



WINTER NEWSLETTER

What the Heck is a Hygge?

You may have already heard that CommUnity recently purchased property outside of Iowa City. Healing Prairie Farm is the future site of our youth crisis stabilization services. CommUnity Crisis Services and United Action for Youth (UAY) are collaborating on this much-needed community service to provide youth in crisis a therapeutic place to stay for up to 21 days. During their stay, kids will be able to engage in counseling, therapeutic recreation, and peer support groups.

Farmhouse renovations are moving quickly, and we are excited to share that Healing Prairie Farm will start accepting youth in crisis beginning in early 2024. Once the farm is open for operation, it will be closed to the public for confidentiality and safety reasons.

There will, however, be one chance for community members to see the farm, pet the animals, and learn about this program.

You're invited to attend the Healing Prairie Farm Hygge Open House on January 14 from 2 - 5 p.m. This event is your chance to connect with program staff, tour the renovated homes on the farm, meet the animals, and enjoy a one-of-a-kind hygge-style event.

What's hygge? Hygge, pronounced hoo-gah, is a Danish term for something that feels cozy, warm, and caring.

Healing Prairie Farm staff from CommUnity and UAY will be stationed around the farm to chat about youth crisis stabilization programs and answer questions about the farm. You can enjoy warm soup from local restaurants, hot cider, hot cocoa, and bonfires (weather permitting). We will also have a variety of crafts set up so you can welcome youth in crisis and ensure each kid feels comfortable and cared for when they arrive at Healing Prairie Farm.

We hope to see you on Sunday, January 14 for self-guided tours, warm soup, bonfires, community crafts, and all around cozy vibes. This will be your one and only chance to see the farm before we welcome kids in crisis. So, bring your friends and family. All are welcome!



RSVP so we can ensure there is enough food to go around! Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/hygge-rsvp.

Sensory Kits Helping Kids in Crisis

This past summer, our Mobile Crisis Response program was honored to receive a Corporate Giving Grant from ACT, Inc. to create sensory kits for youth calls. The kits include fidget toys, coloring pages, and sensory balls. Mobile crisis counselors assembled the kits this past June, and they have been a big hit ever since!

These kits provide kids something to keep their hands busy so they feel more comfortable opening up to the counselor and receiving help. Fidgeting is a form of self-regulation and the repetitive movements help kids relieve stress. Our counselors have noticed that when kids are provided sensory kits, they gradually release stress and are more willing to open up.

One of our many amazing mobile crisis counselors, Ryan Laudick, recently shared a story about these kits helping on a call. Here's Ryan's story...

"Mobile crisis responders were dispatched to the family of a young girl who recently lost three family pets in a horrible accident. Adding to the loss and trauma, this happened on the young girl's birthday. The mother, raising her son and daughter alone, recognized her daughter needed help.

Mobile crisis counselors arrived to offer compassion and listen, but the young girl could hardly speak to us through her sobbing. Once we brought the toy bag out, it was like watching clouds part. She delighted at seeing

the stuffed sheep in the bag and was excited to tell us the art book we'd brought matched up with projects she was working on in school. Slowly but surely, she opened up and started talking with us. We sang happy birthday, we talked about the pets she lost and the pets she's interested in raising next. By the time we left, she was smiling, joking, and lightly teasing her brother again. Against all odds her emotional state improved.

There is no single magic way to help a child process grief and loss. But these sensory kits, coupled with the presence of our trained mobile crisis team, are a crucially important way to begin that work."



Mobile crisis staff assemble calming kits to hand out on crisis calls

Let's Stay in Touch!

Stay in the loop and get even more stories from your friends at CommUnity Crisis Services by subscribing to our eNews! We love to keep our supporters updated on all the happenings here at CommUnity, and we will never sell your information. Pinky swear.

Head to builtbycommunity.org/about/annual-reports-newsletters to get on our list!



Food bank volunteers pose next to the produce selections during Project Holiday 2022

Project Holiday

Thank you for a successful Project Holiday 2023!

Together, we provided over 1,000 households in our area the groceries necessary to prepare a homecooked holiday meal.

Each year, Project Holiday volunteers and donors make this special holiday food distribution possible. We could not do it without your support.

Providing Culturally-Familiar Foods

What are your go-to items in your pantry? Canned tomatoes, peanut butter, or maybe a selection of pasta? Regardless of your particular set of pantry staples, your answer was likely informed by the meals you ate growing up and your family's culture. For many of our Johnson County neighbors, including many Mexican, Honduran, Sudanese, Somalian, and Congolese visitors to the food pantry, those food staples may include dry rice and beans, masa (corn flour), guajillo (dried chilies), and more!

That's why a \$14,000 Social Equity and Racial Justice grant from the City of Iowa City earlier this year has been so transformative! The grant has allowed the food bank to supply culturally-familiar foods for client households while also supporting two minority-owned businesses in the Iowa City community - Modina African Market and Acapulco Mexican Bakery.

Beyond meeting the immediate needs of community members facing food insecurity with foods that are consistent with their cultural identity, the grant has opened up additional partnership opportunities to strengthen the cultural responsiveness of food bank services and welcome diverse community groups into meeting the need. For example - thanks to the guidance of Alex at Acapulco Mexican Bakery, CommUnity

purchased and distributed ingredients for posole, a Mexican winter stew, alongside Project Holiday this year!





In order to ensure that the grant funds are directed toward as much food as possible, CommUnity is placing monthly orders of bulk items like 50 pound bags of rice and beans. Before stocking onto food bank shelves, volunteer groups (like the team pictured below) help divide the food into smaller quantities.

Contact lucas.welch@builtbycommunity.org if your group would like to help with an upcoming re-packing volunteer project!



Volunteers from Hawkeye Sports Marketing repackage culturally diverse foods for the Food Bank



-  @builtbycommunity
-  @builtxcommunity
-  @builtbycommunity
-  @builtbycommunity

1121 Gilbert Court
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Crisis Line: 988
Mobile Crisis: 1-855-581-8111
Food Bank: 319-351-0128
Business Line: 319-351-2726

builtbycommunity.org




HEALING PRAIRIE farm

HYGGE OPEN HOUSE
SUNDAY, JAN 14
2 - 5 PM

SELF-GUIDED TOURS, WARM SOUP, BONFIRES,
COMMUNITY CRAFTS, AND ALL AROUND COZY VIBES
5048 US-6, IOWA CITY



Spread the Love

The Food Bank is getting nutty this February!