



UCOM
COMMUNICATOR

Winter 2019

**Thanks to you scores of children
will be warm this winter!**



By the end of his screening appointment, Raul had a plan, short and longer term career goals, and supportive resources to be able to begin his job search.

The following week a 'warm transfer' to the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan introduced Raul to the Interpreter Training Certification Program. That same week, Raul secured a full time job, taking care to choose a work shift that would not interfere with his training.

In November 2018, Raul received a phone call from the NFL, inviting him back to work security at Super Bowl 53 in Atlanta, GA. Not only will he be given the time off from his production job, he will 'ladder up' several salary steps at the Super Bowl due to having his Interpreter Certification.

Raul's success is the culmination of several factors: his personal motivation to improve his situation, the seamless transition between services within the ESC, and the availability of supportive services like food, bus tickets and educational opportunities that mitigate some of the barriers that might have slowed Raul's ability to secure employment and to pursue his long term goals. UCOM is proud to partner with the ESC and with other local agencies to fill in the gaps that help our neighbors reach their potential.

Where Would Raul Be Without Your Help?

Two weeks before we met him, Raul left New Jersey in debt, recently divorced and feeling hopeless. He had been successful, working as a professional photographer and providing security services for the NFL. He speaks five languages and has an effervescent personality.

But Raul was STUCK. The divorce was unexpected and had drained both his savings and his energy for work. He was depressed, broke and unfamiliar with Michigan in general and job seeking specifically. He'd never had to 'work' at getting work and he didn't know where to begin.

Raul called UCOM, one of eight Employment Services Collaborative (ESC) partner agencies in Kent County, and made an appointment to meet with our career coach.



A New Year Means More at UCOM

Your Gifts Bring New Growth

Cooking classes, community field trips, and more farm fresh veggies are just a few of the new offerings at UCOM this year

Changes are afoot at UCOM as the calendar flips into 2019.

Starting in January UCOM neighbors will have the opportunity to enroll in a Winter CSA program. Participants will receive \$20 worth of locally grown produce, for only \$4.25 in snap benefits AND they'll also receive \$4 worth of tokens that can be redeemed for more produce at the UCOM farmstand.

Beginning soon, UCOM will also be partnering with Blandford Nature Center to offer

experiences to our neighbors like a trip to the Blandford sugarbush, snowshoeing at the Nature Center, and a special visit with Blandford's animal ambassadors.

Additionally, for 12 weeks this winter UCOM will be hosting special cooking classes taught by our neighbors, for our neighbors. These classes will focus on creative, low-cost ways to make healthful and delicious food using ingredients readily available in the pantry and on the UCOM farmstand.

Thank You!

A special thank you to Pilgrim Manor and Plymouth UCC whose mitten trees provided scarves, mittens, blankets and more to UCOM's neighbors in need this winter.

Special Need:

Did you know each week UCOM picks up thousands of pounds in donations from local grocery stores?

UCOM's box truck currently allows us to make these pickups with ease, but it is on its last legs.

We are looking for a replacement vehicle but that won't come cheap. Local dealerships have provided support to other area pantries, but UCOM has had little success on that front so far.

If you know of anyone looking to donate a cargo van let us know!



YOU CAN HELP!

Save The Date!

16th Annual Friends of UCOM
Benefit Concert and Silent Auction
Sunday, March 17, 2019, 6:00 pm
Plymouth United Church of Christ

Featuring:

Dylana Jenson
Violin

Axelle Pringalle Pelfrêne
Mezzo Soprano

Philip Pletcher
Piano

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

2. Volunteer as a driver and help with pick ups and deliveries

3. Help register clients during pantry hours

4. Collect personal care products for our support pantries

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

6. Share this newsletter with a friend!



Resources for living. Hope for life.

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