

UCOM COMMUNICATOR

Summer 2020



Operating During a Pandemic
What's Happening Now
Building for the Future

Staying Safe and Continuing to Serve

Dr. Bruce Roller, Executive Director

The woman pulled into the parking lot and waved Erik over. She handed him a sealed envelope and said, “This is for food for anyone who needs it—especially for any immigrants who might not go anywhere else.” Erik asked her name, but she wanted to remain anonymous. As he walked away, Erik found that the envelope contained twelve crisp \$100 bills. Obviously this empathetic woman had cashed her stimulus check and given it to make sure her neighbors had enough to eat.

During this crisis of sickness and death, amid these trying economic times when some of our usual supporters have lost jobs, those of you who can, have given to show care to one another.

Another woman, fearing her neighborhood bakery might go under, pledged to buy bread in bulk and donate it to her neighbors here at UCOM. Four days a week for over a month neighbors were treated to wonderful fresh bakery bread. One woman cried when she told Shawn that this was better bread than she could afford before she lost her job. See how the circle goes?

Because of you—your prayers, your support and your giving the best you can—services to your neighbors continue unabated. To keep everyone as safe as possible people are not shopping in the pantry, but they can call in their order and have it delivered to their car. Services have

even expanded. Now rather than shopping monthly people may shop at UCOM twice a month.

Each month we have given 140 seniors 25-pound boxes of mostly Michigan grown produce thanks to Heeren LLC and the USDA.

A few of our volunteers have delivered to the doorstep of people who cannot come out to pick up their groceries.

When people ask, “When will UCOM be open again?” I respond that we have never closed—only the building is closed to the public. Of course we look forward to a return to more normal operations, but in the meantime we are finding new ways to continue to be present for those who need us.

Because of you UCOM staff has continued working. In addition to the folk who staff the pantry and Farm Stand, Trisha continues her work with community and urban farmers, even holding a meeting of the gardeners outside in Marquette Park (with masks and proper physical distancing). The gardens are flourishing. Volunteers are taking care of each other’s gardens one household at a time.

BettyBeth continues to coach job-seekers and to help people navigate and cope with the tangled web of employment and unemployment. She works remotely when she can or outside with masks and social distancing.

Because of you we are still here where we have been for 35 years and together UCOM will be here as long as we are needed.



UCOM is raising the roof... and more!



Trisha can finally get rid of her poncho! Our leaky old roof finally demanded to be replaced. For far too long our faithful staff had dodged running water, sometimes covering equipment with tarps and emptying five-gallon buckets of rainwater. This did not measure up to our standards of extravagant welcome for our neighbors or the promise of a quality environment for our passionate staffers.

Through a generous donation from the Peter C. and Emajean Cook Foundation we were able to contract with Weathershield to replace the roof with one guaranteed for 25 years. That work has begun and should be completed by early September.

And that's not all...we are in the homestretch of renovations to the east wing that will offer space for us to spread out to accommodate this growing ministry.

We replaced our antiquated phone system with a modern system that serves us well both for remote work for some staff members during this phase of the

pandemic and into the future when we will all be able to congregate safely.

We have more vision for the building that will enable us to remain in this familiar setting with expanded operations that will better meet the needs of for community activities to enhance the health and well-being of all of our neighbors.

The total cost of the project will likely be more than half a million dollars. We will complete the renovations in phases as the money comes in. We are open to adding to our campaign cabinet co-chaired by Betsy Dole (UCOM's first board President) and Mary Angelo (retired long-term director of the Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association). Please let us know if you have an interest in serving.



Donating and Volunteering *Update!*

UCOM has begun to accept small donations of non-food items again.

We are also welcoming back volunteers in a limited capacity in accordance with all safety guidelines and protocols from the State of Michigan and the Kent County Health Department.

If you are interested in volunteering or donating please call or email Shawn!



In the midst of a pandemic how do you celebrate 35 years of affecting lives for the better?

UCOM's upcoming [Neighbors4Neighbors](#) event is a celebration of lives changed because of the time and the generous support you have invested to be present as neighbors in the lives of those working against the odds to have fulfilled lives and to provide stability for their families.

September 29 7-8pm
Featuring

- MCs Catherine Behrendt from WZZM13-TV and Gabriella de la Vega of WYCE Radio
- Guest artists and musicians
- Neighbors sharing the powerful impact you've made in their lives
- An inside look at plans for the work to come in our community
- A paddle raise appeal to generate funds for the needs of thousands of neighbors in Kent County who count on UCOM

The week prior, special guests will provide 10-minute daily prequels of testimonies, artistry and opportunities to give. Other guests will provide 10-minute sequels on October 1 and 2.

Stay tuned to the UCOM Facebook Page and Website for more information including viewing links!

Early Sponsor



For sponsorship levels and benefits contact bruce.roller@UCOMgr.org

YOU CAN HELP!

1. Celebrate 35 Years of Neighbors helping Neighbors at our virtual event 9/29.
2. Donate today! Your neighbors need your help.
3. Tell a friend about UCOM.
4. Stay in touch with email updates at www.UCOMgr.org.
5. Sign up to volunteer! Contact Shawn for more information.
6. Share this newsletter with a friend!



Resources for living. Hope for life.

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