



OPEN TABLE

Program Type: Social Capital Promotion

Agency and Location: Based in Phoenix, AZ; participants in 28 states and Europe have been trained on the model

Population Served: Low-income individuals and families, including young adults, veterans, individuals under probation or who are reentering society from jail/prison, survivors of human trafficking, and refugees.

Program Description: The Open Table trains faith, government, business, non-profit and other sectors to work together in an effort to use their community's social capital to better the lives of low-income individuals and families.

The Open Table works to boost the social capital of individuals in order to help them work toward self-sufficiency. Congregations recruit volunteers who are trained to launch “tables.” A “table” is the platform through which individuals (referred to as Brothers and Sisters) and congregation members enter into relationship. Each “table” is composed of a group of volunteers that make a year-long commitment to act as a team of life specialists, encouragers, and advocates for individuals and families experiencing poverty or other life challenges. The “table” members, together with the individual or family being served, establish goals, accountability, and develop an overall implementation plan. Table members network in their congregations, organizations, and the broader community for resources to support the plan. Tables meet once a week and socialize outside of the meetings to establish long lasting relationships and offer resources.

Over the course of a year, the goal is for the participant/family to develop friendships with the “table” volunteers and implement a participant-driven plan together to build a better life for the participant. As the year ends, the “table” transitions into an after plan, through which the members are able to remain in a supportive community together. Open Table has noted that community organizations are increasingly using the core model and process to convene human services and other agencies at the community level around strategies for leveraging the social capital of the broader community.

Results: Open Table's findings show that long-term, supportive relationships are being formed. In a [2015 study of 2013 Open Table graduates](#), 95 percent remained in relationship with at least one “table” member after two years and 85 percent of Open Table graduates are either in training or have obtained better jobs two years after successfully participating in the Table process. The same study also showed that “table” members are personally transformed in how they see their own social capital and the social capital of their larger community, and increase their direct involvement with the community.

Program Perspective: Open Table founder Jon Katov believes, “Transforming poverty in our communities requires us to transform the way we invest in human development. To move from transaction-based interventions to the transformational power of relational and social capital.”

An anonymous participant said, “I learned to problem solve. Relationships, good relationships, gave me a new world view. I loved them all (my “table”). They helped me with balance in my life. They surrounded me with love.”

For More Information: Contact Jon Katov, Founder and CEO, at jonkatov@theopentable.org or 602-793-0533.

