

UCOM
COMMUNICATOR
Winter 2023



**You're building healthier,
more vibrant communities**



Building a Culture of Health

by: Nathan Slauer and Katie Vanderwal

Deep breathing, quiet chatter, and shared stories marked UCOM's latest in person class. Rather than the room emptying and people scattering back to their busy lives, neighbors stayed to talk one on one with the instructors after the recent healthy living class. Students from Calvin University's nursing program partnered with UCOM to focus on mental health awareness. Instructors shared information about anxiety and depression, signs, symptoms, and coping strategies. Together the class practiced this by writing personal affirmations to take with them back into the day. Quiet conversations continued as participants lingered, connecting and sharing.

This illustrates how holistic health efforts come together. Physical, emotional, and mental health are all important aspects of wellbeing. Access to food is an essential aspect of a person's well-being, but it is only



one of many components of wellness. With holistic health in mind, UCOM partnered with Calvin University's nursing program to plan the mental health class. "This class fits into UCOM's commitment to prioritizing a culture of health," said Katie Vanderwal, Pantry Manager at UCOM. "It is important that we go beyond meeting people's immediate needs and address root causes of poverty and inequality. Health plays a major role in this conversation." Healthy living classes are a piece of UCOM's broader value of cultivating a Culture of Health, in the workplace and in the community.

UCOM's Culture of Health philosophy is a lens through which we address the root causes of poverty. Healthy choices in the food pantry, fresh local foods on the farm stand, home gardening in the Growing Green Neighbors gardening project, and a variety of healthy living focused classes all play a part in cultivating and prioritizing a Culture of Health for the community at UCOM.



2023 Walk for Good Food

Save the Date
Sunday, May 7th

2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Walk kick-off at Mulick Park

Join Team UCOM and help us Walk for Good Food!

Walk with us!



Over 30% of Americans report experiencing anxiety and depression, and many are becoming more open about their mental health challenges. High-profile cases such as U.S. Senator John Fetterman checking into a facility for clinical depression show how mental health challenges can affect anyone regardless of their status or income level.

Hunger and mental health challenges are often interconnected. A 2022 CDC study found that food insecurity is associated with a 257% higher risk of anxiety and a 253% higher risk of depression.

UCOM's mental health classes are

part of an ongoing commitment to wellness. Upcoming opportunities include a follow up class on mental health, cooking demonstrations, a weekly walking club, and a series of seated exercise classes. "One of my favorite aspects of these classes is getting to see people feel more comfortable and confident taking an active role in their health and self-care." Katie says.

Additional information about UCOM's wellness initiatives can be found at ucomgr.org.



Friends of UCOM Benefit Concert

with POSH4
8 hands, 2 grands



Sowing the Seeds

Dinner: international cuisine
from UCOM neighbors

Online and in-person silent
auction with amazing
packages from local
businesses

April 16, 2023

6:00 pm - 9:00pm
Plymouth United Church of Christ
4010 Kalamazoo Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508



Buy Tickets!

Register to bid!



YOU CAN HELP!

1. Join our recurring donors in supporting UCOM each month!
2. Donate personal care items. Contact Shawn for a list of the most needed items.
3. Donate can openers for our unhoused neighbors.
4. Attend the Friends of UCOM Benefit Concert and bid on silent auction packages!
5. Volunteer! UCOM needs shoppers to purchase produce for the pantry using Meijer Simply Give cards.

UCOM

resources for living | hope for life

United Church Outreach Ministry
1311 Chicago Dr SW
Wyoming, MI 49509

Phone: 616.241.4006
Fax: 616.241.3343
www.UCOMgr.org