

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Brighter Pastures for All

In the Financial Support office, we see firsthand how a single act of generosity can transform a life. Every day, individuals and families in our community reach out in moments of crisis—whether they are struggling to afford utility bills, facing eviction, or experiencing homelessness. Because of your support, we can provide the essential services they need to regain stability and hope.

Everyday, I see our programs working together to brighten the future of our community. Your donation to CommUnity stays local, making an immediate difference for those in need. It helps stock our food bank with fresh produce, proteins, and pantry staples, ensuring that families don't have to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table. It allows our trained crisis counselors to be available 24/7, providing comfort and guidance to those experiencing suicidal thoughts, anxiety, or overwhelming stress. And in my program, it offers emergency financial assistance to prevent evictions and keep the lights on for those facing unexpected hardships.

These services change lives every day.

Recently, a client came to us in a moment of desperation, facing an uncertain future. He had undergone surgery and was living in a sober living home, striving to rebuild

his life. However, because his recovery had kept him from working, he could no longer afford the program. With nowhere else to turn, he was just days away from losing his home and being forced onto the streets.

With your support, we were able to secure stable housing for him, giving him not only a place to heal but also a renewed sense of hope. Now, he is recovering in a home of his own, looking forward to the simple joys that once felt out of reach—hosting his children and grandchildren, sharing laughter around the dinner table, and enjoying the comfort of a home-cooked meal. These moments of relief, stability, and hope are only possible because of you.

Your donation isn't just a number—it's a lifeline. It means hope, relief, and dignity for those who need it most. Thank you for standing with us in our mission to support our community. If you'd like to learn more about the impact of your support, visit builtbycommunity.org/annual-reports-newsletters.

In community,



Elliott Tucker, Financial Support Coordinator

A Year on the Farm

One year ago, Healing Prairie Farm opened its doors to youth in crisis, offering a unique and transformative alternative to traditional hospitalization and shelter placements. A collaboration between CommUnity Crisis Services and United Action for Youth, Iowa's first-ever care farm just outside of Iowa City has already made a significant impact, providing age-appropriate support for young people facing mental health crises, homelessness, and other serious challenges. As the program marks its first anniversary, Program Manager Heather Bopp reflects on the journey, the milestones, and what lies ahead.

With nearly three decades of experience serving youth in various roles, Bopp was drawn to Healing Prairie Farm because of its innovative approach. "When I heard about



Kayla the llama

Healing Prairie Farm, I was so intrigued by the concept of the use of the care farm model and an alternative to a hospitalization or typical shelter placement for youth experiencing a mental health crisis. This alternative spoke to my personal approaches of hope/strengths/relationships focused work with youth," she says. Over the past year, the farm has lived up to that promise, offering a peaceful refuge where youth can heal, learn, and grow.

In its first year, Healing Prairie Farm has expanded significantly. "The Farm has grown not only in terms of opening the doors of two new programs, but also with building our team of dedicated, skilled staff members,"

Bopp shares. The completion of a new riding arena, funded by the Tony Brandt Memorial Foundation, was a major milestone. "This arena was designed by the same folks who designed the arena for Miracles in Motion. The mounting block was made with some of the original KinderFarm fencing," she explains. Additionally, a new horse barn is nearing completion, providing space for horses, a llama, an indoor/outdoor chicken coop, and dedicated areas for peer support sessions. The numbers speak to the farm's success: from March 2024 to March 2025, Healing Prairie Farm served 146



It's very safe, this place makes you feel safe... It's to help your kids and isn't as traumatic as the hospital... It's a place that is calming and is easy to get at peace here.

- Youth client

youth across its Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) and Crisis Stabilization and Residential Services (CSRS) programs, totaling 1,074 nights of care. For many youth at the farm, the animals play a crucial role in their healing process. While Bopp refuses to pick favorites, she admits, "Kayla, the llama, and I do happen to be best friends." Soon, two new horses will join the farm, carefully selected to provide companionship to the existing horses and offer therapeutic riding experiences.

Despite its successes, the farm has faced challenges, particularly in the form of federal regulations and funding freezes. "The most recent federal regulations and funding freezes have impacted our daily lives. Whether it instills uncertainty or our financial day-to-day, this affects the youth and families that we serve and our staff," Bopp notes. "Given the current political climate, we are seeing an increasing number of youth

referrals who are facing crises on a daily basis. Our programs are equipped and ready to support these young individuals. However, funding remains uncertain for many services within the human and youth services sectors. To continue serving our youth and ensure we're here for the long term, we urgently need continued support."

As Healing Prairie Farm moves into its second year, its primary goals include increasing community awareness and expanding its reach to serve more youth in need. Beyond the ongoing need for financial donations to continue operations, the farm also has a wish list of donations that would make a significant difference including hygiene items, cleaning supplies, craft and art materials, and recreational equipment such as a volleyball court, basketball hoop, and soccer nets. For those who have supported Healing Prairie Farm over the past year, Bopp offers heartfelt gratitude. "We are ever so grateful for EVERYTHING that folx provide and do for our youth!" she exclaims. She also hopes more people will recognize the farm's vital role. "This program has a significant impact on the youth in our community. At the farm, we offer valuable services in a relaxed, yet thoughtfully designed environment. While it may appear simple and straightforward, the approach is



Interior look at the new barn at Healing Prairie Farm

carefully crafted and highly effective in supporting the youth we serve."

With a foundation of innovation, inclusivity, and unwavering dedication, Healing Prairie Farm has already changed many lives. As it enters its second year, the farm remains a beacon of hope for Iowa's youth in crisis, proving that healing can take many forms—including the gentle nuzzle of a llama or the steady rhythm of hooves in the dirt.

Policy Decisions Impact Financial & Mental Well-Being

For many Americans, financial stability is a fragile balance. One unexpected expense, job loss, or traumatic event can send individuals and families into a crisis. Unfortunately, recent policy decisions by the current administration have intensified these struggles, making it harder for our neighbors facing layoffs to afford basic necessities like food, housing, and healthcare.

Rising inflation, reduced social assistance programs, and shifting labor policies have left many households stretched thin. Cuts or limitations to food assistance programs mean families must make difficult choices between groceries and rent. Changes in healthcare

policies can leave individuals without access to critical mental health services. The weight of these financial burdens contributes to a growing mental health crisis, as stress and uncertainty take a toll on emotional well-being.

The cycle of crisis is real: financial strain leads to food insecurity, which, in turn, exacerbates stress, anxiety, and depression. Without access to adequate support, this cycle becomes nearly impossible to break.

Together, we can create a stronger, healthier community. Join us in making a difference today.



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Food Bank: 319-351-0128
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