



Tour de Fresh



A good neighbor



YEP graduates

To empower people and build community in Downtown Muskegon by sharing God's love, as we walk alongside neighbors, seeking justice and a better quality of life for all through long-term, sustainable changes.

A word from Sarah:



This summer has been bursting with activity that is keeping all of us on our toes. When one thing is done, we hardly have time to relish in its completion for the next thing that's around the corner. We are blessed with lots of partners and people initiating awesome, SHALOM-seeking work and play. Preparing this newsletter feels a bit like trying to zip up an over-packed suitcase: the zipper just won't close with all the stuff that's packed inside. So, prepare for a packed mid-summer treat! Here you'll find sweet transformation stories about people---kids getting jobs and new skills; about houses and land that are being restored and reclaimed; about children whose creativity and imagination are being inspired; about neighbors linking to neighbors through yard sales and gardens. These are stories that breathe and that whisper through their black and white letters, "We are alive! We are rebuilding!" I am inspired by you all to keep seeking SHALOM in the City! *Sarah*

Sacred Seeds Some Blessings

I got a random call from a former client of Sacred Suds the other day. There are so many lives that are touched at Sacred, daily; Some over a period of years, and some for just a few hours. This is a story of a guy who came and went...and in between got changed. . His story in a nutshell: In early summer, he had come to Muskegon from down south. He had the promise of a summer long of summer festival jobs. But when he came, he realized he had come too early. "I was kind of stranded with little money and no work. I rented a space to sleep but it didn't have water, so I came to Sacred to shave and clean-up, all the while desperately looking for work. I was able to get a few interviews and ended up getting a job that is going to keep me in Muskegon!" The phone crackled as he spoke and I wondered if he was calling from a payphone. "Anyway," he added, "I called just because i wanted to say thanks. Had I not been able to clean up, I would never have been able to get an interview. So, thanks. And also, I'd like to make a donation. Where do I send it?" How cool is that....?! Blessings seeding blessings. And here's another: Mercy Health Partners recent grant support towards the operations of Sacred Suds for 2011-2012. Thanks MHP!!



the enPULSE

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enStory

Christmas in July!!

Christmas is all about Good News ... plus, opening boxes, unwrapping the contents, pluggin in and powering up ... it feels just like Christmas at Community enCompass! There's also new paint, new carpet, a new face, and a new program! The latest buzz at Community enCompass is about the Muskegon Learning Lab. In partnership with MSU, this new program puts a technology learning lab in the heart of the city with 16 computers, software, and internet access available to provide individuals with broadband internet access, job readiness training, and resources to overcome educational barriers to success.

The first boxes have arrived. Computers and classroom furniture deliveries will continue into August as the Lab gears up to be fully functional in mid-August.

In the meantime, the newly hired Outreach Specialist/Instructor, Delores Bray (just call her "De"), has been on the job making contacts with local agencies and educational programs. Mutual relationships with others will help this program not only serve the present needs of the participants, but will provide the necessary connections to

empower participants to utilize local resources to make long-term improvements in their quality of life. Some of those local connections include: Read Muskegon, ESL Muskegon, VITA, Asset Building Coalition, Goodwill, Muskegon Community College, DHS, United Way, Muskegon County Case Managers, Michigan Works!, Orchard View Community Ed, and Church Community News.

The Muskegon Learning Lab is receiving an enthusiastic reception throughout the community, largely because it will not be competing with other programs for funding. Grant funding allows the Muskegon Learning Lab to support individuals who are receiving service elsewhere but still struggle, lack confidence, or require transportation or scheduling options that are more convenient. Spread the good news!



YEP Sees Graduate!

"Josh almost quit the first day I had him," recalls B. Anthony, YEP Coordinator. "He was working on my lawn crew and one of the other YEPs started giving him a hard time saying, 'You telling me you can't even cut grass?' Josh started to walk away saying, 'I'm fittin' to go home. This is crazy.'" He started out rough, but Josh became the hardest worker that B has ever seen in the program. "He's the only one that was chasing down job applications while he was working for us. He just knew that YEP was just a stepping stone." Josh had some real challenges that could have stopped him, too. "He was basically homeless while he was working with us. Got kicked

out of his mom's house, and basically was couch-surfing for a while. It was rough." Josh had to go through two interviews to get hired in a Eagle Alloy. Just this week he called B to "check up on him and the YEPs. When B asked how the job was he answered, "I'm not messing with you, it's hard work. I'm not much of a church guy, you know. Actually the first time I ever stepped foot in a church was for our YEP classes at New Life. But everyday before I enter that building, I stop and pray that God will give me the strength to make it through day." He knows that he's not just judged by his peers but by his production. And he's proud to say, "Since I started, no one has put out more quality parts than I have." This is a guy who's learned the

ethic of work and pride in his work. We are proud of you, Josh! Keep reaching, man! You can do it!

Also, we are so grateful to the Community Foundation for Muskegon County for their grant towards our Youth Employment Program. Their grant will allow us to hire 15 additional youth this year, for a total of 45 neighborhood youth employed and trained!





McGrows first annual “Tour de Fresh”

A WOW! event for the neighborhood and the community! Over 150 gathered at McLaughlin Grows Urban Farm to celebrate Muskegon’s first Hoop House Urban Farm. YEPs (Youth Employment Program participants) led tours of the farm and explained with amazing precision how we grow food year-round (even in the harshest winter!) with the Hoop House. Delicious hors d’oeuvres were prepared by two students from Baker’s Culinary Institute of Michigan, featuring the fresh produce that is grown right at the Farm:

- Fresh tomato Bruschetta*
- Zucchini muffins smothered with cream cheese frosting*
- Strawberry Tarts*
- Smoked Salmon on Cukes*
- Ricotta Stuffed Cherry Tomato*

Makes your mouth water just thinking about it, doesn’t it? Tour de Fresh closed with some words from Chris McGuigan, Dustin Anderson (Farm Manager) and Dennis Childers, one of our best farm volunteers. He shared how he sees the impact of the farm: “I am a Human Services Major at Baker College and when I was first assigned my internship at McGrows, I wondered what farming had to do with human services. But I didn’t know then that 90% of Muskegon County residents don’t consumer enough fruits and vegetables. I didn’t know then that 66% of Muskegon residents are obese or overweight. I didn’t know then that in over 1/4 of residents receive food stamp benefits, and that there is a possibility of linking locally grown food with these dollars in order to keep more dollars in our neighborhoods. Now I know, and now I see what farming has to do with human services!”



We are grateful for the recent grants from Mercy Health Partners and Gerber Foundation towards the efforts of McGrows. The Farm is beautiful these days and exploding with color. Stop by and visit us at 328 Iona. Fresh-picked veggies are available for sale on Friday between 1 and 4 PM!

Old Homes get more than a touch of New!

Old houses are part of the beautiful story of our neighborhood. Houses that have been standing for well over a hundred years, built during the lumber baron years with ornate trim, wood siding and oak floors. When a house is that old I think it starts living. Houses in our neighborhood whisper their stories in the creaks and groans of their floorboards and in the whistling wind through their drafty windows. Everything is romantic about these old homes. Nothing is practical.

Many of the families living in these old homes have a hard time keeping up with them. Whether it’s the huge winter gas bills, or the roof leak, or the old octopus furnace that finally exhaled its last breathe of hot air, it’s expensive to maintain these homes, and many of our neighbors just don’t have the funds to keep up.

Which is why our Home Owner Assistance Program is so cool! Through this program, home owners can get financial assistance for much-needed repairs.

Kimi Zimmerman, our Rehab Specialist states: “We just completed a rehab that helped a home owner with new windows, siding, a roof, and his front steps. Totally changed the curb appeal of this house. He’s proud of his house again, and so are we!” With a program like this, Community enCompass reaches out to individual families in the neighborhood while at the same time beautifying the neighborhood as a whole! If you have any questions about the program, contact Kimi Zimmerman at 231.728.3117.





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To empower people and build community in Downtown Muskegon by sharing God's love, as we walk alongside neighbors, seeking justice and a better quality of life for all through long-term, sustainable changes.

How Can You Help?

My donation will allow Community enCompass to continue working in the McLaughlin neighborhood to seek positive and lasting change.

Therefore (please check):

- I have enclosed my donation of \$____
- I pledge to give \$____ monthly
- I request to be informed of ongoing work by Community enCompass

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, St, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Please send to
Community enCompass
289 E. Larch
Muskegon, MI 49442

Bethany Housing Resident Models "Good Neighbor"

Theresa Higdon is an everyday hero who understands the value of neighbors working together to achieve great things, even while she strives to move forward with her life. Theresa became a member of the McLaughlin community when she entered our Bethany Transitional Housing Program after a number of homeless episodes. She progressed to the point of becoming part of our Home Ownership Program and is currently leasing with the option to purchase her home while she continues to work on repairing her credit.

With all she's personally accomplished, Theresa also hasn't forgotten about being a good neighbor. Currently, she volunteers on the Bethany Housing Program Committee and at the Community Garden of Hope. In addition she is demonstrating how to be a "good neighbor" to the children on her block.

Recently, Theresa worked with a group of kids to help them coordinate a 3-day yard sale. With her support, the children were able to discuss how to set up the sale, consider how they would split the proceeds of the sale, and engage the customers. Theresa says, "I was amazed at how resource-

ful they were. These kids excitedly dragged old computers, lamps, an ancient exercise bike, and bags of clothes—all transported on their bikes!"

In between customers, they happily munched on the sandwiches, pizza, and drinks provided by Theresa, and also made crafts with glitter, markers, paints, and paper to take home to their parents.. Although they only made \$12 on their sale, they were excited to see what they accomplished as they worked together on this project. What they may not have realized is that Theresa was teaching them, by example, the power of caring. And, what an awesome neighbor she is! Theresa definitely adds to the social fabric of our neighborhood, as she gives herself to others to develop community and seek the well-being of those around her.

