



# Stories

The Newsletter of New City Neighbors

## Vans, Droughts, and the Adventures of Summer - Eric Schalk

Being stranded in Tennessee with 13 middle-school kids provided me with time to reflect on what has been one of the biggest summers we've ever had at New City Neighbors. That's right, I said stranded in Tennessee with 13 middle-school kids, but I'll come back to that in a bit.

In late May, I sat down with Erin & Laura (our summer Breaktime staff) to brainstorm ways we could enhance Breaktime. We decided to add more science, focus on healthy living, and add a time of singing. I don't think any of us realized what an impact these things would have. While the healthy snacks were not always a hit, we did get kids to try new foods, and all of the kids enjoyed the science experiments. What was cool was how much the Breaktime children loved singing. One of the children, Curtis, loved the song *We Will Remember*. One of the verses is, "When we walk through life's darkest valleys, we will look back at all You have done, and we will shout, our God is good, and He is the faithful One." Curtis would often get tears in his eyes as he sang that song because he knows about dark valleys. His mom is in jail, he has educational challenges, and he feels as though he has no friends. As he sang those words, he was expressing his pain and claiming God as his only helper.

## 2012 Fall Auction

### Save The Date!

We are having our Fall Auction on Saturday, November 3, at 5:30PM. Once again, our auction will take place in the dining hall of Kuyper College. The evening will begin with a delicious meal, followed immediately by the silent auction. Dessert will be provided by the Breaktime Bakery and followed by a live auction. More information about dinner and auction tickets will be mailed to you soon.

### We Need Your Help!

We are looking for some great items for our Fall Auction. If you have something you would like to donate, or know of someone who can help us out, please contact Eric Schalk today at 616-970-4817 or send an email to [erics@newcityneighbors.org](mailto:erics@newcityneighbors.org).



Fall  
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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The chorus of *We Will Remember* talks of remembering God's good work and stopping to give Him praise, and there were many times this summer when we had to stop and give God praise for His amazing work. I saw God's hand in the Farm as our five high school students learned job skills, how to work the land, how to care for plants, and what God has to do with all of that. I saw God's hand at work in carrying the first year of the farm through a historical drought. God's hand showed up in the number of people who donated to help get the Farm going and the many others who took a gamble and purchased shares of produce. I saw God's hand in the many churches, schools, businesses, and neighbors who volunteered this summer to help work the soil, read to Breaktime children, provide meals, purchase baked goods, lead games, and invest in children.

I even saw God's hand in what will hopefully go down as the most epic Breaktime Bakery trip of all time. On Friday, August 3, we took the bakers to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee for a long weekend of mountain adventure. We went white water rafting and caving on Saturday while avoiding sputtering rain showers under the park pavilion. Sunday morning we left the campground to go into the Great Smokey Mountains for a time of worship. About a mile down the road the transmission on the church van died. The kids handled the news well, and we made the most of the day by swimming and riding a trolley. At 5:00PM it began to downpour. When it finally ended around 9:30, three of our tents were flooded, the laundromats were closed, and we had no shelter for the 13 children in our care. After some frantic scrambling we abandoned the campground and shuttled all the kids to a nearby hotel, which allowed us to cram 17 people in two hotel rooms. We were supposed to arrive in Grand Rapids on Monday night, but we didn't get home until Wednesday evening. There are too many stories to fit in this newsletter, but I can tell you that we saw God's hand many times during that unexpected journey. Let me tell you one of my favorites.



The first two nights at the campground four of the boys went to bed on time and without any trouble. I could hear them having a serious conversation, so I snuck over to make sure there weren't any problems. As I stood by their tent listening, what I heard made my heart sing. These four guys were in their tent reading their Bibles together and praying. I had asked all the kids to bring their Bible and to spend time with God on the trip, and here were four boys working together on their faith. They were remembering God, even on vacation, even out of routine, even without prompting, and I'm still floored by the thought of it.

I want to thank you for being a part of these stories. Your prayers, donations, volunteering, and encouragement help significantly impact the lives of children this summer, and I know God has used you to grow His kingdom. Thank you for helping Curtis connect with Jesus through music, thank you for praying us through Tennessee, thank you for buying baked goods and produce, and thank you for investing in children. I specifically want to thank Creston CRC, Rockford Reformed, and Fourth Reformed. You were a huge blessing to us! Thank you.

## Lessons Learned on the Farm - Daina Kraai

Madison, high school employee of New City's Urban Farm, was at home making pasta with chicken for dinner. While she was contemplating what to put in it, a new thought occurred to her: that she should go out to the backyard and visit her mother's vegetable garden—an unfrequented place for her.



"I ended up picking a tomato and basil to add, which I probably wouldn't have done if I hadn't worked at the Farm this summer," said Madison. "In fact, I probably wouldn't have even been able to tell what basil looked like before."

All five high school students that worked at the Urban Farm this summer came in with very little experience in farming and left with knowledge enough to start their own gardens and make healthier life choices.

"There is a lot more that goes into farming than I thought," said Cameron Smith.

Shanna Greer agrees. "I just thought you would stick the plant in the ground and let it grow, but there is a lot of time dedicated to farming."

"Every plant had a specific method to it. Each had to be harvested at a different time, and you had to know when and how to fix it, even if Lance wasn't around," said Cameron. "And I learned you need to take initiative and not just wait until someone else does it. Work hard, even if your boss isn't around."

During one of the hottest summers, all students said they learned the value of hard work. Pruning tomatoes in the early hours of the morning, in 90

## Ministry Wish List

- Art Supplies \$100
- Gas Weed Whipper \$150
- Brush Hog \$500

degree heat, Christian Smith admitted, was rough. Yet he says the experience was worth it in the end.

"I probably wouldn't have been motivated to get a job this summer. This was a new opportunity, so I had to take it. I learned a lot of new job skills, at the same time that I was able to work with friends and make a difference in the community."

And although it didn't change his view on tomatoes (he still dislikes them), he did try some new vegetables he had never heard of before such as kohlrabi, and as an aspiring chef he was able to try some new recipes with the greens he helped grow.

"This experience has made me think twice before buying food that is just cheaper. The benefits of organic foods are way higher, even though they might be more expensive," added Shanna. "And I was surprised to see how much people like organic (or no-spray) vegetables. Passing out vegetable shares every Thursday was my favorite part."

Cameron agrees. "It helped us connect with customers and friends I knew from Breaktime Bakery and EMS."

Madison also enjoyed selling vegetables at the farm stand in front of the church. "Meeting people in the community and just talking and getting to know people was my favorite part, because it's also my neighborhood where I live," said Madison.

As much as the students learned about vegetables, discipleship, and job skills, knowing it was about more than just them was what excited them most—really making a difference in the community. Shanna sums it up well, "That's the whole point—seeing it all in action."

## Fall Ministries Coming Soon

**EMS** - Kicks off Thursday, September 20, at 6:00PM. EMS is a ministry for elementary and middle school students that provides meals, singing, Bible study, homework help, and games.

**High School** - Kick off on Friday, September 14. Regular meetings take place every Tuesday at 7:00PM starting on September 25.

**GEMS** - Kicks off on Monday, October 1, at 6:30PM. GEMS is a girls ministry that meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month.