

Breaktime 2008

The key word for 2008 is "expansion." Breaktime has generally been a six-week day camp that meets three days a week for educational activities followed by a Thursday day trip to some cool location in West Michigan. Last summer, as Breaktime wound down, the students threatened to form a petition to add an extra week or two onto Breaktime. For many of them, it was all they had to look forward to during the summer, and without it, summer would be boring. In response to the request from the kids, along with a desire to expand the Breaktime Bakery, we are adding two weeks to the program along with an additional day each week. Our hope is that by expanding the program we will be able to deepen the impact we are able to make in the community through the lives of the Breaktimers.

The expansion of the program is especially helpful for the Breaktime Bakery. Last summer we only had 15 days of production and sales, this year we will have 28 days. For those of you new to NCN and Breaktime in particular, let me explain the Bakery a bit. Monday through Thursday, middle school students run a fully-functioning, licensed bakery. Students arrive between 8:00 and 9:00AM, participate in devotions, and then receive their baking assignments for the day. Each student is responsible for successfully preparing two items of the Bakery Store. Through baking, clean up, managing, and store operation, students get to taste what a real job will be like someday. The Bakery is designed to provide middle school students with necessary life and job skills to be successful as they move through life. Starting June 30, the Bakery Store will be open every Monday-Thursday this summer from 12:30 to 2:00PM. There is generally an assortment of delicious pies, breads, cookies, and bars all priced well below what you would pay at any bakery around Grand Rapids. This summer, we hope to include some new items like Banket and Pigs in the Blanket. Last summer, we sold out almost every day, so plan on coming early if you want a good selection.

This year's theme for Breaktime is "The Life and Times of Jesus." The 3rd-5th grade students will spend time each day learning about Jesus and the culture of ancient Israel. Through creative Bible lessons and crafts, the students will get a better understanding of who Jesus was and what his life was like. The 6th-8th grade students in the Bakery will not have the same experience, but they will explore this same theme through their devotional time each day.

The students who attend Breaktime leave changed because they spend all summer experiencing the love of Christ. Breaktime is a great ministry, but it requires a lot of help to make it work. We will once again be looking for people to help by providing lunches, donating materials, and serving as afternoon reading tutors. A complete list of opportunities will be on the New City Neighbors website by mid-May. Below you will see two new special ways to help Breaktime and the students we reach. Please check out these opportunities, and pray about how you can get involved.

Adopt a Breaktimer

We have never charged students to attend Breaktime, because we know that cost is often a barrier for the families we work with. That means that the costs, about \$300 per student, are generally absorbed by the NCN budget. This summer, to offset those costs, we are offering you the opportunity to adopt a student. For a gift of \$300, you will provide a child with a summer of:

- Daily nutritious meals.
- Academic activities.
- Daily exposure to the Gospel.
- The chance to develop new friendships.
- A reading tutor.
- Field trips to places like Lake Michigan, where many of them never get to go.

When you adopt a Breaktimer, we will provide you with information about the child as soon as Breaktime begins. We will also provide you with regular updates of how that child is doing as the summer progresses. If you want to take your sponsorship to another level, you can choose to come and spend time with that child during lunch and free-time. We may even be able to pair you with that student as a reading tutor.

If you want to take advantage of this great opportunity, simply make out a check to New City Neighbors for \$300 and write "Adopt a Breaktimer" in the memo line. If you have any questions please call Eric Schalk at 970-4817.

Breaktime Need List

The items listed below are all necessary ingredients to make the summer of 2008 the best possible. If you are not able to purchase the item, but would like to make a donation towards it, simply make out a check to NCN and include the item description in the memo line.

- 4 Commercial baking sheets - \$25 a piece.
- Wire shelving unit for cooling baked goods - \$100.
- Commercial can opener - \$50.
- Kitchen Aid hand mixer - \$60.
- Games - Connect 4, Chutes & Ladders, Battleship, Checkers, Card Games, Mancala, Jenga. - \$10-\$20 a piece.
- Books - Harry Potter, The Spiderwick Chronicles, Juniper Jones, Narnia, other age-appropriate children's literature. - \$10-\$20 a piece.
- Room cooler/air conditioner (not a window unit) - \$400.
- Book Shelf - \$40.
- Aprons for students - \$15 a piece X 10 for \$150.
- Individually-wrapped snacks and drink boxes.
- Lockable cash box (\$25), receipt log (\$20), or Office Max gift card (\$50).
- Supplies for the Bakery: flour, sugar, powdered sugar, brown sugar, yeast, butter, eggs, vanilla, chocolate chips, peanut butter, peanut butter chips, Hershey Kisses, cream cheese, jars of caramel topping, M&M's, and parchment paper.

Stories



Empty Houses by Eric Schalk

March 7, 2008, is a day I will never forget. I was preparing to head out for an afternoon meeting when my wife sped into 4th Church's parking lot with a look of panic and fear upon her face. She rolled down the window of the van and with a trembling voice told me that our house had been broken into.

Julie went to our pastor's house to sit with the kids while my friend Jim and I went to my house. The screen on my back window had been ripped off, and the glass was chipped. The back door was dented, dirty, and halfway open, the door jam broken by the force of the sledge hammer used to gain entrance. We called the police and waited for their arrival, all the while uncertain of the damage waiting inside the house. After waiting patiently for quite some time, Jim and I entered through the front door, careful to not disturb anything. The house was a mess, and it was clear that the intruders had been through most everything. Remarkably, all that was stolen was our digital camera and a package of D batteries that we had stored in our freezer.

The police eventually arrived and told us that four houses had been broken into. The thieves were apparently three teenage guys with a sledge hammer. From what I could tell, they didn't steal much at any of the houses they entered. What was most amazing about all the burglaries these guys committed was that they all took place in broad daylight between the hours of 10:00AM and Noon. They were brazen with their attack.

The primary reason these burglars were successful, especially at my house, was due to the fact that we did not have any neighbors. The house behind us has been vacant for two years and the one across the street for one year, due to foreclosures. The house immediately to our right is vacant and on the precipice of being seized by the mortgage company. The house on our left has undergone foreclosure and is in the process of being rehabilitated. There were simply no neighbors to hear the sledge hammer beating in my door or see the kids in my back yard running away. The nearby foreclosures are not just affecting people's credit scores, they are undermining the stability of the neighborhood. On my short, three-block street, there are at least three other houses sitting vacant because families could no longer afford to make their mortgage payments. The houses that are being bought up are falling into the hands of large rental groups that dump a

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newcityneighbors



2008

Seeking to be a diverse, welcoming ministry that works with Northeast Grand Rapids neighbors to restore and develop their community.



few dollars in the home to make it livable and then put it up for rent. Our street is changing from owner occupied, to empty, to rental. This break-in traumatized my family for a time, but it woke us up to a looming problem in our community. With all the empty houses and new rentals, people do not know their neighbors. To combat this, Julie and I are going to host a block party when the weather gets a bit warmer to bring our neighbors together and strengthen our community. People living together in a community must know each other so that there is mutual support and a common vision for making the neighborhood a better place to live. While we're working towards this on a personal level, we're also striving through New City Neighbors to be a beacon of hope.

It would be great if NCN had the capital to buy up these abandoned houses, rehabilitate them, and help low-income families purchase them, but that is not our mission at this time. Instead, we work hard each day to impact the lives of youth. Each week we labor to provide children with hope through meals, homework help, games, Bible study, and meaningful relationships. We know that if we can express Christ's unlimited love to them, they can and do change. The type of work NCN is doing helps to ensure that other kids do not make choices that could land them in a world of trouble.

The ministry that we do through NCN is very much your ministry. Without your gifts of prayer and money, we would not be able to keep making an impact in the Creston Neighborhood. The rest of the articles in this newsletter communicate the type of impact being made. On the next page, you will see

an article about the one year birthday of NCN written by our board president. The article communicates the work that has been done and what lies ahead. You will also see articles about our girls' ministry, GEMS, and the amazing work they are doing with young women from our community. Finally, you will read about the expansion of our summer ministry called Breaktime which educates, encourages, and equips 40 children each summer to be better students and neighbors. As you read through these articles, know that you are an instrumental part of making this all happen.

Getting to Know GEMS By Sharon VanTimmeren

GEMS.....A precious stone that has been cut and polished. That is the dictionary definition of a gem. However, our acronym stands for: Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior. GEMS at NCN are indeed precious stones. We come out of the earth with sharp edges and full of dirt, and then Jesus grinds off the rough edges and polishes us. This allows us to shine for him! Each year, our counselors allow themselves to be used by God to wipe away some of the dirt to allow our GEMS to shine.

It is exciting to see the progress of our young girls, especially when they understand that Jesus loves them and so do we, the counselors. Prayer requests are often very unselfish, such as, asking for more customers for a parent's business, or prayers for family members and teachers. Also, several of our GEMS have expressed interest in attending college, even pursuing a degree in medicine. We encourage these young women to reach for the stars and dream large.

Recently, our class of 6th to 8th grade girls was studying the gift of marriage and the gift of singleness. When asked what would be an advantage to being single, one young woman said it would lack some of the drama that happens in relationships. I am sure she was not referring to "excitement" but rather to the conflict that surrounds so many relationships that they're exposed to. What insight for such a young person. Truly sometimes they understand more about life than we imagine. They get it!

Our Bible challenge has become an anticipated part of each GEMS meeting. Just like the old-time "Sword drills" helped my generation learn our Bibles, these young girls are learning the books of the Bible. They clamor to each have a Bible and search the index for the page number of the verse they are looking for. Sometimes counselors help the younger girls to compete against the more knowledgeable older GEMS. If we forget to do this activity, the girls are certain to ask if we can do Bible Challenge next week.

Our Special Friends really make an impression. A godly woman is matched with each GEM. These women are called Special Friends. Recently, a GEM asked if we could invite them to another meeting. That is the kind of bond that is formed when we love as Jesus loved us. Thank you Special Friends! Our GEMS are learning that they are lovable and that relationships are important for accepting each other no matter what we may have done. That is how Jesus loves us, no matter what we have done. Unconditional love!



Planting Seeds

Happy birthday to New City Neighbors! The seed of NCN was planted a year ago, and through the watering, weeding and fertilizing of many friends and supporters, it has emerged from the soil and is bearing fruit. Thank you for your participation!

New City Neighbors was given such a name because we believe that God would have us be employed in making all things new—particularly in the city where sin's deterioration is often most evident and the potential for change and influence is the greatest (Jeremiah 29:7). Jesus became the seed who died, was planted in the ground, and rose victorious over sin and death to yield an amazing hope for the death, decay, injustice, and struggle that we find in the city.

And so NCN is planting seeds of hope through a variety of ministries. While many are literally planting seeds in the community garden, vital relationships are taking root and neighbors are sharing much more than produce. First-time participants in the garden or "strangers" last year are now leaders in the garden and other ministries.

A missionary friend in Thailand recently shared his observations of how God has worked to draw the Thai believers into the Christian community. He noted that a common denominator for those who come to faith is that earlier in life, somehow, they were exposed to the gospel and then, looking back, they see how God had been pursuing and drawing them to himself over a period of years. In our instant-gratification culture, we tend to look for instant harvest. But God often works patiently over time. Our church family recently celebrated the baptism of a mother where the seeds were planted through a mentoring relationship with her son eight years earlier. We will soon baptize three more adults where the seeds were planted by building relationships six years earlier.

And so we look forward, with great hope, to many years of planting seeds and gathering a harvest through ministries that put the love and beauty of Jesus on display. We are grateful for the increasing participation of neighbors and neighbor churches who embrace a kingdom vision where we all work together to make things new. There is no greater joy than to see a community restored and renewed through the united efforts of God's people.

Thank you to all who have supported and encouraged us in the first year. To all, we invite you to participate in what God will do through New City Neighbors in the years to come.

By Tim Meendering, Pastor of Fourth Reformed Church and NCN Board President.

New City Neighbors is a 501(c)(3) nondiscriminatory, nonprofit organization.

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