

were able to make connections with twenty new families through our community garden. Those connections have fostered new relationships between neighbors and have helped to strengthen our community. One of our gardeners said, "I've lived in this community a long time and because of this garden I finally got to know some of my neighbors." Those connections from last year have already helped to bring 8 new families to the 2009 garden. In these tough economic times, the garden becomes even more important as people learn to rely on one another and grow food that can nourish their family and take pressure off the grocery budget.



In 2008 we had over forty people who were regularly volunteering at our ministries. This dedicated group of people gave over 1,500 hours of their time to provide homework help for children, crafts for GEMS, lead Bible studies, play games during free time and teach/model valuable life skills. The list of volunteers gets even larger when meal preparation is factored in. Over sixty meals were provided to kids in EMS and Breaktime allowing children to have at least one nutritious meal a week. These volunteers are not just giving to the ministries and people we reach, they are growing and being impacted with the gospel. It is not uncommon to hear one of our volunteers talk about how much their faith has grown because of their regular interaction with a child.

In just our second year of ministry, we were able to connect with over 170 children and 130 families. The great thing about those numbers is that they generally don't represent shallow contact. Because of the way we do ministry, we see many of the same kids, week in and week out. Real relationships are being formed with a large number of kids meaning a real difference is being made. I'd love to say we had 50 kids commit their lives to Jesus last year, but I can't. The reality is that many of the children we work with already understand that Jesus died for them. These children know about Jesus' forgiveness because they've heard it at a Vacation Bible School, Bible Club, Sunday School or some other ministry. The problem is, that while they know about Jesus' love, they haven't grasped His way of living. Leading children to become like Jesus takes years and many times we see progress in baby steps. Last year we saw a number of baby steps towards Jesus. We saw the edges rubbed off some children, we saw the hearts of some adults soften, high-school kids began to see they were made for a purpose, and neighbors began to learn how to be neighbors.

2008 was a great year. On top of everything I've mentioned, with your help, we were able to meet our budget and lay a foundation for 2009. God has blessed us and we are working hard to extend His blessing to our community. As we look at 2009, we are excited about the possibilities. If you haven't joined us yet, now is the time to get involved in New City Neighbors as we invest in our community and push forward for the sake of the gospel.

Ministry Wish List

The items listed below are all things that will enhance our ability to do ministry. 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.

- Wire shelving unit for cooling baked goods - \$100.
- Room cooler/air conditioner (not a window unit) - \$400.
- Aprons for students - \$15 a piece X 10 for \$150.
- 46 inch HDTV for \$2,000
- Gas Grill for \$250

Stories



A Message from the Board President - by Pastor Tim Meendering

There is great anticipation for what new leadership, and especially for what the new President, Barack Obama, will do for the prosperity of our country. Monumental decisions will be made and world-altering actions will be taken. These decisions and actions will be significantly motivated and influenced by Obama's values which ultimately, as Jesus taught, derive from the heart.

Our concern, as we provide leadership for New City Neighbors, is the prosperity of our city and particularly the Creston area and Northeast Grand Rapids. We make decisions and take actions through our ministries that are motivated and influenced by values that reflect the heart of Christ. And so we work to put the relentless, healing love of the gospel on display through the multiple ministries of leaders and volunteers. We come alongside young people and show them how to dream and prepare for meaningful employment. There are volunteers who provide nutritious meals for a large, hungry crowd and at the same time, we provide spiritual nourishment through Bible studies. Relationships among like-minded churches and organizations are expanding so that we can better work together to restore and develop our community.

While there is great hope, favor and anticipation of what President Barack Obama will do to bring prosperity for all, I have a much greater confidence in what we can do when we are motivated and empowered by the power of the gospel and guided by the values that reflect the heart of Jesus. The gospel IS the power of God for heart-change, life-change and social-change. We are a part of something much bigger. God had a dream that is being fulfilled with believers who love and care for those who are looking for just this kind of dream.

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newcityneighbors



2009

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

While worldly investments are surely proving to disappoint in these difficult economic times, our investments into this dream are yielding a profit that is immeasurable. Young people are walking long distances through snow and bitter cold to be welcomed by warm, loving arms that ultimately point to Jesus. Neighbors and a neighborhood are becoming new. Thank you for praying and participating with us.

GEMS Update: Little Lambs Finding The Shepherd, a story by Dawn Faasse that helps us to understand the NCN ministry of GEMS.

There was once a beautiful farm that was located right smack in the middle of a large plot of land. A mighty, rushing river ran through the land, and there were many trees and valleys, and tall buildings nearby, and roads and highways on the outer fringes. If you kept going in almost any direction on the roads and highways you would find yourself on the shores of great sparkling lakes, bigger and wider than you could even see across. The lakes were filled with beautiful fish and colorful stones, and birds of every kind flew joyously along the shores.

Now there were many animals and creatures of all shapes and sizes that lived on the land and in the outer waters, but this story is about the many sheep that lived on and around the farm. There were lots of



places for the sheep to wander and frolic, but the place that they liked to go most often, the best place to be, was the big yellow brick barn. The barn was very close to the farmhouse, and right across the yard to a bountiful garden that was teeming with lovely vegetables.

This barn, of course, was host to a number of different creatures, but the ones that brought the most joy to the farm were the little lambs. The lambs were truly a pretty little flock, for their fleece was of all shades and colors, and they were joyful and frisky. They would come to the barn whenever they could, and however they could get there, for they knew the barn was a good, warm place for them to come to.

Whenever these lambs came to the barn they were looked after by the big mama ewes. Now these ewes were a very special lot. Some were rather getting on in age and somewhat wobbly, and some were young and spry, but all were very wise and gentle and kind, and they loved the little lambs very much. Their job of overseeing the lambs was an important one indeed. They would feed the little lambs sweet clover and crunchy oats, for sometimes the lambs were hungry. They would play games with the lambs, because the lambs always had a great need to frolic and jump and run. The lambs enjoyed this jumping and running more than the Big Mamas, really, but the ewes tried very hard to keep up with them, and found they had fun, too, sometimes.

On very special occasions, the ewes would take the little lambs out into the surrounding lands to see and do things they would not very easily be able to do otherwise. Once they went to a large estate in the countryside where they were herded onto a large cart and taken on a moonlight ride through the forest. They

saw some creatures they had never seen before in the wild that were delightfully scary, and when the ride was over, they gathered by a large bonfire and ate apples and popcorn and sang sheep songs and told sheep stories. And once they went to a large watering hole that was inside a warm building even though it was very, very cold outside and they stayed in the clean, clear waters playing for a terribly long time and only came out when the Big Mamas said they were tired and wanted to go back to the barn.

There was one thing, however, that the ewes thought was the most important thing they could do for the little lambs. Some of the little lambs, you see, did not know about the Good Shepherd. And if you know anything about sheep, you will understand that they do not do very well on their own, for life outside the barn is never safe. It is very, very important to be under the care of the Good Shepherd, for there are wolves and foxes lurking behind every tree.

The lambs loved hearing about the Good Shepherd, and as they got to know more about Him, they found they were able to see Him near them no matter where they would go. They learned about how much the Good Shepherd loved them, even more than the Big Mamas! He made them feel safe even when they were outside the barn because they knew He was walking right beside them. They learned to let Him guide their steps, and even though there were rocks, and dangerous waters, and frightening encounters of all sorts, the Shepherd was always with them.

And life on the farm goes on. When Jesus called us His sheep, of course, he was not paying us a compliment. Pray for wisdom, energy, and patience for the ewes! We do have challenges from time to time, but we are blessed. And please pray for the little lambs, that they will continue to come and hear about the love of the Shepherd, and take the good news with them far and wide out into the land.

Looking Back by Eric Schalk

I've never been good at driving backwards. For whatever reason, my mind has a hard time reconciling distances when I'm looking through a rearview mirror. If you were to look at my snow-covered driveway, you would see tire tracks that blaze through snow banks and some that get dangerously close to our retaining wall. A few years ago I bumped my old wood retaining wall with my van knocking it into the driveway and causing an eight inch spike to fillet my front tire. I don't know what it is, but backward motion isn't easy for me. Nevertheless, I want to try to spend a few minutes looking backwards with you. I want to try to capture 2008 through stories and stats and show you how your contributions to NCN have made a difference.

2008 was New City Neighbor's first full year of ministry. It was a great year of exploring new ministry options, engaging the community, impacting children and building new relationships with adults. Last year we



New City Neighbors is a
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nondiscriminatory,
nonprofit organization.

1226 Union N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

616-970-4817

www.newcityneighbors.org