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**Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State**  
**Minnesota Public Benefit Corporation / Annual Benefit Report**  
*Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 304A*



Read the instructions before completing this form

Must be filed by March 31

Filing Fee: \$55 for expedited service in-person and online filings, \$35 if submitted by mail

The Annual Benefit Report covers the 12 month period ending on December 31 of the previous year.

Notice: Failure to file this form by March 31 of this year will result in the revocation of the corporation's public benefit status without further notice from the Secretary of State, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 304A.301

1. Corporate Name: (Required) SWIM POSSIBLE SBC

2. The public benefit corporation's board of directors has reviewed and approved this report.

3. In the field below, enter the information required by section 304A. 201 subd. 2 or 3 for the period covered by this report, (see instructions for further information); Note: Use additional sheets if needed. (Required)

See Attached Report

4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am the chief executive officer of this public benefit corporation. I further certify that I have signed this document no more than 30 days before the document is delivered to the secretary of state for filing, and that this document is current when signed. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

*Sonja Brown*  
Signature of Public Benefit Corporation's Chief Executive Officer

March 14, 2016  
Date (Must be dated within 30 days before the report is delivered to the Secretary of State for Filing)

**Email Address for Official Notices**

Enter an email address to which the Secretary of State can forward official notices required by law and other notices:

swimpossible.sonja@gmail.com

Check here to have your email address excluded from requests for bulk data, to the extent allowed by Minnesota law.

List a name and daytime phone number of a person who can be contacted about this form:

Sonja Brown | 952-215-1217  
Contact Name | Phone Number

Entities that own, lease, or have any financial interest in agricultural land or land capable of being farmed must register with the MN Dept. of Agriculture's Corporate Farm Program.

Does this entity own, lease, or have any financial interest in agricultural land or land capable of being farmed?  
 Yes  No

**Print** **Reset**



# swimpossible

FEEL WHAT YOU CAN DO



## SWIM POSSIBLE PBC MARCH 20, 2015 IMPACT REPORT

*In the water - it's so quiet and I'm so free and happy there -  
outside of the water there is always too much stimulation  
for my eyes and ears.*

– written words of a nonverbal 13 year old boy with Autism



## PURSUIT OF SPECIFIC BENEFITS

Three and a half million children in the United States have Autism - an increase of over 100% in the past decade (CDC). The teaching methods of most swimming schools haven't kept up with the needs of these learners. Swim Possible meets their needs. Our proven successful teaching method is designed to help students learn by feeling how their body moves in the water. Few words. Few directions. Minimal stimulation. Hours of happiness.

**AUTISM** is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States (according to the CDC). The increase in the numbers of children with Autism has created a demand for lessons that meet their specific learning needs. Swim Possible, SBC is a swimming school that focuses on providing swimming lessons to students whose learning needs aren't being met. Swim Possible's new teaching method helps students learn to swim by working with their strong sensory abilities. Swim Possible provides lessons to learners with Autism, Aspergers, Anxiety, Learning and Behavior Needs, Down Syndrome, Adult Learners (including Muslim women who seek private learning spaces) and other students who seek our methods.

**As a Minnesota Specific Public Benefit Corporation we work to improve the safety and fitness of children with Autism.** Drowning is the number one cause of accidental death for children with autism. Many children on the spectrum are naturally drawn to water. It is critical to the safety of these children to have swimming skills. Our safety efforts focus on improving the swimming abilities of learners with autism and the water safety knowledge of their parents or caregivers. Many children on the autism spectrum are limited in social and other skills that can prevent them from participating in most fitness activities. As a result they don't get enough exercise and miss the important health and brain benefits of movement. We use learning to swim and then lap swimming and water games as a means to enhance physical activity for our students.



## SWIM POSSIBLE'S IMPACT AND COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

Our Public Benefit mission is to increase the number of children with Autism who can swim and the number of families and community members who are better aware of how to keep children on the spectrum safe. We are improving the water safety of children with autism by:

**Swim Possible Swimming Lessons in More Communities** - We are expanding our programs to more communities including creating in 2015 our first Inclusive Education partnership with the Community of Eden Prairie. During 2015 we offered lessons in Hopkins, Chanhassen, Minnetonka and Rochester. We are positioned to offer lessons in these communities and more in 2016 including Edina, St. Paul, Prior Lake and Cannon Falls. We would like to increase the number of Inclusive Swimming Lesson partnerships we create with Community Programs.

**Instructor Teacher Training Program** - There are not enough trained instructors who understand the most effective ways to teach swimming to learners on the Autism Spectrum. Swim Possible is dedicated to training more people in our Swim Possible Teaching Methods. We are committed to spreading our knowledge to more instructors so more children on the Autism spectrum can become safer swimmers. We currently have only one instructor. During 2015 we took the first steps for creating a Swim Possible Instructor certification program. We started our first instructor training program with potential instructors. In 2016, we plan to revise our training system and hope to have at the minimum six new Swim Possible certified instructors working in more communities.

**Student/Parent/PCA Safety Training Program** - We are committed to helping our families know how to keep their children safer around water.

A. Safety instruction is woven into every class. Simple skills, such as waiting for permission to enter the water are practiced in every class until they become a natural behavior. In 2015, we had 22 students, all who received safety instruction during their classes. (We already are seeing a rapid increase in 2016 of our student numbers. We anticipate we will more than triple our numbers. If our instructor training goals are met, we could serve more than 100 students in 2016.)



B. Many of our students aren't able to comprehend safety lessons. So, equally, if not more important are our safety talks with parents, siblings and PCA's about keeping their child, sibling or charge safe, while keeping safe themselves. We focus on teaching families and care providers how to keep their child safe and how to keep themselves safe from a double drowning. Ultimately it is the child's guardians who must be able to determine if a pool is safe, if their child is safe and to know how to help them if they are in trouble. We plan to enhance our Care Provider Safety Focus in 2016.

### Community Safety Programs

A. In 2015 Swim Possible attended and promoted swimming safety at two Autism related events: (1) Autism Society of Minnesota (AUSM) Walk and (2) Autism Speaks Walk. We talked with families about water safety and the importance of learning to swim. At the Autism Speaks Walk, we introduced the use of a Water Safety Quiz that we encouraged families to take. Our message has reached over 3,000 attendees combined for both events and online with social media.

B. In 2015, Swim Possible worked for safety at a national level. Sonja Brown, the owner of Swim Possible attended the National Drowning Prevention Association (NDPA) conference in Dallas, Texas where she attended drowning prevention workshops and networked with others in the industry about how to keep swimmers with Autism safer. Her attendance at the event helped start a dialogue about Autism and water safety that lead to the NDPA choosing to add a focus on Autism and drowning to their 2016 programming.

C. Swim Possible works with groups working locally and nationally for water safety. Sonja Brown, the owner of Swim Possible, has served on the Abbey's Hope Foundation Board for four years. The Foundation works to improve the safety of pools and swimmers. Swim Possible is a member of the NDPA. In her role, she persuaded the Foundation to promote water safety issues to hotels.

D. In 2015, Swim Possible provided financial donations to Abbey's Hope Foundation, The NDPA, AUSM (Autism Society of Minnesota) and Autism Speaks.



## SWIM POSSIBLE'S IMPACT AND COMMITMENT TO FITNESS

A lack of traditional social skills make common childhood physical activities difficult for many children with Autism. Sports such as Soccer, Baseball, Tag and other game oriented physical activities may be difficult for them. We teach activities to our students that can enhance their social interactions in the water with others while also providing body awareness, movement and cardio exercise. Activities include learning to do handstands, somersaults, jump in the water, swimming laps, crunches, pull ups out of the pool, ladder climbing and more.

### **Fitness:**

1. Children with Autism are limited in their access to physical fitness activities that work with their learning needs. Swim Possible incorporates fitness skills into lessons that provide exercise, body awareness and coordination skills. Many of our clients don't know how to play and have little motivation to move. We build laps, exercises and play into classes to teach them these skills.
2. Reached 20 students in 2015 with exercise. Some of these students swim laps with us.
3. We work with students to help them acquire skills to join Special Olympics swim teams or other teams. We have one student in the 2016 State Special Olympics.

## HISTORY OF SWIM POSSIBLE

Swim Possible was started in 2010 when a therapist asked Swim Possible's founder, Sonja Brown, if she would teach her clients with Autism to swim. The founder began teaching a few students that year, but as the demand for lessons grew, the need to create a swimming school specifically designed to meet the growing needs of learners with Autism and other conditions became apparent and Swim Possible was formed.

Six years later, Swim Possible is a trademarked brand that provides swimming lessons carefully designed to meet the social, safety and fitness needs of all ability learners, specifically focusing on instruction for the growing number of students on the Autism spectrum who learn best with Swim Possible's *Feel What You Can Do Method*.

Swim Possible became a Minnesota Public Benefit Corporation on January 2, 2015 with Sonja Brown as the sole founder. With this change came a stronger desire to



develop a company that is committed to a double bottomline that offers a mission based business opportunity for our instructors and eventual territory owners.

The company is founded on our strong corporate values:

- \* Everyone matters. Respect and Dignity for all.
- \* Community Building. Our partnerships are important to us.
- \* Safety is critical. No child with Autism should drown because they cannot swim.
- \* Fitness leads to happier lives. Autism should not stop anyone from exercise and better health.

Swim Possible is working to create a future where we will have instructors in every community where there are learners with Autism and other learning needs not served well by traditional swim schools.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015

- January 2, 2015: **Incorporated as a Public Benefit Corporation** in the state of Minnesota with help from Fredrickson & Byron and The Improve Group
- March 8, 2015: **AUSM Walk** - First event for families with Autism
- March 11 -13: Attended **NDPA, National Drowning Prevention** Conference, Dallas, TX
- June: Selected as a **MN Cup Semi-finalist**
- July: Created Film to **Promote Swim Possible**
- July: Created Website to **Promote school and mission to more students**
- July: **Enhanced Social Media Presence**. 2016 Goal is to increase exposure on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
- September: Join Rochester, MN Committee creating a comprehensive **Water Playground, Pool and Therapy Center**. A destination therapeutic center for families with children with Autism.
- September 27: **Autism Speaks Walk**
- **October - December**: Added seven new clients.
- **October - December**: Began training five new instructors.
- **December** - Created Partnership relationship with the City of Eden Prairie to provide Adaptive Swimming lessons for their residents.
- **Every student who could not swim who now is a strong, safe swimmer**. These students are our highlights of the year.
- Swim Possible, expanded its reach, messaging and exposure to thousands of people. Prior to 2015, only people who heard about Swim Possible from friends could find our school and hear our message.



## KEY MANAGEMENT AND ADVISORS

Sonja Brown is the Founder and CEO of Swim Possible. As the mother of four children, she could not find lessons that worked with the temperament and learning styles of her children frustrating. Swim Possible offers the customized instruction she wanted for her children. Sonja developed Swim Possible's *"Feel What You Can Do"* teaching method using her experiences volunteering with Special Olympics, her knowledge as a 250 hour trained Yoga Instructor, her 20 plus years teaching in water and her experience with water massage.

Sonja has had several pivotal moments during her life that helped her realize teaching swimming could be done differently. She grew up swimming on one of Minnesota's many lakes. When she took her first swimming class and failed she was devastated. This experience left her with the goal that no swimming class should stop a child from loving swimming. She later became the captain of her high school swim team, swam in college, lifeguarded and taught swimming during her summers. During one of those summers, she was a nanny for a six year old Down Syndrome girl who she taught to swim. Another major learning experience was on a Rotary Trip to Peru where she volunteered with handicapped people by floating and massaging them in a swimming pool. The expressions of bliss on their faces stays with her to this day. It's what swimming should feel like.

The third pivotal experience was during the year Sonja's family participated in a teacher exchange to Australia for her husband's job. Seeking something to do while living in a rural area, she found a job teaching water aerobics at the Community pool. There she observed some teachers teaching butterfly before front crawl. She experimented with teaching her youngest daughter to feel the butterfly by having her ride on her back. That's when she realized there really should not be any rules about what a swimmer needs to learn first or second. Swimming should be like walking - no tests, no levels, no right or wrong way.

Sonja is responsible for overseeing and implementing day to day activities of the company such as teaching students, training instructors, building relationships with pools in hotels, health clubs and community pools and building relationships with Autism, Down's Syndrome, Asperger's, Epilepsy and other communities of learners.





She brings over 25 years of business experience to her role as the owner of Swim Possible. She has been the owner of HEDlines, a marketing consulting firm focusing on new product and new market development since 1987. She has received awards from the University of Minnesota Extension for her work on new programs and strategies that increased mission impact and profits for the school. In addition to education and corporate clients, Sonja has provided strategic consulting to many nonprofits including Women Venture, American Refugee Committee and Open Arms Minnesota. She serves on the boards of the Abbey's Hope Foundation and One Village Partners.

#### **2015 ADVISORS TO SWIM POSSIBLE INCLUDE:**

Kimberly Lowe, Fredrickson & Byron, Public Benefit Corporation Advisor  
Jeff Ochs, Gopher Angels Business Advisor  
Zachary Robins, Winthrop & Weinstine, Trademark Advisor  
Kayla Mueller, The Improve Group, Impact Advisor  
Alan Korn, Executive Director Abbey's Hope, Board Member NDPA, Safety Advisor  
Aaron Schoenecker, Flex-able Solutions, Business Advisor  
Andy Paulson, President IDS-Wi Autism and Business Advisor  
Nicola Kapala, NicolaKapala Watsu, Water Massage Advisor  
Anne Christian, Yoga Center, St. Louis Park - Yoga Advisor  
Barb Scouler, Mtka Master Swim Coach - Swim Advisor  
Mary LeSourd, Aquatic Director at The Marsh - Adaptive Swim Advisor  
Cheryl Shachaf, Autism Therapist - Autism Advisor  
Carla Pavone, University Minnesota Carlson School, MN Cup Advisor  
Nick Libbey, Sparky Stories, Film Company  
Steven King, Landscape Structures, MN Cup Advisor  
Kiersa Notz, DiDee Design  
Jessica Wood, Wood Design, Web Design

All advisors are on an informal basis, lending their expertise and services to help Swim Possible achieve it's financial and social goals.

#### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR 2016**

In order to better achieve our Public Benefit Mission goals of improving safety and fitness of children with Autism we will need to instruct more students in 2016. Our goals for 2016 are:

- Increase number of Swim Possible Instructors: We began creating our instructor training program in 2015. During 2016, we hope to add between trained six and



twelve instructors. The addition of new instructors can make it possible to teach between 60 and 120 more students.

- Enhance our website and add more water safety information and resources on it.
- Become the inclusive/adaptive swim school partner with three new Communities.
- Incorporate waterproof iPad swimming skills videos into classes.
- Incorporate Autism Storyboard tools into program.
- Incorporate goal and reward system into program.
- Develop a Swim Possible led Water Fitness group class for PCA/students.
- Offer first Autism Preschool/Parent group class in Eden Prairie. Replicate this program in more communities.
- Build relationships with more hotel and community pools to offer more lessons.
- Enhance relationships with state Special Olympics to provide swimming training/fitness to members during the off-season.

#### **CERTIFICATION BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The undersigned, being all of the directors of Swim Possible, hereby acknowledge and certify that we have reviewed and approved the enclosed First Annual Public Benefit Report.

 3/21/16

Sonja Brown



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*Our son, James, has been a student of Swim Possible for two years. The results have been beyond exceptional, and I recommend this to any parent. We live on a lake so it was imperative for us to insure he knew how to swim, for both safety and recreation purposes.*

*James started swimming lessons 4 years ago via community education classes. He progressed nicely until he got to a point where he needed to put his head underwater to move onto the next levels of lessons which he was unable to do. He was not getting any of one-on-one attention to help him overcome that fear, thus hit a dead end.*

*We were referred to Sonja from a schoolmate parent. He bonded with Sonja immediately, and with one-on-one attention she was able to work with him to not only overcome his fear of going underwater, but the pool and the lessons have become his "happy place". He can now do most swim strokes, do many laps unaided, swim underwater and has absolutely no fear. We will continue with the lessons as she now includes focus on other life skills including listening, practicing hard, learning new skills, and interacting better with others.*

*For any parent that wants their child to learn how to swim, and in a way that focuses both on the fun and the effort needed, Swim Possible is the best option possible. I strongly recommend.*

Jim Clemson

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I have two boys (ages 8 and 6) who often experience anxiety in new situations, particularly ones where challenges to their gross motor skills are presented. Going into water, with all the uncontrollable variables that experience can entail, is particularly anxiety-producing for them; even getting an unexpected drop of water in the eye/ear is cause for panic. I spent a lot of time and money over the past two summers taking my older son to different swim schools in the area, none of which were able to help him overcome his immense fear of water, before finally learning about Sonja and Swim Possible. Sonja has done an amazing job of working through my 8-year-old's anxiety, showing him ways of calming himself in the water. She has a seemingly infinite well of patience, and her significant experience in working with children with special needs shows in just how attentive she is to what each of her students individually requires; before the first lesson, she asks wonderful questions about what her prospective student is motivated by, and what his/her particular interests are. After being told that my older son loves learning about animal and nature facts, Sonja often cites different aquatic animals throughout the lesson in order to help him visualize the best ways of staying calm and moving naturally in the water. My younger son, who is even more fearful in the pool, is deeply interested in chemistry, particularly the periodic table of



elements; before his first lesson, Sonja actually created a Periodic Table of Elements comprising key swimming concepts for him to look over, so that he would know what to expect. Sonja's patient, focused, and empathetic manner with my boys, and her impressive amount of preparation before each lesson, makes her one of the very best teachers/therapists we've ever had the great fortune of working with over the years.

Although both boys have a ways to go before being fully self-sufficient in the water (particularly my younger son), I have the utmost confidence that Sonja will be able to guide them there. Sometimes watching them struggle in the water (which still happens, as my younger son is still extremely anxious, and my older son gets tired/distracted), I start to feel somewhat distressed about just how daunting a task getting them to fully swim will be... but then I see just how very patient Sonja is, and how she doesn't give up on them, which happened a lot with the other swim schools, albeit in group settings; the instructors would see just how much work it was going to require to really help my older son, and they'd eventually just leave him alone to play in the shallow end, focusing instead on the other students. Sonja commends my older son on his efforts when he has a productive lesson, and firmly informs him that she knows he can do better when he has an "off" day; underpinning both statements is the unwavering message that her belief in his abilities is unshakeable - I see this confidence carry over to how he applies himself to his lessons, and his unmistakable pride when he has a great day. When I see how fully dedicated and determined Sonja is, it makes me realize that I have no right to lose faith, not when their teacher won't. So in addition to being a rock for her students, Sonja is equally a source of strength and inspiration for the parents she works with... she is a treasure, and I cannot recommend her swim school highly enough.

Sincerely,  
Rosa Louie

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I am writing this letter as a personal recommendation for Swim Possible and Sonja Brown. While my daughter has only been a student of Swim Possible since April 2015, we have truly developed a strong bond and connection with Sonja Brown. In February of 2015, I found a flyer advertising

Swim Possible at Gigi's Playhouse and decided to give her a call. We had tried several different swimming lessons in the past; both group and private, but none of them were a fit for my daughter Lindsey. Lindsey has Down Syndrome and although she absolutely LOVES the water, we were not seeing any improvement in her swimming skills and abilities even after more than 6 years of lessons.

Upon meeting Sonja at our first lesson, I instantly knew that this was the class I had been searching for so long. I was instantly impressed with Sonja's calm and nurturing demeanor that gave both Lindsey and I a reassurance of trust and dedication. After greeting me, she turned her entire attention and focus towards Lindsey and spoke to her at her level. I knew instantly that Sonja loved, and felt comfortable working with children who have special or learning needs.

Although we have only been taking lessons for just less than a year now; Lindsey has learned more than she had in the past 6+ years of lessons. She is actually able to swim the entire length of a pool without any assistance. This is something I thought was never going to happen! We discovered that past instructors were not teaching or speaking to Lindsey in a way that she could understand, therefore, we were not progressing; and even regressing at times. We also attribute Lindsey's success to our private sessions and quiet environment. Other children, noises, or activities, are a huge distraction for Lindsey causing her great anxiety and distress therefore prohibiting her from learning. Also, Sonja's "hands on" teaching approach has been the method of learning that Lindsey requires and thrives on. I am so grateful to Swim Possible and Sonja Brown for her commitment and dedication in helping Lindsey become a proficient swimmer and quite possibly, saving her life!

Respectfully,

Cindy MacGibbon  
Very Satisfied Client and Mom

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" Our son learned how to swim at a very young age. Since he has Autism and is considered non-verbal, we decided to hire Sonja to work with him on swimming techniques and safety guidelines in the water. We continue to see Sonja on a weekly basis. It may be small steps that we take to improve week after week but it is the consistency and the repetition of these techniques (arm movement, legs, face etc) that matters the most to our son. His swimming success is due to Sonja's ability to be patient with his progress and her determination to provide outstanding service to insure sound and safe results. We highly recommend Swim Possible to anyone looking to build a strong foundation of swimming techniques."

Tony Farah



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*Steve Simon*

Steve Simon  
Secretary of State