



SUMMER NEWSLETTER

It Takes a Village to Feed Children

When I first stepped into this role in 2020, we were preparing to move from a small space in the back of our administrative office to an 11,000 square foot location in southern Iowa City. I remember pushing bags of groceries to clients through the window to maintain social distancing while ensuring our neighbors were fed.

While we're no longer handing bags of food out through the windows, the reality is, food needs in our community have only increased. Inflation has had a huge impact on us, stretching our resources to their limits. Each year since 2020 we have seen a record number of individuals and families seeking assistance from our pantry. Demand is through the roof, and the need for our services only continues to grow.

As the need for food assistance in our community continues to increase, our need for volunteers increases, as well. Without the invaluable contributions of our food bank volunteers, we would not be able to operate at the level we currently do. However, we need more help to ensure local kids have access to food this summer break.

Every day, our volunteers dedicate their time and energy to ensuring that no one in our community goes hungry, but we need more helping hands to keep up with the summer rush.

They say it takes a village, and let me tell you, our village is pretty darn awesome. Each and every one of our volunteers brings something special to the table. I feel lucky to know each and every one of them.

If you have ever volunteered at CommUnity Food Bank, thank you! Our entire team is so grateful for your support. Time is precious, and we appreciate you spending your time making a difference in our neighbors' lives.

If you haven't volunteered with us before, we would love to meet you! On average, just one fully-staffed volunteer shift provides about 65 local families with groceries for the week. Whether it's sorting food donations, packing meal boxes, or assisting clients with warmth and empathy, your contributions make a tangible difference in the lives of local families.

With sincere gratitude,
Lucas Welch



Luke Welch, Food Bank Coordinator

Learn more at builtbycommunity.org/volunteer

The Barn Doors are Open

The barn doors officially opened at Healing Prairie Farm on March 4, and we are happy to announce the farm is now fully operational! CommUnity and United Action for Youth (UAY) are so proud of our community, our teams, and everyone who supported this project for making this dream a reality.

Healing Prairie Farm is a collaboration between CommUnity and UAY which provides youth in crisis a therapeutic place to receive care. The farm is home to two youth crisis programs, Youth Crisis Stabilization and Youth Shelter. Youth Crisis Stabilization on Healing Prairie Farm provides short-term stabilization for youth experiencing a mental health crisis to provide immediate intervention and stabilization for youth in crisis. Youth Shelter provides care for up to 21 days for youth who are unhoused, have run away from home, were kicked out of the home, or are couch surfing. The goal of Youth Shelter is family reunification and/or successful transition to a safe and stable housing situation.

This innovative approach provides developmentally appropriate care and a more healing environment than traditional alternatives. The “care farm” model allows clients to process emotions while working with animals in a nature-centered environment.

Farmhouse renovations and program costs were made possible by funding from the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, Mental Health/Disability Services of the East Central Region, grants, and individual contributions. The nature of a farm, of course, requires ongoing work and support. It will require grassroots community support to cover the cost of care for animals or other programming uniquely offered to youth on a farm.

We are so grateful that our community not only sees the need for this program, but supports our efforts to provide kids in crisis a safe place to stabilize and receive help. In fact, we were honored to receive a

couple awards already this spring. Johnson County United Nations Association honored Healing Prairie Farm at their Night of 1,000 Dinners event in March for advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In May, CommUnity and United Action for Youth (UAY) received the United Way Game Changer Award for this collaborative program.

To everyone who has spent the time learning about this program, donated to fill our stables with animals, ordered something cozy from our Amazon wish list, spread the word about the program, attended the Hygge Open House in January, advocated for youth in our community, and sent good thoughts and kind words our way over the past year, *thank you*.



Attendees of the Hygge Open House in January making friendship bracelets for youth staying at Healing Prairie Farm.

To request a placement assessment, please call Your Life Iowa at 855-581-8111 and ask for mobile crisis to “assess for placement at Healing Prairie Farm in Johnson County.”



Food bank shelves stocked with pantry staples. The pantry is currently serving upwards of 1,300 families per week.

Strike Out Child Hunger



Nearly 10,000 of our neighbors in Johnson County receive food assistance from CommUnity Food Bank each month. It’s common for demand to rise over summer break because local kids lose access to reliable meals at school. This summer, however, we expect to see a more dramatic increase in demand due to recent changes to Iowa summer meal programs.

In December, the state of Iowa opted out of the federal summer meal program for low-income children. This program provided children who are already eligible for free or reduced-price school meals with a \$40 per month EBT card to purchase food when school is not in session. Without access to these federal dollars, many families are left to rely on local food pantries like us.

“Iowans are struggling to provide for their families and our state declined federal funding for children’s meals,” says Julia Winter, CommUnity’s Director of Development. “It’s up to us as a community to support our neighbors so they can meet their basic needs.”

Strike Out Hunger, presented by Hills Bank, is a summer food drive that aims to bridge the gap between hungry kids and access to nutritious food while school is not in session.

“Hills Bank was founded on the principle that banks should care about the communities they serve and help provide ways to help them prosper and we are honored to again partner with CommUnity on their Strike Out Hunger campaign,” said Amanda Arn, First VP of Community & Shareholder Relations at Hills Bank. “The Strike Out Hunger partnership allows us to raise awareness while helping to end hunger in Johnson County. We would be grateful if you joined us in supporting Community’s critical work in our communities.”

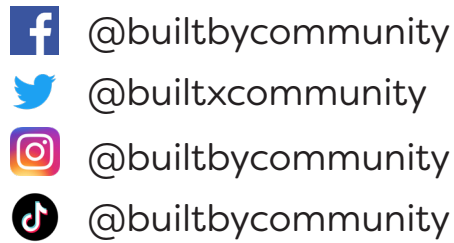
More than 7,000 students qualify for free and reduced lunch across Johnson County. Your support of Strike Out Hunger will provide a stable source of food for them and their families.

Learn how you can help at builtbycommunity.org/strikeouthunger

Thank you to our generous sponsors!



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

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