

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Bright Changes Ahead

I accepted the position of CEO for CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank almost one year ago. In that year, much has changed. We committed to keeping the food bank at Pepperwood Plaza to provide a better shopping experience for clients, and space to meet increased community needs. We hired our first mental health liaison in partnership with the Iowa City Police Department to divert those in crisis from hospitalization and jail. We secured a national contract to provide chat and text crisis support through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Our Crisis Triage Counselors began serving as the main access point for the GuideLink Center, open 24/7 to serve those experiencing mental health or substance use crises.

We have another year of dramatic and positive change ahead of us. The implementation of 988 in July is going to provide individuals in crisis unprecedented access to mental health support locally and throughout our country. Our location at 1121 S. Gilbert Court is undergoing a remodel to accommodate our expanding Mobile Crisis Outreach program, crisis helpline services, and to create a family-friendly waiting area for our clients. We have a newly hired Director that will focus on ensuring client-centered programming throughout our Food

Bank and Basic Needs programs to address food insecurity and economic crisis.

Through over 50 years of service to our community, we recognize that change is the only constant. Nonetheless, change requires bravery from our staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners - the courage to let go of our comfort zone in exchange for the potential that lies ahead. Though our organization is ever-evolving, our roots will always be grounded in supporting our neighbors in crisis.

Without your generous support we would be unable to expand our services while holding fast to our values. All of us at CommUnity are excited for the year of change ahead, and we cannot wait to share our progress with you. We could not carry out the work of our mission without your steadfast support to make our community the best it can be.



Sarah Nelson
Chief Executive Officer

Meeting Clients Where They Are

In the past year, CommUnity has added three amazing mental health professionals to our team in three new roles intended to grow the reach and accessibility of mental health services in our community.

We are so excited to be able to better serve our clients by meeting them where they are.



Mental Health/Law Enforcement Liaison

Last summer, we welcomed Joachim “Joah” Seelos as the new Mental Health/Law Enforcement Liaison to work

with the Iowa City Police Department. Joah assists law enforcement officers on mental health calls and offers formal and informal cross-training between law enforcement and behavioral health disciplines, alternative response and intervention for those experiencing a mental health crisis, and an increase in follow up and resource connection for individuals and families.

“I feel honored to be in this position as the Mental Health/Law Enforcement Liaison and bring a deeper sense of empathy to the Iowa City community,” said Joah.



Providing inclusive resources also means that we need to meet people where they're at.

- Amel Ali, DEI Outreach Specialist



Youth Mobile Crisis Counselor

After working with CommUnity for the past four years, Parth Patel has been promoted to a new Mobile Crisis position which works directly with youth in Johnson and Iowa Counties. Patel has extensive training in youth crisis de-escalation, ACES Training, ASIST, CIT and Trauma Informed Yoga.

“Crisis work is meaningful for me because it allows me to sit with an individual experiencing intense emotions, allow them to openly express these painful feelings, and then collaborate to identify alternative coping strategies and resources that can promote safety and improved functioning,” said Parth. “No one should have to go through a challenging time on their own, and I’m grateful to be in a role that allows me to provide culturally competent crisis support to any youth in Iowa City regardless of socioeconomic status.”



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Outreach Specialist

We recently welcomed Amel Ali to the newly created position of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Outreach Specialist. Amel will champion the importance and value of a diverse and inclusive Mobile Crisis Outreach program, one that is aware of the specific needs of all members within our community. She will lead grassroots outreach efforts that build relationships and create personal connections with the goals of reducing stigma and increasing access to crisis services for all.

“I am so excited to be a part of such a welcoming and multifaceted nonprofit,” said Amel. “This role is really vital, especially because culturally responsive crisis resources are needed in a community like Iowa City.”

Thank you to
the sponsors of
the 6th Annual
Hunger Banquet

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Thanks to our generous sponsors,
every dollar donated to the 6th
Annual Hunger Banquet will enable
the Food Bank to purchase 5
pounds of food. Each year, this event
raises enough funding to stock the
shelves for nearly 6 months.



Hunger Banquet

04 . 21 . 2022

Coralville Hyatt Regency
Social Hour Begins at 5 p.m.
Program Begins at 6:30 p.m.

Register by 04.15.2022 at
BuiltByCommUnity.org/HungerBanquet2022

After two years of virtual events, the Hunger Banquet is returning in person this year! We hope you'll consider joining us on April 21st at the Coralville Hyatt Regency for this interactive and educational event.

The Hunger Banquet is an immersive social experience in which members of the Johnson County community gather to learn the latest on the state of food insecurity in our area. The evening will include updates from CommUnity's CEO, Sarah Nelson; a look at changes to Iowa SNAP benefits from Natalie Veldhouse, Chair of the Iowa Hunger Coalition; and opportunities to engage with fellow supporters to rethink how we can best help disrupt the cycle of crisis.

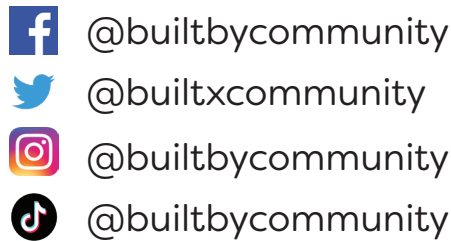
Guests will be assigned to represent real Johnson County income demographics which will determine the meal they receive. 13% of attendees will represent 19,600 of our neighbors in Johnson County experiencing food insecurity, and will not receive a meal.



1121 S. Gilbert Court
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Crisis Line: 1-855-325-4296
Mobile Crisis: 1-855-581-8111
Food Bank: 319-351-0128
Business Line: 319-351-2726

builtbycommunity.org



Upcoming Events

APRIL

CommUnity Baby Shower
Month-long baby product drive.

Hunger Banquet
April 21 - The Hunger Banquet is designed to immerse participants in the reality of food insecurity.

MAY

End the Cycle - Period Poverty Drive
Month-long menstrual hygiene product drive.



**DONATE BABY ITEMS THROUGH THE
MONTH OF APRIL
[BUILTBYCOMMUNITY.ORG/SHOWER](https://builtbycommunity.org/shower)**