

# UCOM COMMUNICATOR

Winter 2021



Throughout a challenging year,  
you've been there for your neighbors

Katie and Richard with Blue Hubbard squash from the UCOM farm stand.



# The Best Birthday Present Ever

It really was a coincidence that the first weekend back with UCOM's Farm Stand on the Road was Harriet's birthday. When Katie arrived at the apartment

complex with 300 pounds of fresh Michigan produce that residents had ordered, **Harriet's assessment was, "Best birthday present ever!"**

Perhaps the pandemic induced isolation we've all experienced this year can help us understand a bit more the loneliness of seniors cut off from family and friends. Fresh produce is a rare treat for many of our older neighbors who are unable to get to the farmers' markets or even the grocery store. That's where you come in, helping us deliver fresh local affordable produce from our farm stand to seniors like Harriet and low income households in these apartment complexes. "Happy birthday, Harriet! We'll see you next month."

**Doris is not stuck at home.** She is out in the community almost daily meeting new people, distanced and masked. She recently shared her experiences from last year as one of the urban farmers at our community garden in Marquette Park. She loves the fresh vegetables she grows there, but even more she appreciates the community. Chatting with people as they work, Doris has made friends in a comfortable setting. Monthly gatherings of the gardeners create even more opportunities for community-building.

Your generous donations of time and finances also provide fresh food to people who may have little access to the food they need to keep their families healthy.

**1 in 5 Kent County families say they can't buy or receive the healthy food they need,** according to Heart of West Michigan United Way. For people faced with too many bills and too little money your gifts provide good nutritious food at no cost through the Healthy Choice Pantry.

Your heart should swell with joy that even in extreme times like these, you are there to share the burdens and joys of life with your neighbors.

***You're Helping Your Neighbors to Grow and Thrive.***



## New Faces, New Opportunities for Connection

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Despite the uncertainty and doubt of this past year, one thing has never wavered; your support for your neighbors. Because of you, in 2020 UCOM not only survived but thrived.

In a year when our community needed you most, you came through. Healthy fresh food was provided the entire year, without interruption and with only limited changes to keep our neighbors and volunteers safe.

Not only that, your support enabled UCOM to hire two new staff members that will help build more meaningful connections with our community for years to come.

Our new Pantry Resource Assistant Kassandra Lopez is a bilingual native Spanish speaker and will help ensure that our Latinx neighbors feel more welcome than ever. As Pantry Resource Assistant Kassy will be working directly with our neighbors,

but she will also be advocating for the community and doing outreach work to ensure that UCOM is here to support the goals and dreams of our neighbors.

Liam Bailey, our new Donor Relations Specialist, comes to us with nearly a decade of experience in the world of Grand Rapids non-profits. Their skills will help build more meaningful relationships with our donors like you and reinforce our commitment to dutiful stewardship of your donations. Liam is excited to hit the ground running and they would love to hear from anyone interested in sharing their experiences.

Together this dynamic duo brings new life and passion to your mission and will help build a stronger community of donors, volunteers, staff, and neighbors.

# YOU CAN HELP!

1. Become a sustaining member of UCOM's programs with monthly donations.

2. Help unload trucks!  
• Mon 8:30 - 10:00 am  
• Fri 8:30 - 12:00 pm

3. Donate masks for our neighbors.

4. Donate warm men's, women's and children's gloves.

5. Donate gently used or new blankets for families this winter.

6. Share this newsletter with a friend!



**Let's Get Cooking!**

**HOSTED BY SHELLEY IRWIN!**

CELEBRITY CHEFS  
DELICIOUS RECIPIES  
JOYOUS MUSIC

UCOM IS  
**COOKING UP COMMUNITY**

AT OUR SPRING VIRTUAL EVENT:  
LET'S GET COOKING!

**MAY 20 @ 7PM**

SILENT AUCTION  
MAY 17-20



Resources for living. Hope for life.

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