

New experiences:

This past summer students in the Believe 2 Become summer program at UCOM were able to visit Ham Family farms. There they learned about what it takes to run a successful farm.



Fall 2015



Resources for living. Hope for life.

United Church Outreach Ministry

1311 Chicago Dr. SW, Wyoming, MI 49509 616.241.4006

www.UCOMgr.org

The Strongest of Us Sometimes Need Partners

**By Bruce Roller –
Executive Director**

Kind and tough—that’s how I describe Lizabeth Johnson. Every morning she is up at her appointed time, dressed and meeting the day. Lizabeth has not had an easy life, but it has been a full one, a blessed one, she would say.

Lizabeth lives with stage four colon cancer, and acknowledges that the illness is terminal, but she is not done living yet. A veteran of Desert Storm, Sgt. Johnson has a wall full of metals, commendations and awards. All of her walls bulge with photos of family and with crosses and icons. These are her most precious possessions, reminders of her priorities of God, family and country. Lizbeth is proud of her Native American heritage and is a role model for all of her neighbors.

Before she needed UCOM to be present for her to provide some basic needs, a lot of smiles, encouragement and the occasional visit, Lizabeth, who grew up in our neighborhood, was a volunteer.



Growing Together: Lizbeth shows off her UCOM garden during Bruce’s visit.

She made more than one trip with UCOM’s/Park Church’s Sand Dudes, chaperoning ten or fifteen children and youth on bus trips to the Lake and the nature center. She insisted that she was having more fun than the kids.

Barely subsisting on a small pension, often exhausted from simple daily activities, Lizabeth has pushed herself this summer to get out to her UCOM garden box every day to water and check on progress. The fresh produce is a favorite way for her to maintain a healthy diet.

Lizabeth is vibrant example of many life lessons, one of the most important being that it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to ask for assistance when we need it, give help when we can and press on with the support of our friends in the face of every obstacle.

[Your generous giving makes sure that UCOM is present to ALL of our neighbors. Thank you.]





Better Health For UCOM's Neighbors NOW

**By Erik Keener –
Assistant Executive Director**

For the past 6 months Bill has been a regular fixture at UCOM. Arriving at UCOM around 9:00 each morning Bill checks in with Bob to see what needs to be done in the pantry. Bill (and Bob too) is a fantastic member of our large corps of volunteers that help ensure UCOM is always there when our clients need us. But Bill isn't just another dedicated volunteer there to help serve our clients, he's also a client himself. Diagnosed with diabetes as a four year old child in 1979, Bill has benefitted the past six months from being a participant in the Nutritional Options for Wellness (NOW) program.

The goal of the NOW program is to help those battling chronic disease and illness (like Bill)

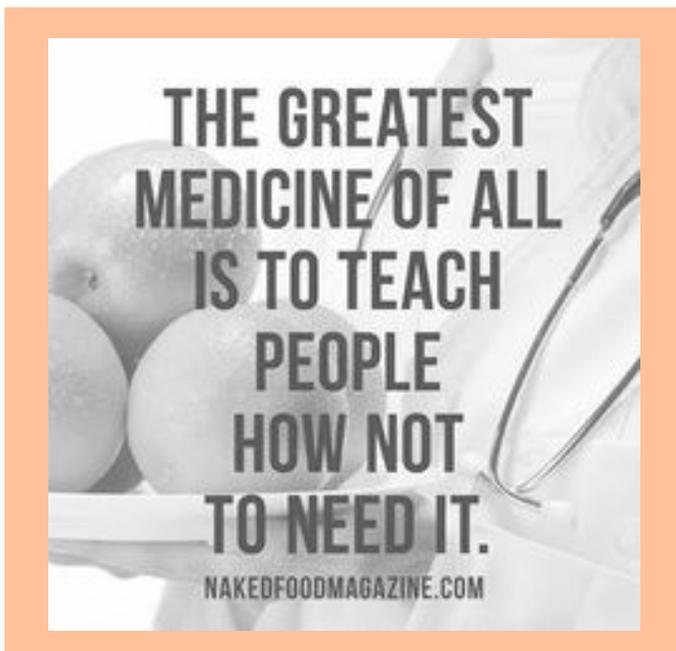


Hard at Work: Bill surveys the UCOM storage room

manage their conditions by providing healthy foods through the pantry network. The program provides healthy, low fat, low sugar, and low salt foods to individuals on a weekly basis, helping cut down on food costs associated with nutritious eating.

Pamela is another one of the people that utilizes the NOW program. Before she joined the program Pamela occasionally had to choose between buying the healthy food she hoped would help manage her weight, diabetes and heart disease, or the medications she knew were stemming the tide against her illnesses. She recently graduated from the program, lost 25 pounds and feels great.

Pamela and Bill are just two of the many NOW participants that have benefitted from the healthy foods, exercise and nutrition classes, and general sense of community provided by the NOW program and your support. With your support, we can make a difference in the health of our community. NOW.





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Contact Bruce for more information

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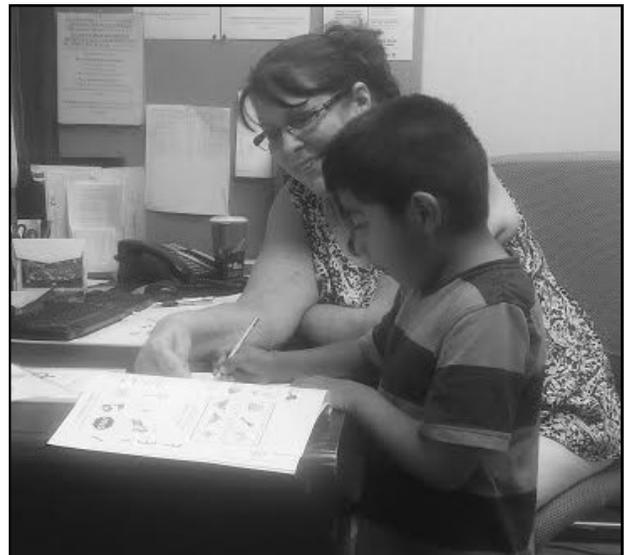
GRASP-ing A Brighter tomorrow

By Erik Keener –

Juan was thrilled, “Can I start working on it now?” Juan was talking about the GRASP (Grand Rapids Academic Summer Program) book that had just been given to his mother “Of course you can,” said Diana, “We can work together while your Mom shops.”

It’s rewarding and rare to see a child as excited about learning as Juan and UCOM is glad to be able to play a part in that excitement. The book that Juan received was just one of several that were distributed to children of pantry clients because of a generous donation to the Summer Learning Academy at UCOM.

While most of the books went home with students of that program a few made their way into the hands of students like Juan and maybe, just maybe helped to spark a budding curiosity and passion for learning.



Learning together: Diana helps a young boy work on his new GRASP book



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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.

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