



WHAT CHANGES, WHAT DOESN'T

A note from Courtney Ball, Interim Executive Director



Friends, as I'm sure you're aware, 2025 has been a year of big changes, both nationally and here at Matthew 25. Just like so many families and businesses, most nonprofits have struggled with the unpredictability caused by changes in our federal government's priorities. Funding that seemed secure is now either gone or left in question. At Matthew 25, we're so thankful that only a small portion of our funding depends on who is in office. Over the past 19 years, people from all walks of life have seen and participated in the neighborhood-strengthening work we do, and then decided to contribute to it with their gifts. This huge community of support remains active and engaged. You are part of that, and you have our profound gratitude.

2025 is also the year that my brother, Clint Twedt-Ball, who founded and led this organization since its inception, chose to step down from his role as executive director to pursue a new calling. We wish him well as he pursues his calling and starts a new chapter in his professional journey.

I'll be honest with you; Clint's departure has left many people questioning what the future of Matthew 25 might be. And I would answer in two ways. First, Matthew 25 has always

been a nimble, adaptive, innovative movement. Helping our community to rebuild after two natural disasters taught us how to be that. So big changes are nothing new to us. Second, there are some things that will not change anytime soon. Our mission of strengthening neighborhoods through the pillars of food, housing, education, and

hiring a new permanent executive director to lead Matthew 25 into the next stage of its life. They aim to have someone in place by the end of the year. That person, once chosen, will bring a new perspective and set of skills to this role. This happens every time someone new joins our community, and it is always exciting for me to see how their



community building remains core to who we are. By the time Clint left Matthew 25—in fact, one of the reasons he felt like he could leave—he had put together a first-rate leadership team, all of whom remain committed to this mission. As interim executive director, I have the privilege of working closely with this team. I also see the dedication and generosity of our 30+ employees and 600+ volunteers. Individuals, as important and loved as they are, will come and go, but the community we've built remains.

As you read this, our board of directors is in the process of

talents will fit within the larger work of Matthew 25.

This world, as broken and unsettling as it can be at times, is also abundantly full of gifts. I can tell you from experience, when we train ourselves to see it in this way, we find the true joy of life. You are one of the people who helps us see that abundance. The acts of service, the generosity, and the joyful spirit that we so often encounter when interacting with members of the Matthew 25 community, those are the things that strengthen our faith in a better world. Thank you for being that kind of person.



From Needing a Meal to Serving the Community:

Dakota's Story

Dakota greets guests at Groundswell Cafe with a smile and a steady presence. To many, he's simply a kind team member serving meals with care. But behind that smile is a story of struggle, resilience, and the community that helped him find hope.

As a teenager in Cedar Rapids, Dakota dreamed of becoming a famous musician. He even performed with his grunge band on the Groundswell stage. Though music was his passion, he took shop classes in high school to learn welding and auto repair—skills he thought might someday be his “backup plan.”

Life soon presented challenges that music alone couldn't solve. Growing up, Dakota often felt at odds with his parents, and he carried the weight of blaming himself for their struggles. As a teenager, he started to drift into circles that led him down a destructive path—dabbling in drugs, including heroin, drinking heavily, fighting and being negatively influenced by friends. Violence touched his life directly when he was shot at twice.

When Dakota and his wife Chanelle found out they were expecting a baby, the weight of responsibility collided with these unresolved struggles. After being evicted from their apartment, they bounced from couch to couch

until eventually entering a homeless shelter. Instead of being a place of relief, the shelter became a place where Dakota's inner battles intensified.

Surrounded by instability, he began to spiral further, nearly overdosing more than once.

It was in this lowest valley that a glimmer of hope appeared. Someone at the shelter told them about Groundswell Cafe's pay-it-forward meals—a safe space where they could come for food and dignity.

Walking through the Groundswell Cafe doors, Dakota realized it was the same place he'd once played music as a teenager. He and Chanelle began coming in weekly for a meal—his favorite was the Thai Chicken Wrap. When their son Holliday was just four days old, they brought him to the Cafe, where staff welcomed them with kindness and respect.

Over time, Dakota got to know the Cafe staff, especially Brittany, who encouraged him first to volunteer and then, in March, to join the team as an employee. He embraced the opportunity, learning new skills—like how to make a Breve coffee drink—and pouring himself into serving others.

Today, Dakota is known for his warm smile and dedication to both customers and coworkers. He loves cooking for Cafe guests, chatting with people over Caesar salads and pulled pork sandwiches, and listening to 60's music while he works. One recent visitor even left a glowing review about being “blown away” by Matthew 25's mission, specifically noting how helpful Dakota was in sharing the story of Groundswell.

Outside of work, Dakota loves being a dad more than anything. His now 15-month-old



son Holliday, named after Doc Holliday, is smart, curious, and full of life. Dakota is determined to equip him with the knowledge, patience, and perseverance he himself has learned.

Reflecting on his journey, Dakota shared:

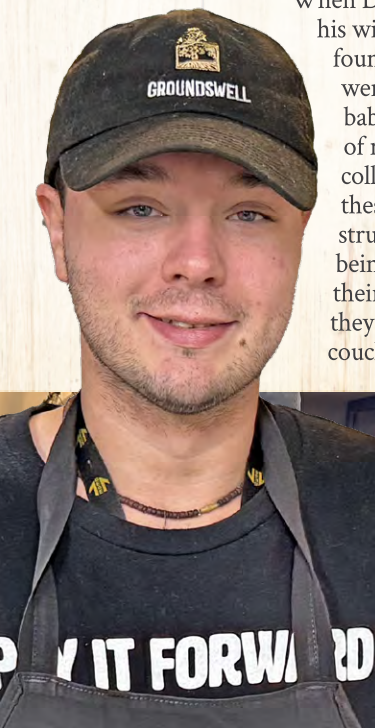
“There is so much you can accomplish by working hard now for your future—instead of just having fun and thinking you can work on your future later.”

He also believes that both raising a child and working at Groundswell take a village. “It takes a community willing to help others in the community,” he said. Dakota hopes that by sharing his story, he can encourage others—even if it's just one person—to make the right choices in life, listen to those who want to help, and put their best foot forward. By being open about his own challenges and lessons learned, he hopes to help others avoid the same mistakes he once made.

Dakota and his family now have a stable apartment, and he's even saving to buy a guitar so he can play music again. He knows how hard it is to get through life when things are tough and you don't have a job or money for food.

“A good meal can go a long way,” he said. “It's hard to work on an empty stomach.”

Dakota's story shows what can happen when kindness and chance come together. Coming from a place of need to now serving others, he reminds us why Groundswell Cafe and Matthew 25 are here: to build hope, respect, and community, one person at a time.



A Classroom of Our Own: Cultivate Hope's New Addition

For years, Matthew 25's education programs have thrived in the gardens, greenhouse, and open-air spaces at the Cultivate Hope Urban Farm. Students learned while planting seeds in the soil, food campers experimented with fresh produce under the sun, and youth gathered outdoors for hands-on lessons. But as our programs grew, so did the need for something more: a dedicated indoor space for learning.

Thanks to the generous support of the Giacometto Foundation, we were able to transform part of our garage into the Urban Farm's very own indoor classroom—complete with desks, chairs, a whiteboard, and the tools needed to support interactive, creative learning.



The classroom has been busy since completion. The Youth Development Program students quickly found their best places to sit in the classroom to participate in discussions about what they were learning and to finish their year-end presentations. Kid campers' artwork brightens the space. More than four walls, it's a learning home.

The redesigned classroom eliminates weather-related camp and class cancellations. Students can work on their indoor projects, which include workshops on nutrition, environmental justice, and career goals. The dedicated room also makes time for field trips, learning with technology, and more in-depth thinking.

"We still do as much as we can outdoors," Kendal shares, "but having this space allows us to gather, reflect, and learn in all seasons. It's the greatest thing ever."

The classroom is already impacting food camps, field trips, and youth programs, but its potential goes far beyond. Matthew 25 hopes to add cooking facilities, additional STEM programming, and a weather station in the future. We also see it becoming a community space—open to neighborhood groups, scout troops, and others looking for a safe, welcoming place to gather.

This classroom is more than just a building. It's an investment in youth, in education, and in the future of food and community. It's becoming not just a classroom of our own—but a classroom for everyone.



CULTIVATE HOPE HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

**SATURDAY
DECEMBER 6, 2025**
9:00 AM-2:00 PM
GROUNDSWELL • 201 3RD AVE. SW

FEATURING:

- ART & CRAFT VENDORS
- FOOD & BAKERY ITEMS
- KIDS CRAFTS
- HOLIDAY PHOTO BOOTH
- LIVE ORCHESTRA MUSIC
- AND MORE!



Did you know you can give to Matthew 25 directly from your IRA?

If you're 70½ or older, you can donate to Matthew 25 directly from your traditional IRA—tax-free—through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). Because a QCD is excluded from your taxable income, it can reduce your tax bill compared to taking a normal IRA distribution and then donating. If you're 73+, a QCD can also satisfy part or all of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). Be sure to talk to a tax advisor to know if a QCD is right for your specific financial situation.

How to make a QCD to Matthew 25:

Contact your IRA custodian and request a QCD to Matthew 25. To ensure it comes to the right organization, provide our EIN: 26-0467321. Let us know it's on the way so we can watch for it and thank you!

Questions? Reach out to Jana at 319-200-2783 or jana@matthew-25.org

"HAVING THIS SPACE ALLOWS US TO GATHER, REFLECT, AND LEARN IN ALL SEASONS. IT'S THE GREATEST THING EVER."



TRY OUR FALL MENU



GROUNDSWELL
cafe

**MON-SAT
7AM-2PM
201 3rd Ave SW
Cedar Rapids**



Transform 10

This summer marked our 10th Annual Transform Week—and what a milestone it was! A total of **384** volunteers completed **36** projects, contributing an incredible **4,282** volunteer hours to strengthen our neighborhoods. Watch the 2025 recap video now at matthew-25.org/transform

SCAN TO WATCH





Growing Strong Neighborhoods

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

A Parking Lot That Makes Shopping Easier—and Community Stronger



The Cultivate Hope Corner Store has reached an exciting milestone! On Tuesday, August 19, we cut the ribbon on our brand-new parking lot, officially opening a safer, more convenient way for customers to visit the store.

When the Corner Store first opened more than three and a half years ago, we dreamed of this day. In the meantime, our neighbors showed extraordinary generosity—Double Z graciously shared their parking spaces, and our community patiently navigated Ellis Boulevard construction.

Now that the lot is complete, shoppers can park to shop with ease. Whether you're stopping in for fresh produce, a Good Meal To Go, or our selection of local and everyday grocery items, parking is ready and waiting. We're also looking forward to hosting outdoor events in this space and welcoming more neighbors inside for educational opportunities and nutrition classes.

For Team Lead Wanda, who has been with the Corner Store since day one, the parking lot represents more than

**"FOR ME, THE
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just pavement—it's another way of extending hospitality. "I want people to feel welcome and know that we're here, and that we care," Wanda shares. "That's how we make a difference. For me, the Corner Store is more than just a place to shop—it's family."

Without the community's patience, encouragement, and generosity, this project would not have been possible. Thank you for supporting this vision and helping us develop a healthier, stronger neighborhood.

If you haven't already done so, we invite you to come see the new lot for yourself — and while you're there, stock up on groceries or enjoy a meal that supports your neighbors. The Corner Store is open Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., and is located at 604 Ellis Blvd NW.



Matthew 25 | 201 3rd Ave SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404 | 319-362-2214 | matthew-25.org | info@matthew-25.org

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OUR MISSION:

Improve the health of people and neighborhoods by investing in quality affordable housing, healthy food, educational opportunities, and community building.