



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

## High school students build relationships and grow through farm work

If you are a home gardener, you know the weeds are relentless. You can spend half a day weeding and come back a few days later to find all of your hard work has miraculously vanished. You might feel defeated. July is brutal in Iowa, and after the 4th it can be easy to just let it all go. "The weeds can have it!" we shout. But we remind ourselves that weeding is important for the growth of our plants, and we trudge on in the heat each week. Through Matthew 25's Youth Development Program, some high school students unexpectedly found that weeding was just as important to their growth as it was to the plants.



There's lots of time to talk when you weed. Those familiar with the Youth Development Program may know that the students spend time almost every day challenging themselves with a group activity or journaling exercise meant to build relationships and leadership skills. Weeding is different. There's no format or required responses, just chatter. They talk about their families and friends, or how they stayed up all night and can't seem to understand why they are so tired. The students talk about college. Will they go? What will they do? They give each other feedback without even knowing it. They ask questions.

As program leaders, we don't always see the impact those conversations have until later. We just keep them talking. In one instance, a student said he was thinking about becoming a pilot. So we discussed what that looked like, what were the next steps? He returned this fall to a farmers market to show us his flight log. Another student confided during the final week that just being there, doing those simple tasks outside helped with her depression. These interactions felt so impactful that we can \*almost\* be grateful for the weeds.

Learn more: [matthew-25.org/youth](https://matthew-25.org/youth)

Stay up to date by following us on social media!



@Matthew25MinistryHub  
@CRgroundswell

@CultivateHopeCornerStore  
@CRToolLibrary



@Matthew25Hub  
@CRgroundswell

Matthew 25 | 201 3rd Ave SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404 | 319-362-2214 | [matthew-25.org](https://matthew-25.org) | [info@hub25.org](mailto:info@hub25.org)



# Community Support Amid a Housing Crisis

Autumn 2023

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

In her three decades of life, Jane has never had what she would describe as a safe, pest free, healthy place to live. She knows what it's like to live with all types of bugs, crime, lead paint, rotted floors, soiled carpets and other unhealthy things. She wished for circumstances to change with her own kids, but after her latest run-in with a slum lord, she was about to give up. Then, a friend of hers connected her with Matthew 25. It just so happened that we had a newly renovated rental unit available. Fast forward, and a little over a year later, she has now lived in the same home for the longest time since her children were born.

This is just one story of the housing crisis gripping neighborhoods around the nation and in Cedar Rapids. Think about these stats. In the last twenty years, wages have increased on average by 20%, while housing purchase prices have doubled. In real numbers, median household wages have risen from \$64k to \$76k while the median price of homes has gone from \$197k to \$395k. Rent and construction costs have also increased. In Cedar Rapids, recent studies show that we are over 1,000 units short of our affordable housing needs.

Every day, we see the results at Matthew 25. The number of free meals requested at Groundswell Cafe has nearly doubled between 2022 and 2023. Our twenty units of

affordable rental units are snatched up as soon as they become vacant. The new houses we are seeking to build are much less affordable than we'd like, due to increased construction costs. People that used to be able to maintain their homes adequately no longer have the funds. Kids and families are doubling up in housing units and sometimes being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords. The stress in housing bubbles up in unhealthy emotional ways and makes it a challenge for Matthew 25 to continue to grow strong neighborhoods.



know that every \$60k in donations gives us the ability to put another family into high quality, affordable housing. And it puts families into a relationship with Matthew 25, a landlord that treats everyone as a gifted child of God. Now, I know, \$60k seems like a lot, but any amount given to affordable housing gets put together with other contributions so that it isn't all on one person. Our housing crisis is a community problem and it will take the entire community to solve it. Our neighborhoods are at their strongest when good housing is available to people at all income levels.

Over and over, we've seen that when families move into quality housing and are treated with respect, they also take ownership of their neighborhood. Their expectations for how people treat others and live in community rises.

Yes, we are in a housing crisis and it can seem overwhelming. There is no silver bullet solution. When it feels hopeless, I continue to look at other amazing crises our community has overcome. We have everything we need. We know we can put the Janes of the world into good housing. We just have to have the will to make it so.

In this together,  
Clint

We're seeing support show up from govern-

ment, with the City of Cedar Rapids granting Matthew 25 over \$350k to support ten units of healthy, energy-efficient home rehabs. We're seeing support from volunteers and corporate sponsors, nearly 300 of whom showed up for our June Transform Week event to help more than thirty homeowners maintain their largest asset.

And, we're seeing it with individuals and faith communities that are calling and asking us what they can do to impact the housing crisis. We



# Creating healthy, affordable rental housing

Matthew 25 works to grow strong neighborhoods by providing safe, quality rental housing at affordable rates. We currently own and manage twenty rental homes on the west side of Cedar Rapids. These range from studios to 4-bedrooms, including both duplexes and single-family homes.

All of our homes are refurbished before we make them available, some going as far as a complete renovation. We're currently working on renovations for five more units, which will be finished and become available in the next few months.



Here are some things that our tenants have said:

*"We never imagined anyone would give us a second chance, but now our family is able to be together. Our kids were bullied and no longer felt 'safe' where we lived. My husband was living in a shelter, but Matthew 25 really helped us. Now we can grow together as a family again. Everything is within walking distance to our home. The Corner Store and Farm, and that is important to us."*

*"I have been a renter with Matthew 25 for nearly a decade. Whenever I have called, they were there to always help me take care of the problem. I was scared to rent a house since I had always lived in an apartment my whole life. But with the help of Matthew 25, I am now in a beautiful home that was completely rehabbed for me and my children. Thank you Matthew 25!"*

*"I have felt discriminated against and completely discouraged in the past, but Matthew 25 looked past and accepted me for who I am. I am grateful for the organization. This is my first apartment and I love it!"*

**If you have a property you would like Matthew 25 to turn into quality affordable housing, contact us at [info@hub25.org](mailto:info@hub25.org).**



## MATTHEW 25 TOOL LIBRARY

**Cleaning up your garage this fall?  
Finding tools you no longer need?  
Donate them to our Tool Library!**

Tools should be clean and in good working order. For more information about what we accept, visit: [matthew-25.org/tool-library](http://matthew-25.org/tool-library)



Drop off donations at the Tool Library, located behind the Matthew 25 building at 201 3rd Ave SW, during regular hours.

**OPEN**  
**Tuesday & Thursday**  
**2:00 - 6:00pm**  
**Saturday**  
**9:00am - 12:00pm**

## Donor Profile: David and Christine Cork

David and Christine first got involved with Matthew 25 because they appreciate our grassroots focus - especially our focus on the northwest side of Cedar Rapids where they live.

"Matthew 25 is about helping with food insecurity and housing. Transform Week, Groundswell, Corner Store, and Farm - they are community changing ideas," David said in a recent conversation.

The Corks give to Matthew 25 because of that grassroots focus, but also because of their life experiences.

"We didn't have a lot in our younger days and (now) we've been blessed. We have an opportunity and a sense of obligation to pay it forward."

One of the ways the Corks give back is an annual donation that helps with rent costs for people who live in Matthew 25's rental properties.

"We want to make sure families can use that donation to pay their rent so they can use their own money to have a joyful holiday with their family. If we can give to one or two families then we can have a huge, meaningful impact," David said.

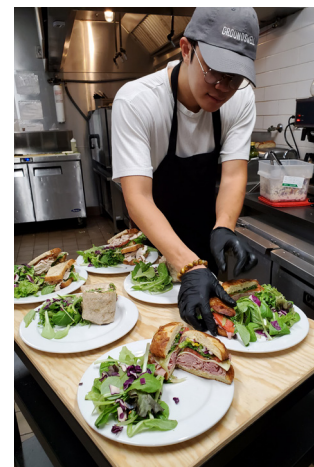
What would they say to others who are considering a donation to Matthew 25?

"Listen to your heart...Listen to it."

# Groundswell Cafe celebrates five years of paying it forward

For five years, people have been able to eat delicious food at a local café that is unlike any other in the state. When their meal is rung up, guests have had the joy of being able to pay-it-forward by giving a little extra to support those who are hungry in our community. Over the course of five years, these actions have allowed Groundswell Cafe to give away nearly \$200,000 in free and reduced-cost meals. Just as important, the Cafe has provided a safe, welcoming space for many who feel ignored and pushed away by society.

All of this and more was celebrated October 9-14 at Groundswell with live music, free birthday cookies and a variety of fall-themed specials.



We see this as one of those glimmers of hope in society, a good news story. For five years, we've run a space where the wealthiest in our community break bread in the same space as the most destitute. The food is critically important, but even more important is the belief that we can each pay it forward to make someone else's life a little easier. What would it be like if many of our whole society just naturally shared to help out someone else?

Matthew 25 opened Groundswell Cafe on October 8, 2018 as Iowa's first and only pay-it-forward café. It's located next to the Matthew 25 office at 201 3rd Ave. SW in Cedar Rapids, and is open from 7:00 AM - 2:00 PM, Monday-Saturday. Learn more at [GroundswellCafe.org](http://GroundswellCafe.org).

**CULTIVATE HOPE**

# HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2 • 10 AM - 1 PM**  
**GROUNDSWELL, 201 THIRD AVE SW**

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

**CRAFT VENDORS • JAMS & BAKERY ITEMS**  
**URBAN FARM PRODUCE • PHOTO BOOTH**  
**LIVE STRING ORCHESTRA • AND MORE!**

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



As part of our school gardens program, Mrs. Martin's 3rd graders from Cedar River Academy learned how to harvest eggplant at our Urban Farm and then delivered it to the Cultivate Hope Corner Store. They loved being real farmers!



Our Good Meals To Go program is going strong thanks to the support of amazing volunteer groups and the extra meals made by our Cooking for a Cause classes.



Cultivate Hope Corner Store has enjoyed a wonderful bounty of fresh produce from the Urban Farm this season, as well as fruits and veggies donated by people in the community for our Free Produce section. In addition, we have received a \$300,000 grant from the John and Cindy Family Foundation to help support the store over the next three years.