and her employer. She’s already received a National Guard grant that will pay for her higher education and has several options for where she might want to go. As a high schooler she earned a number of college credits, giving her further flexibility as she pursues her desire to one day become a doctor.

How does this 19-year-old seemingly do it all and make it look so effortless? Gianna credits

her ability to juggle everything to the structure that Ms. Campbell’s home continues to provide to this day. Additionally, Gianna has had a lot of interaction with Envision Unlimited staff over the years. Whenever she and Ms. Campbell would need to meet up with the caseworker, for example, Gianna would schedule the meetings after school so that she could put her schoolwork first. Ms. Campbell and her case workers always provided guidance, but ultimately Gianna was able to have the final say in so many important decisions in her life. Because of her upbringing and ongoing circle of support, she feels confident and prepared when doing so.

Gianna will always be grateful for her positive experiences in foster care. To this day, her mantra is a statement that Ms. Campbell made to her from a young age: “Don’t let anybody stop me from being the best I can be.”

“

I’ve had her since three days old and everything went so fast. She’s just been wonderful to raise.

— *Ms. Campbell*

”

The seeds of the kitchen were planted in 2017 when Envision Unlimited President and CEO Mark McHugh identified an opportunity to bring together aspects of horticulture and culinary arts — two of the most popular programs Envision already had in place, to create employment for members. At that time, a small number of Envision program participants were formalizing their kitchen skills by obtaining safe food handling certification, and the Van J. Voorhees Horticulture Program was active at farmer’s markets. Mark — working with local food industry expert Zina Murray — identified a shared commercial enterprise as a way to bring this all together.

After a feasibility study, research on similar shared kitchen facilities, participant input, and the approval of a business plan, the concept of a community-focused industrial kitchen seemed within reach. The initiative, however, was still missing a key ingredient: the capital needed to get it off the ground.

Enter Larry Kipperman, a retired lawyer and long-time supporter of Envision Unlimited who loved the concept and generously agreed to

underwrite the space, which is named in honor of his mother Idelle. “Everything I became, I owe it to my mom,” says Larry. “She was a working mom and a very sharp businesswoman.”
(For more on Larry’s story, see page 14.)

Business is on the minds of everyone in the kitchen these days. A licensed kitchen is expensive to build and maintain, so for these entrepreneurs, the Kipperman Kitchen helps remove some of that financial burden. For Westtown Center, a space that already hosts a number of regular community groups and events, the kitchen further strengthens the ties to local businesses and neighbors near and far. For program participants, the skills acquired and connections forged are opening up new career options.

“

“It feels good to be working in the kitchen and to learn the things I need to know to get a job in the community.”

– Anthony Berrafato

”

“Not only are you doing your job making money and doing well for yourself, but you’re working with other people,”
Hallie Schwartz, owner of Sweet Shot Cookies, said in an ABC7 segment on the kitchen. “It’s really nice at the end of the day when clients are asking me for these recipes that they want to be doing this at home. You know you’re making a difference.”



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Envision Unlimited posted an increase in Net Assets of \$70,925 in fiscal year 2019. This was the first full year of combined operations from the March 1, 2018 merger with Neumann Family Services. Programing services drove the year over year increase in revenue and expenses providing enhanced services for our additional members. Net revenue from Contributions and Fund Raising events increased again this year.

Envision's Net Assets as of June 30, 2019, were \$10,324,467. Our balance sheet stabilized this year with investments in housing and community site assets. It continues to provide the flexibility needed to implement the programs and services

needed to fulfill our overall mission despite the funding challenges presented by the State of Illinois.

We begin fiscal year 2020 with the ongoing transformation of our day services to a completely community-integrated model and offering more independent living opportunities for members. Such initiatives will adequately address the current challenges presented by government funding, as well as better meet the needs of our members.

Sincerely,



Brittany Scott Nanry
Treasurer

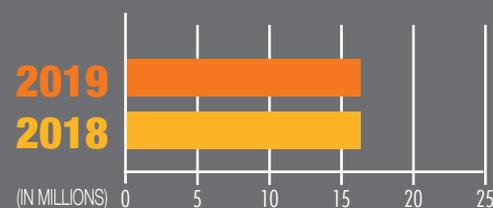
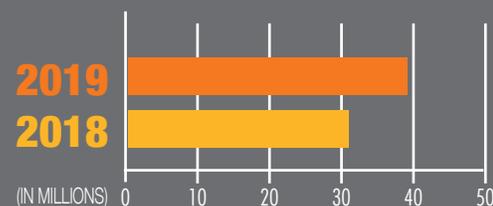
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

(Years ended June 30)

Support and Revenue	2019	2018
	<i>(Unaudited)</i>	
Operational Revenue	\$33,359,392	\$25,279,430
Program Fees and Other Revenues	3,742,939	2,950,262
Contributions	2,101,528	1,948,016
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE	\$39,203,859	\$30,177,708
Expenses	2019	2018
Community Day Services	9,178,539	8,171,803
Community Living Services	21,291,351	15,436,598
Family Support Services	2,015,750	2,128,243
Mental Health Services	3,413,922	973,996
Total Program Expenses.....	35,899,562	26,710,640
Management and General.....	2,614,567	2,721,601
Fundraising and Development	618,805	614,518
Total Expenses	39,132,934	30,046,759
Operating Surplus	70,925	130,949
Net Assets Transferred from Merger	0	2,835,589
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS.....	\$70,925	\$2,966,538

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets	2019	2018
Cash	5,094,622	6,788,787
Other Current Assets	3,876,015	3,013,398
Total Current Assets.....	8,970,637	9,802,185
Fixed Assets, Net	7,659,359	6,479,756
Other Assets	134,122	439,891
Total Assets.....	16,764,118	16,721,832
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Total Current Liabilities.....	5,403,619	6,407,217
Total Long-Term Liabilities	1,036,032	61,073
Net Assets	10,324,467	10,253,542
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$16,764,118	\$16,721,832



DONOR PROFILE: LARRY KIPPERMAN



Photo by Tom Vlodek

In the spring of 1972, a 30-year-old lawyer named Larry Kipperman received an address on a slip of paper and was sent on his way to meet a client for the first time. He got lost on the way there. “I thought, this is terrible! It’s a new client, and I can’t find the office.”

Larry didn’t know much about the client, save for a couple of oddly specific details: the head of the management team was a man named Otto Whitehill, and he had a noticeable Viennese accent. As he rushed up and down the hallway looking for the right office, Larry heard the lilting words of Whitehill waft through a door: “Maybe we got the wrong young man.” Whitehill’s words, while slightly discouraging to the young lawyer, nonetheless enabled Larry to identify the right room and step into the

meeting just in time. To this day, Larry recalls the significance of that moment: “If I hadn’t found that door in those five minutes, the next 40 years could have been very different!”

Fortunately, Whitehill was wrong. Envision had found just the right young man at the right time.

For the next four decades, Larry provided legal representation for Envision Unlimited in a number of capacities, working with five different CEOs along the way. Early on, he focused on employment relations at the schools and vocational workshops run by the organization. As the field of human services changed, so did the nature of Larry’s work. One thing that hasn’t changed is the

dedication of the management and staff, which has always impressed him. “These are people who could go out into the world, generally, and work anywhere they want. Yet they choose to be here to fulfill a wonderful mission.”

In 2010 Larry retired, but his fondness for Envision kept him engaged with the work at the organization. After careful consideration, he joined the Board of Directors and sought ways to provide meaningful financial support. When Mark McHugh approached him about a new idea around a shared commercial kitchen space at Envision’s Westtown Center, Larry knew it was the right opportunity. The space would be named the Idelle Kipperman Kitchen in honor of his mother.

Idelle Kipperman was a business entrepreneur when that wasn’t the typical path for most women. She had spent time working in the front of the house at a restaurant, as well as running businesses with her husband, but wasn’t particularly known for a love of being in the kitchen. Except, that is, when it came time to make banana cake with chocolate frosting for her son.

“It was my favorite food from the time I was a little kid,” Larry explains. “Our neighbors taught mom how to make it, and I can clearly recall assisting her by mashing up the bananas and adding the sour cream. I was a skinny kid and could eat as much cake as I wanted. There was nothing better than that cake fresh out of the oven paired with a cold glass of milk.”

Even after his parents retired to Arizona and he would visit them as an adult, a slice of banana cake would be waiting for him upon arrival. By the time Envision approached him about the kitchen, the original recipe had been lost to the ages, but he found a matching recipe online. The banana cake with chocolate frosting served at the Idelle Kipperman Kitchen ribbon-cutting ceremony

“tasted just like what Mom used to make,” says Larry.

The Kipperman family highly valued the role of small businesses in their lives, and Idelle Kipperman herself was an entrepreneur many times over. The business owners and program participants that share the commercial kitchen space carry on her spirit. Larry hopes that benefits accrue to all who step through the doors, with individuals working together to develop new skills, fine-tune their talents, and cultivate commercial activity in the community.

“I had been waiting for the right time to make this type of gift,” says Larry. “Everything I have accomplished, I owe to my mom, so this contribution has given me more joy than a fancy car or remodeling my house. My hope is that the Kipperman Kitchen will train hundreds of program participants over the years while providing food entrepreneurs access to space and equipment that they otherwise wouldn’t have.”

As social service agencies continue to come under additional fiscal constraints in the public arena, increased infusions of private dollars are necessary. Larry hopes this kitchen will catch the attention of others who would be willing and interested to provide financial support to Envision. His advice to other potential donors is to find an initiative you believe in; surround yourself with high quality board members, leadership, and frontline staff; and then feel good about the gift you decide to make, knowing that the effort you put in ahead of time will result in a significant impact down the road.

Larry keeps tabs on the growth of activity in the shared commercial kitchen and intends to stay actively engaged with the organization: “Forty-seven years after I walked through that office door, I can say without hesitation that Envision Unlimited is my favorite client!”

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– Kristin V. MacRAE

Pictured: Kenneth Johnson, Urban Gardener





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