



# Stories

The Newsletter of New City Neighbors

## The Journey - Eric Schalk

2013 is nearly upon us and another year is nearly in the bag. Over the last year, we have worked with a large number of children. I want to let you in on a little known fact. Most of the kids we work with believe in Jesus. Take a moment to let that sink in.

I'm telling you this because one of the most important aspects of our ministry is to lead children to Jesus. What surprises me time and time again is that many of the child who come to EMS, GEMS, Breaktime, the Bakery, the Urban Farm, and our High School ministry already know that Jesus died on the cross to save them from their sins. Some of them heard the good news first with us, but others have heard it at any number of children's ministries around Grand Rapids and beyond. What is striking to me is that most of them don't realize Jesus how they live today. Most with believe Jesus is their understand that he is also

This understanding results evangelism efforts that cross but fail to help them follow Jesus impacts them wrong, I'm not saying we the cross, but they need understand that the same wants to lead them.

This school year at our School ministry (EMS), we through the life of Jesus. I surprised some kids are to Jesus than the cross. Two about Jesus calling his blown away that the 12 just ordinary guys. What is that Jesus calls people to learning that their belief in differently today, and they that truth. What seems to



has something to say about of the children we work Savior, but they don't their Lord.

from well-intentioned seek to point kids to the see how their decision to today. Don't get me shouldn't point children to more. They need to Jesus who saves them

Elementary and Middle are working our way can't tell you how find out there is more to weeks ago we were talking disciples, and the kids were people Jesus called were the EMS kids are learning a journey. They are Jesus means they live don't always like hearing really impact kids, though,

**December 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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is when they learn/understand that no matter what their journey has looked like, Jesus still loves them. When they see that Jesus will continue to love them, even when they mess up, that is even more mind blowing.

2012 has been an incredible year for us in many ways. I have personally seen a lot of growth in some children. God is reclaiming lives.

When you partner with New City Neighbors, you become a part of that reclamation project. When you donate money, meals, transportation, and pray, you are helping kids in their journey to understand the gospel.

Think about the 12 disciples again for a moment. Jesus called them all, they had a conversion experience of sorts as they left their old life behind to follow him. But Jesus didn't convert them and then leave them to figure life out, he spent three years with these guys. He taught them with words and with action. He loved them with words and with action.

I get really excited by the fact that we see many children year after year. We know them, they know us, and the relationship we have allows us to really show them the whole person of Jesus.

As we turn the calendar to 2013, I want to encourage you to partner with NCN like never before. Being on a journey with children is a long-term commitment. Sometimes we see huge leaps in faith, education, and life, but other times we see baby steps. In both cases there is growth, but that growth takes time.

As we take this journey of faith, will you commit to praying for the volunteers in the trenches with the children? Will you commit to prayerfully consider becoming a monthly donor so we know we have finances in place to keep the journey going? Will you commit to volunteering so you can invest in a life? Will you pray for the Holy Spirit to descend in a profound way and transform lives for God's glory?

I want to end with Hebrews 12:1. Paul says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." We are all on this journey together. Thank you for your past, present, and future help to surround children with a cloud of witnesses. Thank you for helping them with laying aside the baggage of their past and running toward Jesus. Join us in helping them run that race every day of their lives.



## Tough Crowd - Jake Parks (Ministry Intern)

The past few months of EMS have been a tremendous blessing and challenge so far this year. You could say that we have a "tough crowd" of boys that come faithfully every single week. Every week they disrupt others, cause some kind of trouble, and attempt to leave EMS early. Each week the leaders laboriously try to love these boys while at the same time establishing ground rules for behavior. I must admit, my time in EMS this past spring seemed like a breeze compared to this fall.



I have been wondering recently, why do these boys keep showing up every single week? Since they do not seem respectful of others and they try to get out of worship and Bible study, why are they our most faithful attendees? After thinking on this I cannot think of any other answer but this: love. Love is why they keep coming back to EMS. Regardless of what they say they feel, they come to EMS because they are loved and accepted regardless of their life situation.

A question comes to mind that one of the boys asked in Bible study a few weeks back. He asked me why we ate bread and drank juice during worship. At the time I was thrown off by the question considering it was completely off the topic of the Bible study, but now I can see the importance of his question. In communion, we Christians experience in a tangible way our unity with each other and with the Father through the sacrifice of Christ. The relationships broken during the fall are restored during communion. And that is what many of the boys that

## Ministry Wish List

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

like to act tough this semester really need: relationships. They desperately need love and relationships with others, so they come to EMS every single week.

More importantly, though, they need to be restored to a relationship with God, and that is why every week we try to teach the middle school students the gospel of grace. And that is why despite the difficulties of the regular group of boys, it is a joy to work with them week in and week out, because God is at work calling them to himself and offering them the perfect love, relationship, and acceptance that they desperately need.

## 2012 Annual Report

We had 70 adults and high school students **regularly** volunteer at our ministries this year. When factoring in the people who brought meals for our ministries or showed up on Farm workdays, we had nearly 120 people volunteer this year.

Those 70 volunteers put in over 2,200 hours of time with children.

Over 175 children participated in our ministries with many of them receiving at least one of the 1500+ plates of food that volunteers served.

26 families grew produce and made new connections in the Community Garden. We're proud to say that a group of gardeners even dedicated extra time to grow produce for local food pantries.

Through the Breaktime Bakery and Urban Farm ministries, we were able to provide over 2,500 hours of job and lifeskill training. We made over 3,000 cookies, 2,250 bars, and 150 loaves of bread.

Through our first year of the Urban Farm we had over 20 families purchase shares of produce, with each family receiving around 300 lbs. of produce.

God was at work growing NCN in 2012, and we can't wait to see how he uses NCN in 2013!

