

Keeping us warm:

Because of you we have hundreds of quilts donated yearly to give to new babies and mothers. The look on these families faces when they receive a beautiful homemade gift is priceless.



Resources for living. Hope for life.

Fall 2014

United Church Outreach Ministry

1311 Chicago Dr. SW, Wyoming, MI 49509 616.241.4006

www.UCOMgr.org

Homework House™ changes for the better

By Katie Vanderwal –
Education Director

When Sara first joined Schools of Hope she was a third grader reading at a first grade level. Many of the pieces had been taught to her but they weren't fitting together quite right. Through her time with us her view of reading and understanding of the pieces changed enough to make things click. **By the time she left us at the end of the year, she was reading at a fifth grade level.**

Change is something most of us are all too familiar with in life. Change can certainly be difficult but it can also be beautiful. Summer changes into fall and with it comes the brilliance of color, fresh scents in the air, and countless new activities starting. As those of us at Homework House follow the changing seasons and prepare for the school year, we find ourselves facing a different sort of change as well. We hope that it will be a change that brings a different kind of beauty to our work.

Homework House and Schools of Hope have merged to capture the best of both programs. We are combining explicit literacy instruction, given by a certified teacher, with individualized attention offered by our many volunteer tutors. Children learn from a much-needed focus on literacy while still getting homework assistance as we walk alongside students in the other areas in which they struggle. **Last year we expanded into the Godfrey Lee public school system.** This year we enhance that relationship by offering longer time frames, more instruction and grade-specific activities.

We are also excited to introduce a new partnership that we are piloting with the Michigan Literacy Corps this year. Americorps members who are trained in the Literacy Corps program will be working in Homework House this fall



Social interaction, literacy, confidence and fun bring smiles to the faces of Homework House™ students.

to provide targeted one-to-one interventions, better addressing the specific needs of our most challenged students.

Homework House changes to meet the needs of students and schools celebrating the excitement that the transition brings. As we move forward Homework House continues to empower the beautiful growth of students who are working hard to achieve their best!

These children need someone to walk alongside them. As you volunteer with students you have the opportunity to truly make a difference in the life of a child and to grow and learn from them in the process yourself.

For more information on volunteering with Homework House, please contact UCOM Program Director Shawn Keener or me.



Other ways to give



Volunteers play such a vital role in UCOM's day-to-day operations and we are especially in need of volunteers in the following capacities:

- Drivers...** to pick up food to share with our neighbors
- Tutors...** to teach children excited about learning how to read
- Data entry...** to ensure all neighbors receive a holiday basket
- Checkout clerks...** so that all patrons receive all the food they can
- Gardeners...** for spring 2015 to teach people how to grow fresh produce
- Shipping and receiving...** to keep a variety of foods on the shelves
- Clothing ...** to give neighbors access to the clothing pantry
- Client intake...** to welcome clients with a warm smile into the pantry

Volunteers use Community Participation Initiative to transition into meaningful experiences

**By Erin Mann –
Community Development Manager**

The Kate and Richard Wolters Foundation has allocated funds to help UCOM and the Arc Kent County continue our Community Participation Initiative (CPI) (formerly Including Our Neighbors). The goal of CPI is to assist, persuade, and challenge community agencies to open their programs to include people with disabilities: to welcome them and to provide them with the assistance they need to succeed. The CPI is an endeavor to establish greater inclusion, communication, and participation for all community members.

This program has proven to be successful. While volunteering at UCOM two participants with disabilities gained food safety skills that carried over to working in restaurants in the community.

One of these volunteers, Pearl, stopped in to tell UCOM that she gained employment and was filled with gratitude for the experiences and skills she gained during her time here. We are excited to have funding for this program. Through the CPI, UCOM can successfully utilize the insights and expertise of clients, volunteers and neighbors with disabilities to facilitate meaningful community service opportunities.



Motivated and Skilled: *Pearl and Tim are two volunteers who benefited from an opportunity offered to them through CPI. They are currently working in restaurants in the community.*

In collaboration with the Kate and Richard Wolters Foundation and donors like you, these opportunities were made possible. We welcome donors to come and work with these volunteers or to serve as an advocate in the community for CPI. If you would like to learn more about the CPI program call (616) 241-4006 and ask to speak with Erin.



Growing Food and Growing UCOM Preparing a Healthy Foundation

**By Erik Keener –
Assistant Executive Director**

As the seasons change and we move forward into another fall and winter, UCOM is excited to watch as our gardening program also moves into its next season. This will be the first fall for UCOM’s hoop house and community garden plot and we are looking forward to seeing what the tail end of Autumn has in store for our gardeners. Cool weather crops like lettuce, cabbage, carrots, beets and others will make for one last bountiful harvest before the cold puts an end to this year’s growing season and we move into the long dormant winter. However, before the cold arrives in force there are many things our gardeners can do to ensure a fertile environment for the next growing season. From the end of the growing season, there is much to do to make sure the soil is healthy and ready



Gather ye carrots while ye may: As the growing season comes to an end, UCOM and our gardeners have one last harvest and prep for what comes next

Perseverance

“Spring passes and one remembers one's innocence.
Summer passes and one remembers one's exuberance.
Autumn passes and one remembers one's reverence.
Winter passes and one remembers one's perseverance.”

— Yoko Ono



Cold months can be difficult for our clients with increased expenses due to the holidays and heating costs. Through your dedication, support and altruism you inspire our neighbors to persevere through these months. Please pass this newsletter on to a friend so they can inspire others too.

for crops. From mulching leaves and dead plants to readying tools and equipment for the spring, there is much that can be done to make the coming growing season a success.

Like our gardeners, UCOM is also hoping for one more big harvest before the winter arrives. Also like our gardeners we know that there is much to do to ensure that our organization is healthy and primed for growth going forward. As we continue to expand our gardening and healthy living initiatives here at UCOM we are well aware of the things we can do to ensure our growing season is as fruitful as possible. You can help ensure a fertile landscape for UCOM by making sure our year end annual campaign is as successful as possible.

At UCOM we are constantly striving to create the strongest possible foundation for the organization and with the help of friends and supporters like you we know we are on our way.



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Immediate needs for UCOM Gifts big and small... we'll gratefully accept them all

- Fire escape ladder
- Holiday Basket providers
- Incentive gifts for children & adults
- Healthy and nutritious food items
- Children's dictionaries
- Gift cards to office supply stores or grocery stores
- Clean empty egg containers
- Clean plastic grocery bags
- Clean clear or glass containers
- Spartan UPC labels
- Cloth grocery bags

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MISSION

UCOM values individuals and builds community in southwestern Kent County by providing material and educational assistance to meet basic needs, improve quality of life, and promote self-sufficiency.

Please accept my donation in the amount of \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

UCOM makes it easy for you to donate at UCOMgr.org
My friend gave me a copy of your newsletter,
I would like to share "perseverance" with our neighbors too.