

# UCOM COMMUNICATOR

Fall 2019



Setting a Budget, Cultivating a Career, Finding their Home  
*How You Helped Alexandra's Family Make  
Their Dreams Come True*



Alex studies at her new kitchen table

## It Only Takes a Spark

Alexandra's UCOM journey began with a small letter-sized poster hanging in the food pantry. "If you want to learn to take charge of your financial future, sign up for FREE financial literacy classes here at UCOM." Something sparked in her. She signed up for the class on a whim.

She was feeling direction-less. She had abandoned her personal goal of becoming a nurse when she dropped out of college to return to Michigan to care for her dying father. She had met and married the love of her life, and children came along, and there was happiness in that. But after her father passed away, her mother became too ill to live on her own.

The physical and emotional toll of her family of five living in cramped quarters with her ailing mother was draining the energy and joy out of life. Alex was feeling tired and defeated the day she signed up for classes.

Alex was energized throughout the course. She set about the weekly homework and soon had financial goals that made sense and seemed achievable. Her husband was on board and by the end

of the course Alex was sharing her dream of pursuing a medical career.

Alex was referred to the Goodwill Certified Nursing Assistant Program, agreeing to be in a pilot cohort that provided full tuition in exchange for a year's service at an area long-term care facility. She sailed through the entrance exam, completed the 16 week course, passed the state test and started a full time CNA job.

Building on her momentum, Alex created new goals... and achieved them. She paid off debt. She saved for holiday giving. She made grocery lists and shopped sales and re-purposed household goods. She taught her children that "good things come to those who wait" and planned a trip in lieu of piles of presents. With each small victory came greater confidence and that confidence grew into bigger dreams.

Housing was next on the list. She budgeted, worked extra hours, and saved every dollar beyond for basic expenses. Her husband worked extra shifts, too, and was excited about their progress. They could see results and they were communicating better and working toward shared goals. They pre-qualified for a mortgage, watched for a house in their price range and pounced when one came available. They found good used furniture, scrubbed the place from top to bottom and moved in just shy of the year they had given themselves to reach their home ownership goal.

As she shared her story, Alex became emotional talking about her most meaningful moment of success. "For the first time ever, I was able to pay for my son to be a part of sports. I did that. He loves wrestling and he qualified for the state finals!" To be able to be the person that provided this opportunity to her son was an unexpected and very satisfying bonus for all of the sweat equity

and hard work that had taken place over the previous two years.

Next up was a better job. She did very well at the senior living center but wanted more responsibility and better pay. Alexandra did get her “dream job” at a large healthcare center but after a few months found that it was not a “dream schedule” for her family so today she is doing private duty care giving. She loves it and says that once her children are older, she plans to go to nursing school. Life still holds many challenges, but Alex has developed a skill set that finds solutions rather than hopelessness. She often recalls her life before finding UCOM and says that no matter how hard some days are now, they are nothing like the despair she experienced without the HOPE and ABILITY TO COPE that she

gained working with the staff at UCOM.

Chatting with Alexandra, it is impossible not to catch her joyful spirit. She is looking forward to a bright future and credits much of her turnaround to a very simple, subtle core value at UCOM: We believe people are capable. We believe all people have potential. And we will do what we can to open doors and unleash possibility, even when the world is saying otherwise.

“To have so many people believe in me, especially at a time when I didn’t even believe in myself, made all the difference.”

Alex is a beacon of light to her family and to those in her care. She has blessed so many, including the UCOM staff, by sharing her story.

## Thank You!

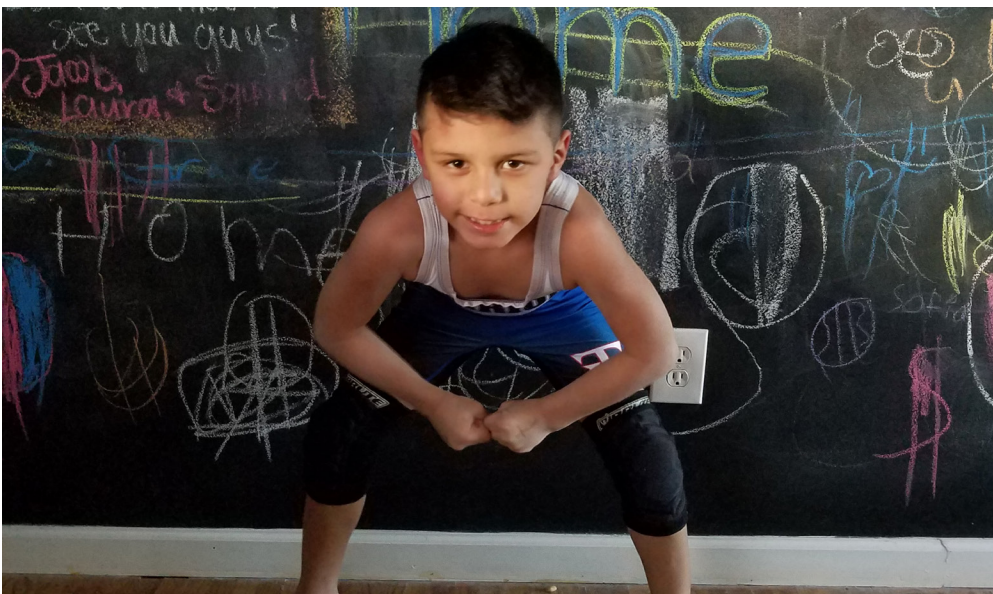
Your support of UCOM’s neighbors provided 8 CSA (community supported agriculture) shares to 16 participants this summer.

## Special Need: October is County Wide Food Drive Month!

During the month of October you can help UCOM by donating to our fresh food fund!

This fund ensures that we can purchase fresh fruits and veggies to stock our farm stand and pantry for our neighbors!

You can also help by donating low sodium, low sugar, and low fat non perishable food items, or by starting a collection at your work or place of worship.



Alex's son shows off his wrestling moves



# Night of a Million Dreams

Thursday, October 24, 2019

6:30-8:30 p.m.

GVSU Eberhard Center

301 Fulton St W, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

UCOM's Night of a Million Dreams is an opportunity to learn more about the community we serve and the resources and hope that are provided to your neighbors through our programs.

It is only because of community support that UCOM can help neighbors reach for their dreams. You are the reason our neighbors succeed in life and we want you to help us celebrate the dreams UCOM has been a part of this year.

Through community involvement and investment in UCOM, a million more dreams will be possible next year.

*Tickets are available until October 1st! There will be no sales at the door for this event.*

Admission is \$25 and includes event entry and a strolling dinner. A cash bar will be available as well. Game tickets are \$10 each and each ticket wins a wonderful prize donated to make the evening fun for all! We cannot wait to see you there!



Order now by scanning the QR code or by visiting [UCOMgr.org/NightOfAMillionDreams](http://UCOMgr.org/NightOfAMillionDreams)



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# YOU CAN HELP!

1. Become a sustaining member of UCOM's programs with monthly donations.
2. Volunteer Thursday evenings at intake or checkout.
3. Help register clients during pantry hours.
4. Attend the Night of a Million Dreams fundraiser event.
5. Donate to the fresh food fund for fruits and vegetables.
6. Share this newsletter with a friend!