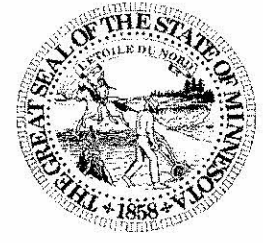




**Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State**  
**Minnesota Public Benefit Corporation / Annual Benefit Report**  
*Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 304A*



Read the instructions before completing this form  
 Must be filed by March 31  
 Filing Fee: \$55 for expedited service in-person, \$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.301 subd. 2 or 3 for the period covered by this report, (see instructions for further information): Note: Use additional sheets if needed. (Required)

See enclosed

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* CEO  
 Signature of Public Benefit Corporation's Chief Executive Officer

January 31, 2018  
 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.

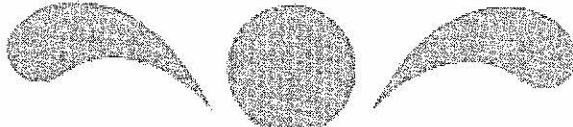
**List a name and daytime phone number of a person who can be contacted about this form:**

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.

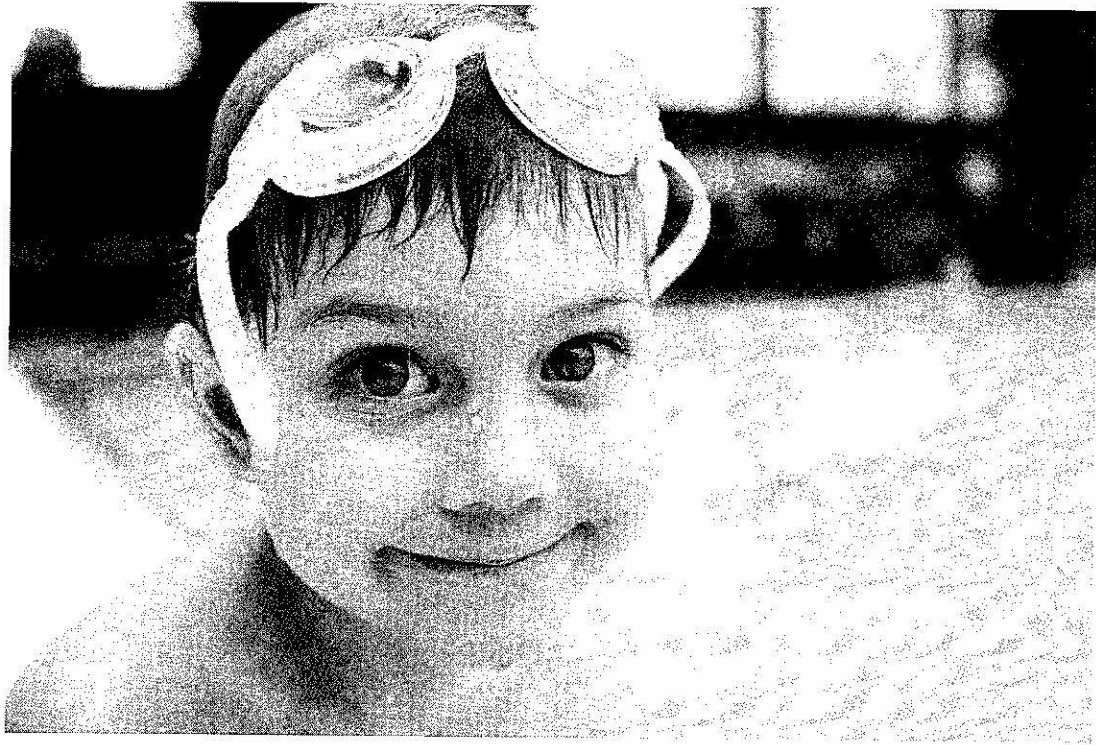
Does this entity own, lease, or have any financial interest in agricultural land or land capable of being farmed?  
 Yes  No

Per call SB

The logo consists of three stylized, rounded shapes at the top: a dark grey shape on the left, a light grey circle in the center, and a dark grey shape on the right, all with a stippled texture.

# swimpossible

FEEL WHAT YOU CAN DO



## 2017 Specific Benefit Annual Impact Report

*Committed to Teaching Swimming to Learners With  
Autism and Other Learning Needs to Help Them  
Become Safer and Fitter Swimmers*



## PURSUIT OF SPECIFIC BENEFITS

Three and a half million people in the United States are living with Autism - an increase of over 100% in the past decade (CDC). This number includes about 500,000 children under the age of 15. For children and young teens with this developmental disability, the risk of drowning is a serious issue. Researchers say these children are 40 times more likely to die from injury than the general child population. Drowning is the most common fatal injury among children with autism.

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 Swim Possible teaching method is designed to help students learn to swim by feeling how their body moves in the water. Few words. Few directions. Minimal stimulation. Hours of happiness.

According to the CDC, Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States. The increase in the numbers of children with Autism has created a demand for swimming lessons that meet their specific learning needs. Swim Possible, SBC is a Minnesota based swimming school that provides customized swimming lessons to students that work with their personal learning needs. Our approach works with students' strong sensory abilities to help them feel how to swim. 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 a leading cause of accidental death for children with autism. According to Dr. Guohua Li, researcher and founding director of the Center for Injury Epidemiology and Prevention at Columbia University, "Autistic children aged 14 years and younger are 40 times more likely to die from injury than the general pediatric population. Specifically, drowning accounts for 46% of all injury deaths among children with autism, which translates to 160 times the chance of dying from drowning compared to other children".



Many children on the spectrum are naturally drawn to water. It is critical for the safety of these children that they have swimming skills. Dr. Li explains children with Autism often feel anxiety, and wandering, especially toward water, is one way they seek relief. Dr Li says **"The first concrete step parents and caregivers could take to reduce the exceptionally high risk of accidental drowning is to enroll these children in swimming classes."** The problem for parents is it is not easy to find swimming schools that teach the way their children on the spectrum learn.

Swim Possible, SBC provides private lessons that are customized for each student. Our program has three main focuses: First, making sure every child and family feels welcomed and comfortable in their lessons. For many of our students other swimming programs make them feel unwelcome because of their differences and learning needs. Our instructors are trained to understand how to work with different learning needs. They know how to design their classes to respond to the unique needs of the child every time they come to class.

In addition to our focus on a welcoming and comfortable program where students and their parents want to come to lessons, we also make safety our top priority. Swim Possible, SBC's safety efforts focus on improving the swimming abilities of learners with autism and providing water safety knowledge to their parents or caregivers. We spend time working with parents (and siblings) to make sure everyone knows how to be a good "Water Watchdog" (never take their eyes off swimmers).

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

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. We lost the use of one of our Minnetonka pools during 2017 and added two new locations St. Louis Park and Maple Grove. We are very grateful to Silvercreek on Main in Maple Grove and Sabes JCC in St. Louis Park for partnering with us in 2017. We continue to provide lessons with our partner the Marriott Hotel SW in Minnetonka. We are positioned to offer lessons in these communities and more in 2018. We are seeking additional more pool partners so that we can reach more learners.

**Training and Licensing As A Way to Reach More Communities** - There are not enough swimming instructors who understand the most effective ways to teach learners on the Autism Spectrum. Swim Possible is dedicated to training more committed people in our adaptive Swim Possible Teaching Methods. During 2016, Swim Possible provided training to seven instructors. Three of these instructors taught with us during 2017. Two instructors left during 2017 and three new instructors have begun working with us in 2018 - giving us five instructors available for lessons. We are very happy to be able to offer more lessons, in more locations with excellent one on one instruction.

We continue to seek legal help to pursue a licensing model for growth. Expansion is important to our mission. It is critical to have more instructors to be able teach more special needs swimmers to be safer. We are committed to spreading our knowledge to more instructors so that more children on the Autism spectrum can become safer swimmers. In 2018, we hope to expand beyond our three locations to six. To do this we want to bring on territory owners who want to help us with our mission. With this model, instructors will be able to own and grow their own business giving them more motivation to commit to teaching. As business owners they can create a part-time or full-time business that works for them.



**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 2017, we taught over 50 students swimming lessons with safety instruction integrated into their classes as best as their abilities allowed.
- 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 themselves safe. 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.
- C. Sonja Brown, the owner of Swim Possible serves on the Abbey's Hope Foundation's Board. During 2017, she worked on a committee working to make water safety education a part of early childhood and elementary school education. As a result of her continued perseverance, the Foundation has created a committee of dedicated water professionals working in a variety of roles to work on designing an educational program to be offered in schools across Minnesota. Sonja Brown serves on this committee to bring the voice of her students' needs to the content. She also volunteers at Abbey Hope's World's Largest Swimming lesson day where the foundation brings basic swimming instruction to learners who otherwise could not afford swimming lessons and would not learn these important safety and swimming skills.

#### **Community Safety Programs**

- A. In 2017 Swim Possible attended and promoted swimming safety at the Autism Society of Minnesota (AUSM) Walk. We met with families and talked with them about water safety and the importance of learning to swim. Our message has reached over 1,500 attendees.



- B. Swim Possible works with groups working locally and nationally for water safety. The owner of Swim Possible, has served on the Abbey's Hope Foundation Board for six years. The Foundation works to improve the safety of pools and swimmers. In her role, she persuaded the Foundation to promote water safety issues to hotels and now many hotel pools around the country have the Abbey's Hope Watchdog Poster on their walls to encourage parents to be better watchers of their children swimming.
- C. In 2017, Swim Possible provided financial donations to Abbey's Hope Foundation and AUSM (Autism Society of Minnesota). Swim Possible also provides time and money to other organizations including One Village Partners, The Minnesota Arboretum and MPR.

#### Swimmer Head Injury Protection

- A. In 2016, Swim Possible owner Sonja Brown invested in Hammer Head Swim Caps - a Minnesota start-up company that has created the first protective swim cap that acts like a helmet. **This investment was not from Swim Possible.** As an instructor and swimmer herself, she is well aware of the risk of head injuries in the water. Her goal is to see that Hammer Head swim caps become available to all swimmers. The Hammer Head swim cap will benefit many many special needs students making it safer for these learners to swim. During 2017, Swim Possible's owner dedicated many of her hours to helping Hammer Head with it's business.

#### 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:

- A. Children with Autism are limited in their access to physical fitness activities that work with their abilities. 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.
- B. In 2017, we provided water exercise to 50 students. Some of these students swim laps with us.
- C. We work with students to help them acquire skills to join Special Olympics swim teams or other teams. We had two students in the 2017 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.

Eight 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 business 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 were unable to find swimming lessons to meet their learning needs.
- \* 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 Swim Possible programs in every community so that learners with Autism and other learning needs will have access to lessons designed for their learning needs.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017

- Swim Possible offered instructor training to six potential instructors. We now have five committed instructors providing swimming lessons to our students.
- March 2017: **AUSM Walk**. Swim Possible had a booth at the Walk and shared water safety and swimming instruction information to families with children with Autism.
- Continued to serve on the board of **Abbey's Hope Foundation**. A nationally recognized leader in water safety.

### 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. 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 child should fail swimming. Learning to swim should be as natural as learning to walk - it's not a pass or fail skill. 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. That planted an early seed that became Swim Possible.

*SWIM POSSIBLE is based on the idea that there 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. Our goal is to help everyone who wants to swim become a swimmer without any barriers.*



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 27 years of business experience to her role as the owner of Swim Possible. She has also 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 double bottomline 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.

#### 2017 ADVISORS TO SWIM POSSIBLE INCLUDE:

Zachary Robins, Winthrop & Weinstine, Trademark Advisor

Alan Korn, Executive Director Abbey's Hope, Board Member NDPA, Safety Advisor

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 2018

In order to better achieve our Public Benefit Mission goals we will need to instruct more students in 2018. To do this we need more instructors. Our goals for 2018 are:

- Increase number of Swim Possible Instructors: We trained six instructors in 2017. We have four of the six now working with us into 2018. We need more instructors to make it possible to teach more students. We are excited by the commitment and enthusiasm our new instructors are bringing to their teaching. With their commitment and ability to spread the word about their work, we are hoping to attract more instructors during 2018.



#### 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.

Sonja Brown

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#### LETTERS FROM FAMILIES

*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 progress nicely until he go 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

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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**Original File Number 803419800060**

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
FILED  
**02/07/2018 11:59 PM**

*Steve Simon*

Steve Simon  
Secretary of State