



Breaktime & Bakery Registration

Starting May 1, registration will be open for our 2014 Breaktime, and Breaktime Bakery programs. Both ministries begin on June 23 and run until August 7.

Breaktime is five days a week from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The Bakery is Monday - Thursday, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

If you know of a child in 2nd - 8th grade, please point them to our website and help connect them to these awesome ministries!

Run NCN Run

The race is coming up on Saturday, May 10. We have 12 people running for us this year, including 5 kids.

There is still time to join our team and help us raise funds for New City Neighbors.

You can join our team, make a donation, and track our fundraising progress at crowdrise.com/runncnrun.

For every \$5,000 we raise, Eric has to run 5k. Help us increase his distance by making a donation today!



RUN NCN RUN

Stories

The Newsletter of New City Neighbors

Overcoming - Eric Schalk

The New City Garden is alive! The recent rain and "warmer" temperatures have brought the ground back to life. I am astounded that so many plants survived such a harsh winter. One of the gardens has a decent crop of greens that sprouted up as the ground warmed. The random onions and root vegetables don't surprise me so much because they were a bit more protected; but greens are on the surface. They took the brunt of the frost, and were exposed to the deepest freezes, but yet here they are growing, like winter never happened.

This morning, as I looked at those plants, it brought to mind the hope I have for the kids with whom we work. Many of the children who come through our doors have experienced "harsh winters." They are living in poverty, hungry, struggling to read, frustrated, and feel so lonely that they will do anything to experience a relationship.

At a recent 180 Homework Help, my daughter Abbie reminded me that "Dads and Donuts" was coming up at Kent Hills Elementary School. She asked if I'd be able to go, and before I could answer, two 5th grade boys looked at me and asked, "Can you take me too?" As I looked around the room, I realized that many of the kids were fatherless. I took a risk and asked them about their fathers. One boy's father has been in jail since he was two, another boy claimed his father was dead, and another boy has a father, but he is rarely home.

Later that night at our high school ministry, I realized that most of the kids there don't have much contact with their birth fathers. My heart grew heavy.



April
2014

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

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Fatherlessness is an epidemic and results in major life challenges for kids who experience it. I've seen stats that indicate 43% of US children live without their father. Other stats show the majority of runaway children, pregnant teenagers, high school dropouts, and youth suicides come from fatherless homes.

Do you feel the gravity of the situation?

There are numerous Bible passages related to caring for the fatherless. Psalm 146:9 says, "God holds up the fatherless," Deuteronomy 10:18 says, "God will provide justice for the fatherless," and Psalm 68:5 states that God is, "Father of the fatherless..."

Through the ministries of New City Neighbors, we are constantly trying to point children to God so they can see what a loving Father looks like. We want children to know that they are loved and accepted. We want them to know that they can endure the harshest times of life and endure, much like the plants in the garden, because God is with them through Jesus Christ.

We are also trying to provide solid male leaders to speak life and love into children. Fatherlessness does not have to equal hopelessness. Prayerfully consider if God is calling you to volunteer in our ministries. Pray also for all the children who have no father in their life. Pray that they would come to know God as their loving Father and find their identity in him.

Al the Compost Guy - Lance Kraai

Last week Ruth Meendering, who lives at the 4th Reformed parsonage overlooking the farm, came to me and said there was a guy who comes to the farm every day carrying branches and small trees. She asked if I knew him, and if I wanted him messing around the farm.

"Oh thats Al, the compost guy. I let Al do his thing."

There is a concept that we really like at New City Neighbors called asset based community development. The idea is that each community has a wide variety of God given gifts (assets) that if empowered, will help the community solve its own problems (rather than bringing in an outside expert). I see the profound truth in this approach each season at the farm and the community garden. Al is our neighborhood compost expert. When he joined the community garden two seasons ago, he took over our lame excuse for a compost pile within his first week. Al shows up daily to turn the pile, keep it moist, add worms to it (he brings buckets of worms he finds throughout the neighborhood), and makes sure the pile has plenty of oxygen flow (that is what the branches are for, they hold the form of the pile and allow it to breathe). His hard work at the compost pile means that the farm and the garden get their nutrients from the neighborhood, too. More assets! The neighborhood is filled with organic matter and Al sees it everywhere he goes and puts it to good use.



Al is also our official unofficial marketer of the farm. A new farm share holder who lives on Penn (one of the streets that border the farm) recently told us that within the first week of moving into their new home, Al introduced himself to them and told them they should buy a share at the farm. Al is constantly talking about the farm to people, so much so in fact, that I print out a minimum of 200 brochures for him each winter to hand out across the city.

What excites me most is that Al did not even live in the neighborhood when he first got involved with New City Neighbors. But because of his involvement with the garden and farm, he sought out and bought a home just a block away. He is a wonderful addition to our community.

I could just as easily be talking about Monica, Emmet, Tim, Jeff, or Tom in this article. They have all made the community garden and farm their project. Watering, helping harvest produce for the farm, mowing, giving advice to new gardeners and so much more. Eric and I are always humbled as we see God pull all these pieces and diverse people into place to make our neighborhood flourish: a neighborhood that looks like the kingdom we long for in hope.

Farm Update - Lance Kraai

Slowly emerging out of the tundra, the farm enters its 3rd growing season. The glacier of snow in the parking lot has melted and the earth is slowly trying to warm. While summer takes its time arriving, we have been busy. We had a goal of selling 45 full shares this season. As of now, we have sold 50 and we have decided to offer up to 55 shares to meet the demand. With half shares and quarter shares, this means we will have at least 90 families participating this year! We are excited to see so many new people join in the work we're doing.

Ministry Wish List

- Art Supplies: \$100
- Bakery Sign: \$250
- Muck Boots: \$300

Because of the farm's continued growth, we were able to hire Shanna Greer part-time as our field manager. Shanna was a student employee the last two seasons and graduated from the ministry last year. She knows better than anyone what the farm is about and how it can impact our student employees.

Together, we have been interviewing high school students to fill the 8 positions that we have open this summer. Shanna's insights have been really valuable as we make the hard decision of who we should and shouldn't hire. It is a real challenge to juggle who wants it the most with who needs it the most.

With the growth of the farm, Shanna has been a real blessing as we do spring prep, greenhouse work, and transplanting.

In order to accommodate the increase of share sales, we have also been working on improving our infrastructure. We are in the process of building a walk-in cooler which will allow us to have greater harvesting flexibility along with improved produce quality. We also ordered a walk-behind tractor which will give us the capacity to grow the additional shares we are adding this year.

To date, we have received \$2,500 in donations to take on the \$6,000 cost of the tractor. We recently collaborated on a grant with the YMCA and Bethany Christian Services that would have covered the remaining cost of the tractor and

cooler, but were disappointed to find out that we did not get the grant. Adding to the challenge, is that another youth employment grant that we are dependent on is also in limbo this year.

The financial challenges brought on by the uncertainty of these grants is tough; but we have seen the farm change lives, and we are pressing on in faith! We have seen God provide so many times in the past and we expect he will do the same for us as the season progresses.

Please join us in praying that God will not only provide for our financial needs, but that he will truly transform the students who work with us this summer.

