

UCOM COMMUNICATOR

Fall 2020



The Work Continues
Dreaming with our Neighbors
Growing Green Communities

Dreaming With Your Eyes Wide Open

Your concern for the economic security of our neighbors resulted in 68 people last year receiving in-depth job coaching, resume-building, and assistance in navigating the labyrinth that leads to long term employment.

Part of that process is teaching people to dream again. Asking participants about a dream job can be foreign territory. It can be hard to envision a job that provides a living wage and some measure of job satisfaction if you've never known that or if you've been told that you can never have it again because of something in your past. Our participants work to set a goal that is challenging but attainable. This goal is a reality-based dream that life has crushed in the moment, making it that much more difficult to envision.

Helping people find their self-worth may be the biggest job with which you have charged UCOM. We call this Asset Based Community Development and we're grateful for that challenge. It has resulted in miracles big and small in the lives of our neighbors.

Once a respected educator, Emilio's fall from grace cost him 25 years in prison. While incarcerated, he continued his education and started a GED program for inmates. He dreamt of returning to teaching once he completed his sentence but was realistic about the barriers that would be in his way.



Emilio with BettyBeth
UCOM Community Development Manager

Dreaming with his eyes wide open, Emilio connected with a reentry support program that led him to UCOM. UCOM's workforce development specialist helped Emilio build a resume, practice interview skills and find the words to speak about his past and, more importantly, his future. He soon found a retail job, then volunteer work in education and finally, a teaching position with one of UCOM's community partners. His dream-turned-reality was supported by UCOM at every step along the way.

UCOM is blessed to be able to serve all. There are no excluding factors that prohibit those seeking a better life from using our workforce development services. We believe that EVERY person has worth and the potential to succeed. We're able to do this because supporters like you see worth and value in the community-building we do every day at UCOM. Thank you for helping us dream with our eyes wide open.

Growing Green Neighbors Seeding Green Communities



Trisha called gardening volunteer Vern to fill in last minute when our scheduled speaker was suddenly called out of town. Vern didn't hesitate a minute. "I'll be there," he told her.

What Trisha didn't know was that Vern took her call while he was on a camping trip in Indiana. Only after the class did Trisha find out that immediately after her call Vern had packed up his gear and rushed back to Michigan, abandoning his camping plans a couple of days early, to lead the discussion (outside at Marquette Park) with our urban and community gardeners.

"Vern is an amazing person full of compassion and knowledge. He shows great interest in each one of our gardeners," Trisha said.

Amber and her sons and a few other urban farmers worked faithfully in the community gardens this year. A few people at a time worked not only their own gardens, but their neighbors' as well. Your UCOM family is here to care for

one another. It was easy to decide what to do with "leftovers" like those prolific zucchini squashes. People just brought them up the street to UCOM for the Healthy Choice pantry and to help us meet our WIC requirements for the Farm Stand.

Another volunteer took the bus to UCOM several times a week to work the gardens in the back of our parking lot. He never let his disability interfere with giving his time and talents to these community gardening efforts.

UCOM's many community and individual gardens are about making more options available to our neighbors. They don't have to settle for the lack of affordable quality fresh produce within walking or busing distance of them. "We get to choose what we want to grow, and we help each other learn to produce our own food," one neighbor remarked. "I like that it's healthy and good for us, and I like that my kids can help and learn too like I learned from my Grandma's garden when I was young," another pointed out.

You make all of this possible for our neighbors. While you provide emergency food to tide people over in these difficult days, you also liberate them with opportunities to provide for themselves and their families while they build fuller lives.

Safety and Precautions at UCOM

Since the beginning of September UCOM has invited our neighbors to once again shop for their own groceries in person.

We have been diligent in maintaining safe conditions for our staff, volunteers and our neighbors. Everyone in the building is required to wear a mask and we are limiting the number of people inside at any given time.

We are doing everything we can to keep our community safe.

Holiday Giving Network



YOU CAN HELP!

Holiday Season and COVID-19

The holiday season can be a particularly difficult time for families in need. The stress and extra expenses can be trying for even the most economically secure of families.

As a part of the Holiday Giving Network UCOM has always tried to help provide our neighbors with the best holiday season.

This year is no different in that regard, but COVID-19 has forced us to make some changes to our services.

Instead of the intensive process of signing families up for and providing holiday baskets, many of which were packed and delivered by supporters like you, UCOM will be allowing all families in need to have double shopping services during November and December.

There will be a handful of small households, mostly homebound seniors, that will still need deliveries and UCOM is looking for around 60 providers to fill that need.

Another way to support UCOM's Holiday efforts is by donating directly to UCOM what you would have spent on a basket. Your support will help ensure that all our neighbors are able to have enough food for the holidays and will help keep families safe during these difficult times.

1. Join our recurring donors in supporting UCOM each month!

2. Donate today! Your neighbors need your help.

3. Tell a friend about UCOM.

4. Stay in touch with email by signing up at www.UCOMgr.org.

5. Sign up to deliver a basket to a Senior. Call Shawn for info.

6. Share this newsletter with a friend!



Resources for living. Hope for life.

1311 Chicago Dr. SW
Wyoming, MI 49509

616.241.4006
www.UCOMgr.org