



Matthew 25  
201 3rd Ave SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

## Net Zero Homes Nearing Completion

One of our goals is to think about housing and living environments in a way that is climate conscious, community oriented, income diverse, and helps revitalize a neighborhood. Our new net zero homes represent the next step toward this goal.

Three units of small scale housing are being built on one single-family home lot, located at 1021 8th St. NW. Net zero means there will be as much energy produced on site as is consumed each year. The homes are all electric and super efficient, with solar panels, thick and well-insulated walls, air source heat pumps and EV chargers, and they are built in a healthy, sustainable way.

But these homes are more than just energy-efficient buildings. The design fosters interaction and shared living spaces, enhancing the sense of community among residents. Each unit will have its own patio and direct access to the outdoors, while sharing a yard and outdoor spaces. They also feature easy access to parks, green

spaces, the river, our Urban Farm and the Cultivate Hope Corner Store.

The homes come in various sizes to accommodate different needs and preferences, ranging from 840 sq ft to 1,340 sq ft. They embrace a simpler lifestyle with no yard maintenance and are ideal for retirees looking to downsize.

By introducing these innovative homes, Matthew 25 aims to breathe new life into neighborhoods, making them more attractive and livable. The homes will be finished and available for purchase in November, and will be sold at market rate with no income restrictions. If you're interested in learning more or potentially purchasing one of these homes, please contact us at [info@matthew-25.org](mailto:info@matthew-25.org).



**Matthew 25's Mission:**  
Improve the health of people and neighborhoods by investing in quality affordable housing, healthy food, educational opportunities, and community building.

Join our email list: [matthew-25.org/email-list](https://matthew-25.org/email-list)

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## The Pay-it-Forward Life

Autumn 2024

*A note from Clint Twedt-Ball,  
Founder & Executive Director*

Frank connected with Matthew 25 after retiring at a fairly young age. He was searching for purpose and meaning in his life after a fulfilling career. Now that work wasn't his routine, what would feed his soul, connect him with others and make the world a better place? Eventually, he found his way to the tool library. There, he helps homeowners move forward with challenging projects, works with a team of other caring people and puts his faith in action.

Jasmine (name changed) is a single mom who works hard to make ends meet around the home. She wanted a place where she could give back to others and develop her cooking skills. She volunteers as a cook at the cafe and always brings a big smile and abundant joy to everything she does.

Cedar River Academy students work with Kendal, Matthew 25's Education Leader, to grow food in their school garden. When harvest time comes, they pack up some of what they've grown to take home. Other times, they bring lettuce and a variety of fresh produce to Groundswell Cafe or the Corner Store to help feed those who are hungry. They seem to walk with an extra spring in their step and a few inches taller as they proudly share their bounty.

At the core of Matthew 25's work is engaging a diversity of people in the pay-it-forward lifestyle. In a casual tour of Matthew 25, you can see pay-it-forward results everywhere. At the Cafe, one of our frequent visitors and supporters decides to drop \$300 in the pay-it-forward fund to make up for the shortfall in contributions this week. He is helped by one of our volunteers working the cash register. Sitting at the table in the Cafe is a group of four, including two who recently paid for a new walk-in cooler.



Walk over to the Urban Farm and a whole crew of volunteers are mowing, harvesting and pulling weeds. At the Corner Store, several backyard gardeners come in weekly to bring freshly harvested produce to be placed in the pay-it-forward section of the grocery store. The energy and goodwill is contagious. People who receive pay-it-forward food know that it's a gift from other community members.

One of the accusations leveled at Matthew 25 has sometimes been that we live in a world with our head in the clouds. We don't see how bad and angry the world is or all the problems. That could be true. We do tend to have a fairly optimistic view of things and often see possibilities for coming together as a community, even around what others see as problems.

For us, this is what a faithful life looks like. Over and over, Jesus and every great faith leader in the world teach us that our destinies are all woven together. When one person is hurting or one person causes harm to the world, all of creation groans and longs for shalom or peace. Mother Theresa used to talk about how the big challenges the planet faces only get solved one person at a time.

Imagine what your household, your block, your neighborhood or even Cedar Rapids would look like if the majority of people woke up with an attitude that each day is a gift and opportunity to pay-it-forward by bringing a little joy to others and working towards the common good. We would all live significantly different lives.

Let's not tell ourselves it isn't possible. Life is hard. Divisions are growing. Challenges are on the rise. Yes, some of that may be true. But, paying it forward is a choice each of us gets to make in countless ways each day. At Matthew 25, we are working every day to put systems into place that make it simple to pay it forward to others. We love this team of people that is joining us in choosing this lifestyle. May we work together to become like leaven in bread, causing the whole community to rise.



# Storytellers of CR Elevates Voices, Builds Community

The inaugural Storytellers of Cedar Rapids event was an incredible success! Groundswell was filled to capacity as the community gathered to share in an evening of heartfelt storytelling, music, and connection. To start off, local legend Kevin Burt took the stage, wowing the crowd with his captivating presence and soulful performance, setting the tone for a truly memorable night.



The event highlighted five featured storytellers: Courtney Ball, Jason Edwards, Eric Gutschmidt, Akwi Nji, and Ruth Modrow. In preparation, the storytellers gathered over several weeks to learn how to craft their stories for a live audience. Their previous weeks' efforts paid off as they each delivered unforgettable tales that resonated deeply with everyone in attendance. The evening also included four open mic opportunities, allowing audience members to take the spotlight and share their own stories.



We heard stories of friendship and the power of kindness. There were tales of mastering a skill – even when performing in front of famous people who seem more talented. We also

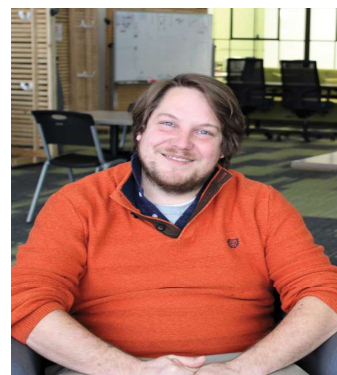
had gripping accounts of loss, survival, and narrowly avoiding arrest in foreign countries. It was inspiring to see such a diverse range of voices participate, each bringing something unique to the stage.

Our team comes into contact with neighbors every day who have amazing and powerful stories few people have the honor of hearing. Our Community Building team created this new program as a way to help the community hear these stories and help our neighbors share them in a way that will impact an audience and the larger community.

The next Storytellers of Cedar Rapids event will take place on Wednesday, November 6th and features all new storytellers, open mic opportunities and live music. Tickets can be purchased on our website at: [matthew-25.org/storytellers](http://matthew-25.org/storytellers)

## Matthew 25 Remembers Philip Hamilton

We are saddened to share that Philip Hamilton, our beloved recent Groundswell Director, died unexpectedly at the young age of 37. Philip came to Matthew 25 as our Volunteer Coordinator following the derecho in 2020. He would later transition into the role of Groundswell Director, putting to use his years of culinary training and experience in highly-rated restaurants in New Orleans and elsewhere. In Groundswell, Philip found a way to put his deep yearnings for food justice, equity and authentic friendships to work.



To honor his memory, Philip's family and Matthew 25 created the Philip Hamilton Pay-It-Forward Endowed Fund to permanently support the pay-it-forward program at Groundswell Cafe. To date, more than \$22,000 has been given to this fund. You can read more about Philip's life and legacy, and give to his fund on our website at: [matthew-25.org/philip](http://matthew-25.org/philip)

# Chickens on the Urban Farm

This spring we began an exciting new project at the Urban Farm. Thanks to grant funding from Theisen's and Farm Credit Services, and the skills of our Neighborhood Building department, we were able to build a coop and welcome six new chickens to the farm. If you have ever had the joy of raising chickens you know how fun they are to watch, and nothing beats fresh eggs, but we have a few other plans for our new friends. We are going to put them to work.



In April, we lovingly chose six chicks from Theisen's of three different varieties to join our squad. Once they had grown enough we moved them out to the coop. It was obvious that they were going to be the highlight for a lot of the local students who visit the Urban farm throughout the year. This was particularly true for our elementary school visitors, and summer food camp participants.



Part of the Cultivate Hope education program is to connect students to the food they eat. We encourage them to explore the food they can grow themselves, because we know students make connections to their food when they can be a part of the process. Just like harvesting and eating broccoli, picking eggs and cooking them can give that same benefit. Eggs are a perfect source of protein for growing kids, and giving them that experience can help them appreciate even more where their food comes from.

This August, the chickens began laying eggs, and we are excited to host the students from Cedar River Academy in October for their annual fall field trip. We know the students will be excited to see how much the chickens have grown.



The farm itself has also benefited, as chickens are compost accelerators. When allowed to forage in beds after harvest, they turn and aerate the soil while searching for scraps and bugs. All while keeping the weeds down and preparing the beds for future plantings. We have begun this process on a small scale and hope to have our coop fully mobile this fall.

## Take a look at what else has been happening...



We started a new "Fridays at the Farm" summer camp for 7-10 year-olds to learn about growing food, harvesting fresh produce, making pickles and salsa, and more fun activities!



New Transform Week records were set with 325 total volunteers and 150 single-day volunteers helping with home repair and maintenance projects. Watch our 2024 recap video at: [matthew-25.org/transform](http://matthew-25.org/transform)



Fifteen high school students participated in our Cultivate Hope Youth Development Program, which is a paid opportunity for students to work on our urban farm while developing various skills in preparation for life beyond the classroom. Read more about their experiences in Summer Stories at: [matthew-25.org/whats-happening](http://matthew-25.org/whats-happening)

**CULTIVATE HOPE**  
**HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR**  
**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7**  
**9 AM - 12 PM**  
**GROUNDSWELL**  
**201 THIRD AVE SW**

*Neighbors, Friends, Families, Food, and Fun*

**CRAFT VENDORS**  
**FOOD AND BAKERY ITEMS**  
**HOLIDAY BEVERAGES**  
**PHOTO BOOTH**  
**LIVE STRING ORCHESTRA**  
**AND MORE!**

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