The Open Table Mission

Open Table trains faith communities, community organizations and their members, through the Open Table Model, to form communities – called Tables - that transform the vocational and life experiences of members into tools our Brothers and Sisters experiencing or at risk for economic poverty can use to develop and implement plans that create change. The Open Table process is a catalyst for the collaboration of faith communities, government, universities, businesses and non-profits, working through a shared purpose model, to move themselves and their communities from a transactional relationship with our Brothers and Sisters to one of transformation.

While people join Tables to help others, they soon realize they are transformed by the relationships they create. Through the Open Table, relationship is mutual: friendship, healing, purpose, faith and transformation given by each other for each other. God gives everyone human potential and the Open Table model allows us all to use it to give lives of meaning to each other.

Rapid Expansion of the Movement and the Model

From a chance encounter with a homeless man at a local church outreach, Open Table has expanded to a movement in more than 28 states and 180+ global cities and communities. The movement is demonstrating that the abundant, renewable resources of intellectual and social capital in people and their communities can be directly and effectively invested in the human potential of our Brothers and Sisters. The breakthrough element is a model based on fifteen years of implementation and current research that prepares, trains, and equips participants for authentic and transformative relationships.

Open Table for Young Adults

Congregations use the Open Table model to create community and transformation through relationships with individuals and families who are homeless, working poor, young adults, veterans, probation/re-entry, survivors of human trafficking, refugees, and others.

Congregations recruit volunteers who are trained to launch "Tables." A Table is the platform through which our Brothers and Sisters and congregation members enter into relationship. Candidates for Tables pass through an assessment and backgrounding process. Each Table is composed of a group of volunteers that make a year commitment to act as a team of life specialists, encouragers, and advocates for individuals and families experiencing economic poverty. 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 and the community for resources to support the plan. As Tables end, they transition into an After Plan, through which Table members and Brothers and Sisters are able to remain in supportive community together.

www.theopentable.org
Each Table is hosted by a congregation or community agency. A required team of volunteers (10-12 people serve an adult or family and 6-7 serve a young adult over a 12 month period). Tables meet once a week. Table members work as teams and also provide leadership for important life domains (see Open Table model diagram). A volunteer Mission Leader is trained in each faith community to lead the model and launch Tables.

Family Portrait: A graduated Sister in Dallas, TX and her Table.

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Shared Purpose Initiative

The Open Table model is re-defining the faith-government partnership to build new community capacity to serve individuals and families.

Faith-government projects in multiple states with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Systems of Care have now been launched. Additionally Open Table is partnered with community organizations of all kinds across the country.

Open Table processes draw from the extensive research base of Wraparound, an established evidence-based practice method for assisting people in transition (Open Table was developed independently in the faith community without knowledge of Wraparound). Wraparound has served more than one million young adults and families globally.

Both models emphasize the importance of individuals prioritizing their own needs; learning to manage life on their own; and building natural support networks to help sustain them once formal services end.

The steps and procedures for both models are similar. As a result, the extensive research base for the Wraparound Process, which comes from 25 years of development and high levels of Federal funding for research, is directly applicable to Open Table. These studies show that support, when tailored to individual needs, with high levels of voice and choice, backed by specific plans to address unmet needs, actually works to address complex long term needs central to living in the community.

The unique contribution of Open Table is its focus on establishing intensive and long sustaining positive and supportive relationships, and creating a bridge between intellectual and social capital resources and connections. It is clear that cross cultural and socio-economic systems understand the need to address the challenges inherent in successfully transitioning from formal care systems to natural community support.