

“ Last year, a boy who has Down syndrome began to sit with me at my lunch table. He has changed my perspective on life. Lunch became the best part of my day. It's a great experience when you can learn from someone as much as they can learn from you. I've also learned to acknowledge what people CAN do, instead of focusing on what they cannot.” – Grace, classmate, peer mentor, future physical therapist



2015 Annual Report

Dear Friends and Supporters of Inclusive Catholic Education:

Practically everyday we see and hear stories about young students who are lifting each other to new heights and helping each other stretch their capacity as learners, friends and Believers. Inclusive education brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students.

Inclusion is a journey that's fueled by bold faith and respect for the dignity and potential of EVERY one of God's children. Children like Jenny\*, who has Down syndrome. Last year she attended a public school and was assigned to a segregated (and isolated) classroom with students who were non-communicative. Her parents knew Jenny was capable of so much more. Plus, they wanted her to experience the benefits of attending a Catholic school with her older brother. Funding from the FIRE Foundation opened the doors of Catholic education to Jenny. She is learning and interacting with her peers, becoming more verbal and reaching academic goals that seemed like a distant dream just a year ago. Surrounded by members of her parish community, Jenny is thriving academically, socially and spiritually.

Your investment in FIRE's mission makes stories like Jenny's possible. The FIRE Foundation Board and staff are working hard to ensure responsible stewardship of donors' gifts.

Here are a few highlights of 2014-15:

**FIRE Foundation's income grew by 19% over the last fiscal year.**

**FIRE Foundation hosted the first diocesan-wide professional development on inclusive education practices in partnership with the Catholic School Office.**

**FIRE Foundation welcomed a new partner school — St. Pius X High School.**

**In an effort to keep donors and friends informed about opportunities and initiatives on a more regular basis, we launched FIREworks, an electronic newsletter.**

**FIRE Foundation engaged with more than 30 individuals (including educators, parents and parish leaders) from across the country to inspire adoption of inclusive practices.**

These accomplishments wouldn't be possible without your support. We are grateful beyond measure. With your continued prayers and support, and of course with God's blessings, the flame of FIRE will continue to burn brightly for years to come.

In Peace and Gratitude,

**Peggy VanDyke**  
Board President

**M. Lynn Hire**  
Executive Director

\*Student's name has been changed.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide children with special needs the opportunity for an inclusive Catholic education in their home parish schools.

## Our Story

Inclusive education — where children of ALL abilities are welcomed to schools and learn side-by-side — is widely recognized as a best practice in education. In fact, a large body of research demonstrates that children who learn in inclusive environments achieve higher academic success both during and after high school.

Inclusion is also a mandate of our Catholic faith. Our Holy Father Pope Francis and Catholic Social Teaching call us to embrace and walk side-by-side with our brothers and sisters on the margins. A 1978 pastoral statement by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops leaves no doubt about our responsibility: “There can be no separate Church for people with disabilities. We are one flock that serves a single shepherd.”

The FIRE Foundation (aka: Foundation for Inclusive Religious Education) was founded in 1996 by a group of parents who shared a common dream — to attend their parish schools with siblings and friends and to grow together in knowledge, faith and friendship with their peers. Long

before inclusion was recognized as a best practice, FIRE’s founders knew they were on the right track. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, and fueled by passion and determination, these inclusion pioneers convinced parish, school and diocesan leaders to say yes. They persuaded friends and associates to invest financial resources. They launched an “experiment” that would evolve into a best practice model replicated across the country.

Since 1996, through the efforts of parents, a dedicated board of directors, exceptional educators and community members who embrace inclusive Catholic education, over \$4 million dollars have been raised and countless lives have been impacted in a powerful and positive way. FIRE offers financial grants for qualifying schools within the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. These grants assist with the cost of special education teachers, para-professionals as well as training and resources, enabling schools to educate children with special needs alongside their peers.

The FIRE Foundation raises money and raises awareness and advocates for inclusion of ALL God’s children in Catholic schools. We believe that inclusion enhances the education of all children, regardless of ability, by teaching acceptance, compassion and the value of every child of God.



## Contact Us

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## Stay Up-to-Date

Send us your email address so we can email FIREworks, an e-newsletter that provides the latest and greatest on the people, parishes and projects that bring our mission to life. Send your email to: [fire@diocesekcsj.org](mailto:fire@diocesekcsj.org).

## Follow Us



[www.firefoundation.org](http://www.firefoundation.org)

FIRE Foundation, The Catholic Center  
20 W. 9th Street, Kansas City, MO 64105

**fire**  
FOUNDATION

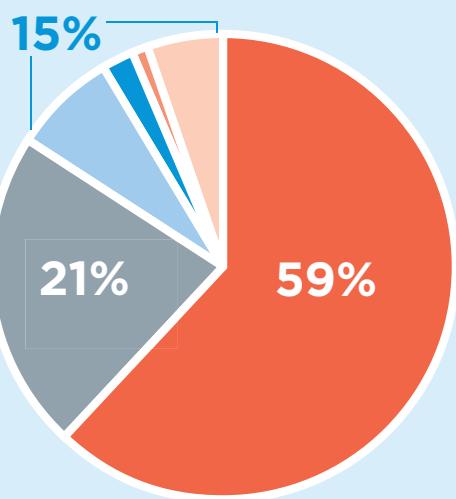
*Igniting Inclusive Catholic Education*

“ An education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic schools. An inclusive education finds a place for all and does not select in an elitist way the beneficiaries of its efforts.” - Pope Francis



## FIRE By The Numbers

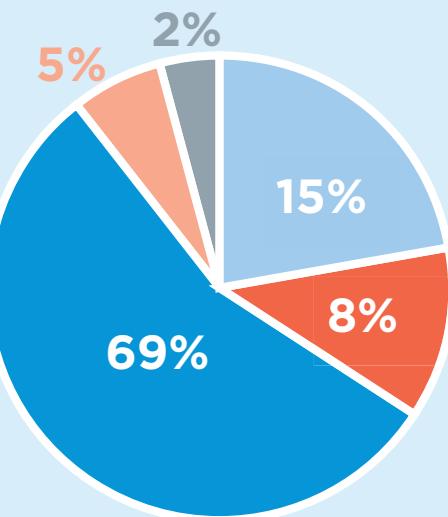
This report reflects donations received between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015.



### EXPENSES

EDUCATIONAL GRANTS .....	\$298,863
PERSONNEL EXPENSE.....	108,168
GENERAL ADMIN & SUPPLIES..	37,080
PROFESSIONAL FEES.....	7,364
TECHNOLOGY & PUBLIC RELATIONS.....	8,467
IN-KIND EXPENSE .....	24,690
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$484,632</b>
NET INCOME.....	\$23,512

*Net Income of \$23,512 is carried over to help meet budget goals for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.*



### REVENUES

GRANTS .....	\$38,200
CONTRIBUTIONS .....	74,674
EVENTS (NET REVENUE)	
FIRE BALL.....	274,781
GOLF TOURNAMENT .....	51,327
PURSES W/ PURPOSE .....	27,921
INTEREST & OTHER INCOME .....	5,157
IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.....	24,690
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$508,144</b>

## Keep Our FIRE Burning Brightly

Opportunities to Support and Strengthen Inclusive Catholic Education

**VOLUNTEER.** We're always looking for folks to serve on event committees and to help out in a variety of ways. What a great way to have some fun and meet people who are passionate about meeting kids' special needs. Call Julie at 816.756.1858 ext. 252.

**JOIN.** Become a Friend of FIRE! You'll serve on a team of parents from your parish community. Friends of FIRE meets six times a year to share ideas, help raise money and to expand awareness about FIRE's impact.

**CLICK.** It's quick, easy and safe to donate online at [firefoundation.org](http://firefoundation.org). You can make a one-time donation or set up monthly gift giving. Just click on the Donate button in the upper left corner of the screen and follow the prompts.

**MAIL.** Yes, we accept (and welcome) checks. Whether it's \$5, \$50 or \$500, we love receiving money in the mail to support our mission.

**ATTEND.** Our FUNdraising events are open to everyone. Join us at the Play with FIRE golf tournament, Purses with Purpose or FIRE Ball gala.

**DESIGNATE.** Every fall, the United Way launches its giving campaign through area employers. You can write in Foundation for Inclusive Religious Education, and your pledge will benefit FIRE.

**TELL.** If every one of our friends and supporters told just one person about FIRE and invited that person to participate in an event or fund-raising campaign, we would double our support.

**DONATE.** If that junker in your driveway has lost its get-up-and-go, consider donating it to FIRE. Simply call 1.800.237.5714 and we'll get the wheels in motion for your car donation (and tax deduction).

**INCLUDE.** Please remember FIRE in your estate planning. We are happy to work with you to discuss gifts of stock, annuities as well as wills and trusts and other options.

**TAKE** (us to the cleaners)! Hangers Cleaners, that is. They donate 10% of your total bill to FIRE when you sign up by calling 816.941.2262. With just 150 participants spending an average of \$500 per year, FIRE can earn \$7,500+.

