

Stories

The Newsletter of New City Neighbors

Pushing the Limits - Eric Schalk, Executive Director

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind. Two weeks ago we had our Fall Auction. We had an amazing night at Kuyper College eating a great meal, bidding on items, and sharing stories about the ministry. This was our second time holding an auction, and I was thrilled with how much better this year's auction went. More than half of the 140 people in attendance had never heard of New City Neighbors, and we had opportunities to cultivate some new relationships. The Fall Auction ended up being our most successful fundraiser ever, and we want to thank everyone who helped to make this night so awesome. We have not stopped giving God praise for His blessings. The auction was great, but I have to tell you, last weekend might have been better.

This past weekend we took some high school students on a retreat to Cran Hill Ranch. The retreat was made up of New City Neighbors, Algoma Baptist, and First Baptist of Grand Haven.

There were twenty-one kids in the retreat center that weekend, and we as leaders were blessed to see God build relationships with kids who had little in common except Jesus.

Together, we learned what it means to be a leader and we spent over ten hours digging into the Bible, praying, and worshipping God. The students were challenged to dig into the Bible and engage God and people in new ways. I saw so much growth in the four guys I brought along.

On Saturday afternoon, we



Fall
2011

Seeking to be a diverse, welcoming ministry that works with Northeast Grand Rapids neighbors to restore and develop their community.

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1226 Union N.E
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
616-970-4817

www.newcityneighbors.org



took everyone to Cran Hill's high ropes course. As we walked up to the telephone poles webbed with cables looming 40 feet above the ground, it was hilarious to watch eyes grow wide. There was a mixture of fear, excitement, and adrenaline; though mostly there was fear. The tension built as youth and leaders put on their harnesses and practiced transferring ropes. People began to get antsy as the first kids climbed the ropes to the top. Even the bravest kids shook as they tiptoed across wires with nothing but frayed ropes to hang on to. The fact that you are harnessed in doesn't matter at forty feet; your mind doesn't listen to that logic.

As I stood waiting in the top of the trees, I called down to one of our students who hadn't gone yet. This guy has a crazy fear of heights. It's a fear so real that he barely rode a single water slide last summer at Noah's Ark. He raced over to get a helmet, prepared his sling line, and to my amazement, headed over to the cargo net that would take him to new heights. He steadily climbed while simultaneously shaking. He never wavered. He was happy to be back on the ground a half hour later; but he also smiled because he had conquered his fear, at least for a day.

I saw him and the other three guys from NCN pushing the limits on who they are, and how they define themselves. I saw them push the limits of their faith. They were still buzzing about the weekend at our Ignite meeting on Tuesday.

At the auction I said that while the ministry of NCN happens in the context of our programs, the real ministry happens through relationships. I've known all four of those guys for at least eight years. I have had the privilege of watching them grow, and I've seen the love of Christ melt their hearts.

The rest of this newsletter is geared to help you better understand the ministries that make up New City Neighbors. As you read through the list of programs, be listening for God's voice calling you to action. Not a call to a program, but a call to engage in a relationship that will transform your life as much as God uses you to transform the life of another.

Note: If you came to the auction hoping to support New City Neighbors but weren't able to place any winning bids, you can still donate! Make your check payable to New City Neighbors, and send it to New City Neighbors' address. Please put "Auction" in the memo line, so that we can keep accurate records for the auction.

Breaktime

Breaktime is our seven-week, summer day camp that focuses on 2nd-5th grade students. Through Breaktime we seek creative ways to teach life skills, reinforce what students have learned at school, and provide them with memorable experiences. Children come to Breaktime every Monday through Thursday and not only receive the educational support they need but also nutritious meals, new friends, mentors, and opportunities to see the amazing world that God has created for them.

GEMS

Through Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior, New City Neighbors strives to teach girls important life skills, instill self esteem, and build positive relationships through crafts, games, singing, field trips, and Bible study. Girls are paired with adults who serve as friends and encouragers throughout the year. Through the love they receive, girls are learning what it means to be women of God.



Breaktime Bakery

The Breaktime Bakery is a unique employment training program that was started in the summer of 2006. For seven weeks, 6th-8th grade students are taught basic job skills that increase their chances of succeeding in the work place. Students are taught the importance of showing up on time and having good hygiene, how to maintain the supplies needed to run a business, and people skills. Furthermore, they are taught how to work hard while having fun.

At the end of the summer, most students have mastered money/goods exchange, multitasking, and quality control. We limit this program to twelve students so that we can focus on each individual and make sure that each young person succeeds.

Community Garden

The garden is a place where neighbors develop relationships, grow fresh produce for their families, and experience the joys and struggles of working together as a community. The garden is a beautiful tapestry of vegetation that illustrates the beauty of neighbors working together to accomplish something great.

Ignite

On Tuesday nights throughout the school year, high school students gather to dig into God's Word and develop a biblical worldview. Through weekly meetings, retreats, and activities, we are striving to develop true disciples of Christ. These high school students are equipped for leadership and many are involved in ministries that reach younger children.

EMS (Elementary/Middle School Ministry)

This ministry was born out of a desire to come along side at-risk students in grades 3-8. Every Thursday evening, September through May, students gather for a well-balanced meal, activities, homework, and Bible study. Our volunteers work hard to connect with students and show them unconditional love and compassion. Our goal is to help children see that they have great worth and potential and that there are people and a God who have their back.



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Get Plugged In to NCN

There are many ways you can connect to the ministries of New City Neighbors. The work we do in the Creston community takes a lot of different skills, abilities, and gifts to make it possible. Take a moment to

read through the list, and prayerfully consider how you can join us in loving children and families so that they might know Jesus.

Volunteer

- Small Group Leader (GEMS, EMS, Iignite): A weekly commitment to help lead a Bible study, and pray for a small group of children. Depending on the ministry, this may also include eating meals with kids and playing fun games.
- Craft Helper (GEMS): Help prepare a craft or activity for young girls.
- Special Friend (GEMS): Become a behind-the-scenes prayer warrior / encourager for a young girl. This volunteer opportunity is mostly from a distance but does require you to come to a few events throughout the year.
- Van Driver (EMS): Help children get to and from EMS every

Thursday by driving our fifteen-passenger van.

- Garden Team: Volunteer your gardening expertise, truck, tools, and time to help our garden succeed.

Meals

- EMS: Bring a meal on a Thursday night during the school year. You can choose to provide the ingredients, cook, serve, or all the above.
- Breaktime: Provide lunch during our summer day-camp. Same guidelines as above.

Give Financially

- As a nonprofit, we rely heavily on the donations of people like you to keep our ministries going. Prayerfully consider making a one-time or monthly donation to New City Neighbors.

