



## Adopt-A-Breaktimer 2012

Since 2008 we have run an annual campaign to raise support for the kids who attend the Breaktime ministry. Every child who signs up for Breaktime is allowed to come. We have never charged a child to attend this life-changing program. While we have never asked a family for money, the Breaktime program doesn't come without its share of expenses. Every summer we spend money on new curriculum, books for children to read, materials for crafts, field trips, and providing lunch every day. When we add up the costs for Breaktime and factor in the two amazing staff who run the program, it costs us about \$300 a child for the summer.

Adopt-A-Breaktimer is an opportunity for you to help us cover those costs while at the same time having a direct connection to a student.

When you adopt a Breaktimer, we provide you with information about a child as soon as Breaktime begins and you will receive regular updates of how that child is doing throughout the summer. If you provide an email address, we will email you regular prayer requests and praises so you know how to lift that child up in prayer. As an additional option, you can come to Breaktime and eat lunch with your student or be that student's reading tutor. Adopt-A-Breaktimer is an opportunity for you to make a lasting impact in the life of a child in the Creston community.

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 contact Eric Schalk at 616-970-4817 or [erics@newcityneighbors.org](mailto:erics@newcityneighbors.org).

Breaktime

# Stories

The Newsletter of New City Neighbors

## When Small Groups Attack - Eric Schalk, Executive Director

Isaiah and Noah: two guys with biblical names and less than biblical lives.

Those of you who read my occasionally-updated blog have heard these names. These two guys had a reputation for making small groups miserable at EMS. Isaiah and Noah worked hard at being disruptive; they did not want to study the Bible and seemed to have no patience for anyone who wanted them to live a different kind of life.

I decided to take them into my small group with the hope that if we isolated them, things would improve. My first night of Bible study with them was horrible. After reading the Scripture passage, they immediately launched into a frenzy of questions about the Bible and quickly concluded they did not believe the Bible was true or that God was real.

They said I was crazy for believing in God and would not listen to a word I had to say. At the end of the night, their friend Al, who seems to be a believer, offered to pray. His prayer was simple. "Dear God, my friends are stupid, and I think they're going to hell, please help them. Amen."



The next week I didn't even get to the Scripture before chaos broke loose. I set the lesson down, listened to them rant, and then started to chat with them like a friend. I asked about their families, school, friends, etc. Eventually they calmed down, and the night went better. The following week, as they were eating dinner, they summoned me over to their table with, "Hey baldy, we got some questions for you." They proceeded to ask questions about Jesus and how Christianity was different from other religions. I was encouraged by their curiosity, though it didn't translate into small group time. We had a few more weeks of this craziness, and then something weird happened: they engaged in Bible study.

There were rumors of another leader bribing them to behave (candy does get their attention), but it

Spring  
2012

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

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seemed like more than that. It seemed like the Holy Spirit. Since that night, I have been amazed at how different small groups have been. Sure they sometimes get off track, like the night the kids told me about a pyramid scheme they were running at school, but for the most part, they are really digging into the topics at hand. They are wrestling with who Jesus is and what his call is for their lives. I'm seeing baby steps toward faith, and I am encouraged.

By the time this newsletter lands in your lap, EMS will be done for the school-year, and these kids will disappear into the summer. I don't know what adventures they'll take; but I know God has begun a good work in them and he will not let them go.

Please pray for Isaiah and Noah. Pray that God will continue to work in their hearts and pray they will be led to give their lives to him. You have already played a role in their lives by supporting the work of NCN through prayer and gifts; just imagine what could happen in their lives if you and all the others who read this begin to pray for them.

God is surely on the move.

## Moving Mountains - Lance Kraai, Farm Director

*"For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." - Matthew 17:19-21*

The farm became a reality in late March when a double trailer dump truck arrived loaded with compost meant to enrich the soil. The truck dumped two enormous mounds of deep black soil in the middle of the field, and two hours later returned with another double load. I stood in the middle of the field excited by the four rich piles of dirt—two of which were donated by our friends Bernie Berens and Ross Veltema at IB Compost—but to be honest, I was also overwhelmed. How on earth were we going to move all this dirt, plow the field, plant seeds, and harvest, all by our first customer pick-up date of June 7? I was somewhat humorously reminded of Jesus' words in Matthew that if you have faith you can simply move mountains by saying, "Move from here to there." Yet, after diligently yelling loudly at our mini-mountains they still stood there in the center of the field.

Before the dirt could be laid down, we had to break up the ground that had been fallow since the green houses that once occupied the site were torn down over 50 years ago. Just before I was ready to start tilling the whole field with our little rototiller, Eric and I met Joe Platte at the Creston Neighborhood Pancake Breakfast. Joe kindly told us he would be happy to plow the field for us with his tractor. At the same breakfast I met Peg Markle. Peg and her husband, Rog, run the Wildlife Rehab Center just 3



blocks north of the farm. Peg let me know that she had truck loads of hay full of bird droppings ready for me to pick up and add to the field whenever I want. While I suspect that I am the only one who gets excited about bird droppings and hay, it was amazing to ponder how many agricultural assets we have right in our urban community.



With the field plowed, the first of four compost "mountains" was moved by a group of Calvin students with many wheelbarrows and shovels. My neighborhood friend Steve helped me move the second pile. Steve is currently unemployed but is always there alongside me whenever I have a big pile of dirt to move (which is often), he only asks that the coffee is hot and that the lunch tastes good. We finished the third pile on our April 28th volunteer work day. That work day was a collection of people from the New City Neighbors' community garden, the Creston Community gardens, farm share holders, and members of 4th Reformed and Creston CRC. It was a joy to build new relationships with each other as we worked together on our neighborhood gardens and farm.

We have also had many others get excited about different aspects of the farm. For instance, Norm Schalk has taken on the task of being the farm's maintenance guru. He has been building trellises,

## Ministry Wish List

- Tooth Brushes \$50
- Toothpaste \$50
- Deodorant \$50
- Art Supplies \$100
- Gas Weed Whipper \$150
- Summer Reading Bags \$200

tuning up wheelbarrows, and getting the garage ready for our produce cleaning station. Justin Heslinga has been leading the charge on a native plant border that will beautify the farm while attracting insects that will either pollinate our produce or prey on the bugs we don't want around.

Finally, we have been blessed to have sold out of all our CSA share offerings. We have 20 members. Some are members of local churches (actually seven different churches!), and some are neighbors who are simply excited about the produce and the opportunities we are giving to our high school students.

With all this field preparation, I have marveled at God's hand. He has brought together community members of all kinds to slowly transform the field into a fertile soil that will receive seeds and the young people who will tend to them.

As I write this, one pile of dirt still stands ready for use through the growing season, and Jesus' words have become clearer to me. The faith of the mustard seed—like all seeds—starts small, but then through time emerges, growing large and strong. God moves mountains the same way—slowly but faithfully.

## Summer Ministry News



Breaktime and the Breaktime Bakery kick off on Monday, June 18. We are currently taking registrations for kids entering 2nd-8th grade. If you would like to register a child, please go to our website and download a form.



The Breaktime Bakery opens for business on Tuesday, June 19, at 12:30PM.

**New this summer:** you can order online at [breaktimebakery.org](http://breaktimebakery.org), and we will be taking credit cards.