



E-Newsletter

newcityneighbors

EMS
More Needed: Through Bible Studies, EMS help nurture the spiritual lives of the kids who participate. But they need to be physically fit as well. Part of the EMS ministry is to provide meals for the kids that come out. Throughout the year, please help with meal donations and preparation. Providing meals is a great way to support EMS and to be a part of the ministry. If you are called to help the EMS ministry in this way, please contact us at www@newcityneighbors.org



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Run for NCN

Run, NCN, Run (Formally Run, Eric, Run) is coming upon us quickly. This year the race is on the 11th of May, less than three months away! There are more ways to get involved than there have been in previous years.

We are looking for:

- Teams of 3 to run the 25k relay.
- People to run the 10k and 5k.
- People to walk the 5k.
- Kids to be part of the Fun Run.



RUN NCN RUN

If you want to be part of Run, NCN, Run you need to know the following information:

- You are responsible for registering yourself with the River Bank Run.
- If you collect at least \$100 in pledges for NCN, you get a t-shirt.
- There will be a prize for the relay team that raises the most pledges.
- There will be a prize for the individual who raises the most pledges.
- All the kids who race will receive a special prize for participating!
- Pledge forms can be found at: newcityneighbors.org/pledge-form/

Stories

The Newsletter of New City Neighbors

The Valentine's Kid - Eric Schalk

I walked into EMS last week after picking up a few kids and found my wife walking around with a chocolate rose. Because of my chocolate addiction, I hoped the gift was for me. I soon discovered she had been given the rose by a middle school boy named Chris, who has been a part of EMS since September. I was perplexed by the gift and wondered if my wife had received this gift from a boy with a crush. It turned out he was giving Valentine's gifts to everyone. In all my years of youth ministry, this was a first.

As I watched him hand out gifts of candy and pencils near the dinner line, I noticed that he was actually handing out love. Yes, it was Valentine's Day, and yes, he was handing out heart themed gifts, but the love was coming from his face. I wish you could have seen his smile. God used this young boy to help set the tone at EMS that night. There was a peace that lasted throughout the meal and our time of singing; a peace that was finally broken during Bible study, when two brothers, "Josh" and "Matt" got into a heated argument.

I pulled both of the boys aside, starting with Josh, who was the most angry. He was furious with his younger brother Matt, who constantly calls him names and picks on him. Josh wanted to go home to get away from his brother. Josh and I talked for quite a while about the situation, about how to love his brother, about how at EMS he could be safe because I or another leader would have his back. Thankfully, Josh finally settled down.

After small groups, I found Matt and pulled him aside hoping to have a similar conversation. I asked what was going on and without missing a beat he said, "I hate my brother. I hate my whole family. And I'm not going to tell you why either." Matt was full of anger and didn't care about what anyone had to say, including me, but as we talked he did warm up. Reflecting on our conversation, I realized that while his body was full of anger, his eyes were full of pain.

Matt and Josh agreed to a mutual peace which lasted for about 20 minutes. At the end of the night, Matt was angrily yelling at Josh, and Josh was yelling at me saying, "I told you so!"

Josh and Matt have a difficult past and their lives are full of baggage. Hearing their story broke my heart. I prayed for them a lot over the weekend and I'm curious to see what they'll be like tonight at EMS. Regardless of what happens, I have hope for them.

I have hope because I know that Jesus lived, died, and rose again for these kids. I have hope because I know that the Holy Spirit can transform their hearts. I have hope because they keep coming



February
2013

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

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to EMS and they have adults who are working hard to love them. I also have hope because of Chris, the Valentine's kid.

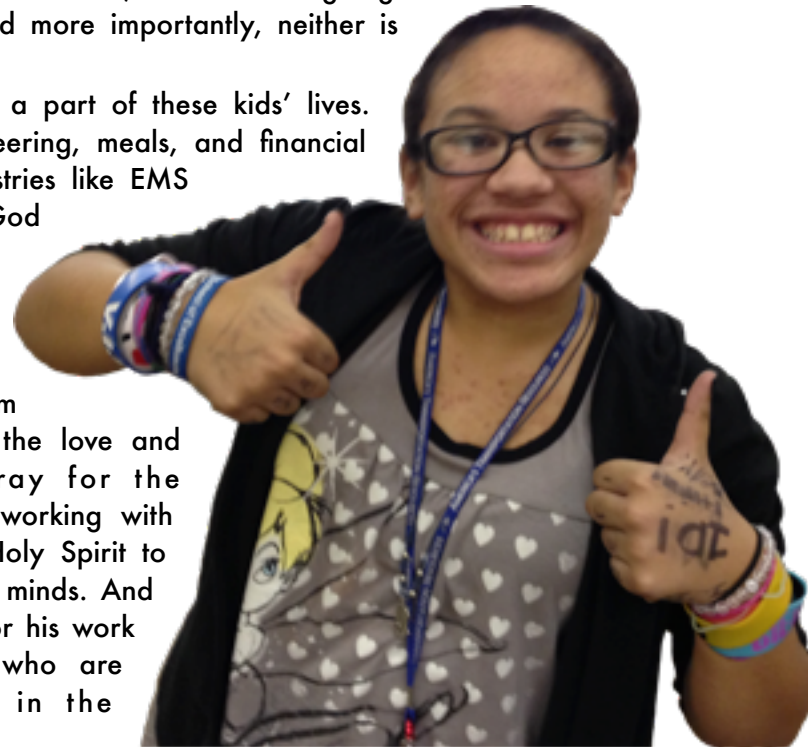
You might remember that I've mentioned Chris before in a letter. Chris was down in the dumps, didn't want to participate in Bible study and didn't want to sing. Then last fall, God started working on him. During a time of singing, in literally 15 minutes, he went from grumpy and refusing to participate, to raising his hands in worship and declaring, "How great is our God!" This is the Chris who last week showed up with a bag of Valentine's gifts and proceeded to bring joy to EMS.

This is God at work.

I saw God work in Chris's life and I believe he can do the same with Josh and Matt. It may take time, but we're not going to give up on them, and more importantly, neither is God.

Thank you for being a part of these kids' lives. Your prayers, volunteering, meals, and financial gifts help make ministries like EMS possible. Know that God is using you to help make a difference.

Keep praying. Pray for Josh, Matt and all the kids like them who need to know the love and care of Jesus. Pray for the volunteers who are working with them. Pray for the Holy Spirit to transform hearts and minds. And finally, praise God for his work in kids like Chris, who are learning to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.



New City Urban Farm 2013: Growing a Job Employment program - Lance Kraai

As our five student employees found out last summer, starting an urban farm requires more than just physical labor, it also involves building up a fledging small business. And this, our students soon found out, requires a broad spectrum of job skills.

For instance, we quickly realized early on in the blazing hot summer of 2012 that we had more food than our share holders could possibly eat. So, we called a meeting to develop a marketing strategy. To add some extra incentive, Eric and I decided that 25% of all restaurant and farm sales revenue would go directly to the students as an end of the season bonus. As we gathered as a team and started throwing out ideas, I was surprised and delighted by what I heard, as one student's idea led to another:

"We should start a Facebook page."

"Yeah, and why don't we get some stickers for our share holders to put on their window? And we can put the Facebook address on the sticker."

"How about chalk board signs that we write "Farm Stand" on?"

"Let's write something for church bulletins."

"Let's make a flyer, and pass it out to the neighborhood."

"We could make the bakery students pass out the flyers to everyone they know, and for every flyer that someone brings in with their name on it, they could get a Bakery point (I still don't know what this does)."

All of this without any of my help, and so they began: One student was making a Facebook page, another was ordering stickers, another was working on Photoshop to make a flyer, another writing clever and concise text to go on the flyer, another taking photos to post on the Facebook page, and so on.

This ability to brainstorm and implement real-life business ideas taught them things like: Groups have a bigger imagination than one person, learning how to work with computers is really important, as is photography and learning to write well. They also learned they should pay attention in school when their teachers teach them these things and that they can do cool things with their gifts, and someone actually wants them to.

These are the stories we want to build on in 2013 for our eight student employees this coming season (last year we hired five).

We want students who emerge from our program able to confidently look you in the eyes, professionally shake your hand, and let you know what they are capable of. We also want students who will use their gifts for more than just themselves. We want them to ask, "What is my vocation? What is God calling me to? What do I love, and what does the world need?" These are questions we asked last year, and these will always be the primary questions we ask both our students and ourselves.

We hope these questions will remain central to the farm as we expand its vision to include supplying fresh produce to our lower income neighbors. We will be



Ministry Wish List

- Elementary aged books
- Kitchenaid Professional Mixer (\$900)
- Jobs for Life Curriculum (\$1,000)

asking, "How does access to fresh food affect a family's health? Can justice truly be practiced when not all neighbors have access to high quality food? What is our responsibility as a farm and a small business to try and remedy these problems?" In other words, we will be asking, "What does it mean to be a farm that follows Jesus? How would he run our farm? Who would he feed? What would he charge?" Big questions. Life changing questions.

We are especially excited because we have a growing pool of supporters who are providing us with the resources we need to enact the ideas that will emerge from these questions. In 2013, we are offering 30 annual food shares (or 60 half shares), and to date

we've already sold the equivalent of 25 full shares to at least 35 different families. We have also received a grant from the Van Den Bosch Gospel Foundation for farm expenses and another from the Conservation Fund, backed by the Kellogg's Foundation, to enable us to make the farm EBT (food assistance) compliant. Creston Church has also partnered with us again this season with another sizable donation.

Two generous donors have also come forward and offered to do a 50/50 match for all private donations up to \$5,000 for a total of \$10,000. To date, we've

received \$2,100 in matching funds for a total of \$7,100. We are hopeful that we can reach our \$10,000 goal by the start of the season in June. Because we are a start-up, we have a huge list of infrastructure needs. These include: a well, a hoop house, computers, a shed, a walk behind tractor, and more. Each dollar we receive is another opportunity for the farm to grow. This means more food for the neighborhood, and it means the farm will become self-sufficient faster, but most importantly, it means more student employment and more learning opportunities. We pray this translates into more empowered disciples for the Kingdom.

If you feel compelled to partner with us in 2013, please write Urban Farm 50/50 in the memo line. If you are interested in finding out more about our annual food shares, please contact Lance Kraai at lancek@newcityneighbors.org.