



SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Radical Empathy to Spark Hope

It meant so much to see our supporters, community partners, elected officials, volunteers, staff, and friends gathered together to celebrate an exciting milestone in food security in Johnson County. The joy is evident in the photo above.

In June, we officially cut the ribbon on the new, specialized Mobile Pantry vehicle, made possible by generous funders and individuals across our community. We're still celebrating what happens when a community decides that everyone deserves access to healthy food, no matter where they live, how they get around, or what challenges they're facing.

For many of our neighbors, getting to a traditional food pantry isn't easy. Every day, we meet people who are working hard, caring for their families, living on fixed incomes, recovering from illness, or simply facing circumstances beyond their control. Transportation can be a barrier. Mobility can be a barrier. Distance can be a barrier.

But those barriers shouldn't determine whether someone has food on their table.

That's why our Mobile Pantry exists. This new vehicle allows us to bring more fresh, healthy food directly into

neighborhoods throughout Johnson County.

None of this would have been possible without an incredible community effort.

Our Meals on the Move campaign brought together hundreds of individual donors, businesses, foundations, volunteers, and community champions like you who believed in this vision.

To every person who gave a gift, shared our campaign, attended an event, made a phone call, or encouraged someone else to support this project—thank you. You made this happen.

Food insecurity continues to rise. More families are turning to us than ever before, while nonprofits across the country face increasing uncertainty in funding. Those realities make investments like this even more important.

This milestone is a reminder that our work isn't finished until every person in Johnson County has enough food to eat.



Sarah Nelson, CEO

Sharing Hope: An Expert’s Take

The following is a selection from a recent interview with Kyle Burke, CommUnity’s Crisis Helpline Program Manager. To read the full interview, visit builtbycommunity.org/sharinghope

Emma, Director of Communications: For someone who isn’t familiar with our Crisis Helpline Services, what happens when someone reaches out?

Kyle, Crisis Helpline Program Manager: You can share as much or as little as you want on 988 [Suicide & Crisis Lifeline]. You’re in the driver’s seat... 988 conversations will mostly focus on exploring the reasons you reached out for support. We can help you process difficult events, openly share your feelings, and problem-solve obstacles.

E: What kinds of situations do you help people navigate every day?

K: The most common things that people seek support for are anxiety and depression – relatable, right? Relationship issues with family, friends, and coworkers come up a lot too – yup, very relatable. The reasons people come to 988 reflect all the challenges we deal with in life... It’s rarely just one of these in isolation, too. Part of what makes 988 valuable is that we help people make sense of their complicated situations and gain some relief from the stress they cause.

E: Many people might assume crisis work is simply listening. What expertise goes into helping someone through a crisis?

K: There’s a difference between being listened to and being heard. Our goal is that everyone leaves with the feeling that they were truly understood... Counselors have particularly strong expertise in suicide prevention. No matter how intensely suicide is on someone’s mind, they can recommend simple steps to help reach safety. All of this specialized knowledge silently operates in the background.

E: What does empathy look like in a crisis conversation?

K: Empathy is the bedrock of our conversations, but its

shape changes depending on the connection between the caller and counselor. Sometimes it’s the identification of a buried emotion under all the chaos of someone’s situation. Other times it’s the sharing of a counselor’s own related struggles. And maybe it’s the knowing silence after someone shares something indescribably painful. All of these shapes convey an understanding of what the person may be feeling. Rather than prescribe a certain way that counselors should send that message, we invite them to be human.

E: How has the field of crisis intervention evolved over the past 15 years?

K: Crisis intervention has moved from a mostly volunteer-run, niche field to fully professional, integrated services. The transition of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to 988 in 2022 was a major contributor to that change. It cemented many of the practices that the American Association of Suicidology and International Council of Helplines had been working on for decades. We’re quickly seeing blossoming connections between crisis lines like 988 and the broader mental health world. There’s no doubt that this period will go down in history as revolutionary for America’s mental health infrastructure.

E: Is there a moment or type of interaction that reminds you why this work matters?

K: The conversations that carry me forward are ones where there isn’t initially any reason for hope. People’s lives are endlessly complicated. Sometimes the problems they face have no real solution, or at least aren’t solvable in the short-term. They come to 988 looking to tell someone about the impossibility of it all. And by the end, they feel just a little bit better. Hope doesn’t have to come from changing circumstances. Sometimes a tiny light is sparked just by sharing a painful moment with someone else.



Broderick Binns, CommUnity Board of Directors co-chair, volunteering at “The Crisis Center” circa 2010.



Broderick (middle left) helping out at the Mobile Pantry Ribbon Cutting in June 2026.

Meet Broderick

CommUnity is fortunate to have not one—but two—dedicated leaders serving as board co-chairs this fiscal year. We’re excited to introduce Broderick Binns and Andy Picchietti, who together bring a wealth of experience, thoughtful leadership, and a deep commitment to our mission. In this issue, we’re kicking things off by getting to know Broderick!

A familiar face around CommUnity, Broderick has served on our Board of Directors for the past five years. His connection to the organization began back in 2009 as a University of Iowa student completing a volunteer requirement. What started with stocking shelves and breaking down boxes quickly became something much more meaningful.

Giving back has always been important in Broderick’s family. “My father instilled in my siblings and me the importance of giving back,” he says. “CommUnity is a well-rounded organization that positively impacts many people across the corridor, and I’m grateful to play even a small part in its success.”

Outside of CommUnity, Broderick serves as the Senior Culture and Engagement Specialist at GreenState Credit

Union, where he helps foster employee engagement and belonging. “To me, ‘community’ means bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to work toward a common goal.”

He’s also a proud Hawkeye football alumnus, a devoted husband to Kailey, dad to Brooklyn and Bo, and can often be found coaching youth sports, riding bikes, or finding time to shoot a few hoops.

As he steps into his co-chair role alongside Andy, Broderick says his focus is ensuring CommUnity remains a dependable resource for anyone in our community facing hardship.

“Now more than ever, in uncertain times, it’s important that we show up for the corridor,” he says. “Let’s continue to be a steady, reliable presence that our community can count on. We truly are better together.”

We’re grateful to have Broderick and Andy helping guide CommUnity through the opportunities and challenges ahead. Be sure to watch future newsletters as we introduce you to Andy and share more about the people helping lead our organization.



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

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