



Matthew 25
201 3rd Ave SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

Empowering People to
Transform Neighborhoods

Generating Hope

Following the Aug. 10 derecho that swept across the Midwest, more than 500,000 people were left without power in Iowa alone. In the days after the storm, Matthew 25 mobilized volunteers to do door-to-door wellness checks to assess the needs of people in the community. It became quickly apparent that there were many with medical needs dependent upon power, such as home dialysis, nebulizers, CPAP machines, or refrigeration for insulin.



Preparing the generators for distribution

Our executive director, Clint, immediately began conversations with community partners and was able to secure 30 generators with the help of McGrath Powersports here in Cedar Rapids. We then developed a generator lending program where individuals and families could receive a generator to power their necessary equipment until their electricity was restored, and then the generator was returned so it could be given to another family in need. Medical

needs were prioritized but we were also able to help families that needed power to have running water and other basic quality of life needs.

After this program gained some attention, Rep. Abby Finkenauer assisted in procuring

a donation of 10 generators from World Central Kitchen to add to our inventory, and then MidAmerican Energy loaned us 15 more. We received cash donations from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation and HACAP, as well as a Lowes store credit from United Cajun Navy, that we were able to use to purchase more generators,

gas cans, extension cords and other necessary materials.

One of the amazing things about this program was that many of the people who requested a generator were doing so on behalf of someone else, not themselves. There was a mother who



One of the happy families who received a generator

called for her daughter who had just gotten home from the hospital after giving birth to triplets. The employer of a man called about getting a generator for her employee's grandmother because she was bedridden in hospice.

Over all, we had a total of 68 generators and were able to help more than 100

families through this program with the help of our staff and volunteers. Thank you to all who were able to donate their time or money to provide temporary power to families in need after the devastating derecho.



Volunteers loading up for delivery

Stay up to date by following us on social media!



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Experiencing Amazing Grace



Autumn 2020

By Clint Twedt-Ball, Executive Director

There is an old Yiddish saying, "Humans plan and God laughs." 2020 has proven for all of us how true this is. Coming into the year, Matthew 25 had big plans. Our Healthy Time Check initiative was moving into full swing. Transform would continue to grow. Groundswell Cafe would continue to serve more food. As an organization that has community building at our core, almost every plan had people interacting at its center.



A volunteer helps with derecho repairs

First a one-hundred year pandemic and then a once in a lifetime derecho shifted our plans. Consider Groundswell Cafe. In January through the beginning of March, our numbers were way up from where they had been. We closed for a month when Covid arrived, but opened and were slowly figuring out how to adapt to this new world.

August 10th was a busy day. Our fifteen high school employees, who work on food issues at the urban farm, were in the cafe's kitchen making pesto to sell at our market. As the wind and rain intensified, their leaders took them



Damage to our roof

into the Matthew 25 basement. I stayed upstairs to check on how things were holding up. Suddenly, there was a crash on our roof. Water started cascading onto the stage in Groundswell.

Before long, water was leaking throughout the building. We began to smell gas. The high schoolers and their leaders huddled in the basement, thankfully oblivious, as we wondered whether the whole building might explode. We were worried, but knew we couldn't risk taking people out of the building. Fortunately, we made it through the storm with no one being hurt.



Groundswell Cafe following the derecho

But our plans for 2020, many of those went the way of the roof, damaged beyond repair. And then this amazing thing happened. People found there was some relief from Covid in coming together to help their neighbors. We handed out generators and food and anything else we could gather. Mike Rowe, of Dirty Jobs fame, posted a glowing recommendation about Matthew 25 on his Facebook page. People from around the country saw it and sent funding to help our neighbors in Cedar Rapids.

In a world in incredible pain, we once again found hope. Now, I wouldn't wish disasters on anyone. If I never go through another one, I'll be ok with that. While we should be prepared for them, I'd rather not plan to have them happen every few years. But, what I will say, is that it is sometimes when our plans get disrupted that we remember what is most important. Caring for our fellow humans and all of creation binds us together and brings us a sense of relief.



Neighbors thrilled to receive a generator to use while they wait for power to return

We're back to making plans at Matthew 25. And I think you'll be hearing about some pretty incredible things we're doing in the coming weeks and months. What we won't stop doing is looking for God in the interruptions. We won't stop being interrupted so we can be with the most vulnerable and overlooked in society. Because it is when we see them and allow ourselves to be interrupted, that we experience amazing grace.



Volunteers replacing a garage roof

Our New Produce Rescue

One of the goals of Matthew 25 is to make fresh, healthy food accessible to all. Much of the area where we work on the west side of Cedar Rapids is considered a “food desert,” meaning that there are very few - if any - options for good-quality, affordable food. As a way to provide fresh produce to these neighborhoods, Matthew 25 started the Cultivate Hope Produce Rescue with the help of Green Iowa AmeriCorps member Bridget Williams.



The produce rescue, located at 604 Ellis Blvd NW, is open three days a week and is stocked with donations of produce from local gardeners, Hawkeye Area

Community Action Program (HACAP), and our own Cultivate Hope Urban Farm. Here individuals and families are able to essentially “shop” for the produce that best fits their lifestyle and that they are able to cook meals with, at no cost to them. By running our pantry this way, people are empowered

to pick out items they are already familiar with and can cook with in their home, while having the option to occasionally try something new. This also cuts down on food waste when families are given a prepackaged box of items that may contain things they can't or won't use.



Since the Aug. 10 derecho, we have partnered with Advocates for Social Justice to stock the produce rescue with a variety of nonperishable food items as well as cleaning supplies and sanitary items to further help those struggling in the aftermath of the devastating storm. In July, the pantry was able to help 41 families, growing to 94 families in August after the storm and 98 families in September.



TRANSFORM

Presented by Ingredion



Our 5th Annual Transform looked a bit different this year. First, due to the pandemic, we decided to push back the regular June event and split it into two weeks: Aug. 31 - Sept. 4 and Oct. 13 - 17. This allowed us more time to plan how to safely complete projects for volunteers, homeowners and staff, and reduced the number of volunteers gathering at one time.

Then when the derecho hit shortly before the first week of Transform projects, we quickly adjusted our plan so that we could add some derecho recovery projects and broaden the geographic area where we usually focus.

This program is a very important part of the work we do here at Matthew 25, as we believe having a safe, healthy home is one of the most basic human needs, so we worked hard and got creative to ensure Transform was still able to happen.





MATTHEW 25 TOOL LIBRARY

Do you have some projects around your home that need to be finished before winter? Maybe there are a few derecho-related damages that you can take care of yourself with the help of some additional tools. Stop by our Tool Library to see if we have the right tool for you!

The Tool Library is located behind the Matthew 25 office at 201 3rd Ave SW. People of all income levels are welcome!

Learn more or browse our online inventory at: hub25.org/tool-library

Tuesdays and Thursdays
2:00 - 6:00pm

Saturdays
9:00am - 12:00pm

Wrapping up the 2020 Cultivate Hope Season

Due to the pandemic, this year's Cultivate Hope season looked a bit different than normal, but with a team of creative people, it was still able to be a very successful year.

The Cultivate Hope Youth Development Program added a new dimension this year by choosing three students to be part of a “Root Crew,” who worked with Cultivate Hope from mid-March through the end of October. These students received a more immersive experience of the entire growing season and did more leadership-focused activities and lessons.



Starting at the end of June, 12 more students joined the team, forming the “Seed Crew.” These students worked during the peak growing and harvesting season and worked with the Root Crew to learn about social justice issues, food insecurity, as well as the in's and out's of where food actually comes from.



healthy snacks using organically-grown veggies from the urban farm.

Our Cultivate Hope Market opened on May 14, and started out with only online ordering in lieu of an in-person market due to the pandemic. By July 15, we started doing both online orders and in-person orders on Thursday nights, and continued this way throughout the rest of the season. We continued with our Farm Fresh Friends program to allow for low-income families and individuals to receive produce at half-price, and had 29 families participate this year. Students from the youth development program created a variety of value-added products, such as salsa, jam and pesto, to sell at the market. We also had two

market sponsors, Mercy Medical Center and Raining Rose, with partnerships that also helped further our mission.

Thank you to all who have supported Cultivate Hope in various ways throughout the 2020 growing season! We're already starting to plan another bountiful, educational season for next year.



Although we cancelled our Food Detectives and Food Creators summer camps due to Covid-19 concerns, we were able to safely host K-2nd grade students for our Food Explorer camp. During this day camp, students learned about food through nature exploration, outdoor crafts and scavenger hunts. They explored how food is grown in a hands-on manner and made