Matthew 25

FALL 2026

What We Carry Forward



CULTIVATE HOPE CORNER STORE





A note from Courtney Ball
Executive Director of Matthew 25

A woman comes into the Cultivate Hope Corner Store regularly to buy Good Meals to Go for her 90-year-old mother. Her mom has mobility issues and can't cook as easily as she used to, but the meals are easy to prepare and taste like home-cooked food. They help her feel more independent. She is one of many elder Corner Store guests who buy these meals regularly.

One day, a mother approached our team members Sarah and David in the store to show them the food she had prepared for her daughter's lunches using Corner Store ingredients. David said it was a lovely, delicious-looking spread. The mother wanted to express her gratitude for our free produce corner, which helped her stretch her food budget and make sure her child's lunches were both tasty and nutritious.

Periodically, teenagers come into the Corner Store's Hadley Hangout area to snack and play games. It's a safe third space, one of the only places in the neighborhood where people can come to just hang out and relax.

These are just a few of the many meaningful stories we've heard over nearly five years. They remind us of the connections made and the difference the Corner Store has made in people's lives. That's what makes our decision to close the store later this year so difficult.

One person we'll especially miss is Shirley. She walks down to the store nearly every day it's open to visit with our staff and greet other guests. Shirley usually brings cookies with her to share.

It's incredibly hard to end a program that has served such an important role in our neighborhood for nearly five years. When Matthew 25 bought the Hosmer building 10 years ago, we didn't know what it would become. We only knew it needed to change from being the highest crime corner in the neighborhood into something more positive. After some initial rehab, it served as a temporary food bank. Then Clint came up with the idea to return it to its original purpose, a small corner grocery store.

It was a very popular idea, garnering support from a range of funders, large and small, along with many volunteers. Everyone knew there was risk involved with this undertaking, but they also agreed it was worth trying. And try we did!

"Matthew 25 has always been innovative and willing to chase big ideas."

Despite many improvements and growth over the years, the Corner Store has continued to face significant financial challenges. While its impact on our community has been meaningful, the financial losses have become too substantial to sustain. As stewards of the resources entrusted to Matthew 25, we have made the difficult decision that we cannot continue operating the store.

But even when an undertaking doesn't turn out as we hoped, it gives us an opportunity to learn and find new ways to fulfill our mission. Matthew 25 has always been innovative and willing to chase big ideas. I remember in 2008—just a little over a year into Matthew 25's existence—I thought my brother was crazy when he proposed us leading a program to rehab 12 blocks of homes after the flood. But our Block by Block program did that and much more: 30 blocks and hundreds of homes.

I'm incredibly proud of what our team of staff, volunteers, and donors created in the Corner Store. And even though we are ending this program, the building remains an asset for us to use to serve the neighborhood. It's time for us to start dreaming again about what we can do with that space. And when we do, we won't forget experiences like I described in the stories above.

Everything important about the Corner Store will carry forward in some way through Matthew 25. We are exploring ways to continue programs like the Free Produce Corner and Good Meals To Go, while creating welcoming spaces where neighbors can connect, find nourishment, share their gifts, and help build a stronger community.

Saying goodbye to the Corner Store is hard. That change will be felt by our team and our neighbors. But one thing we've learned over the years, especially by serving through two large natural disasters, is that this is only the end of one chapter. The story of Matthew 25's mission is much longer and larger. Thank you for being with us on this journey, for trusting us and empowering us to try new things, and for staying with us when our plans don't work out as we'd hoped. You make all the good stories possible.

What Your Support Makes Possible

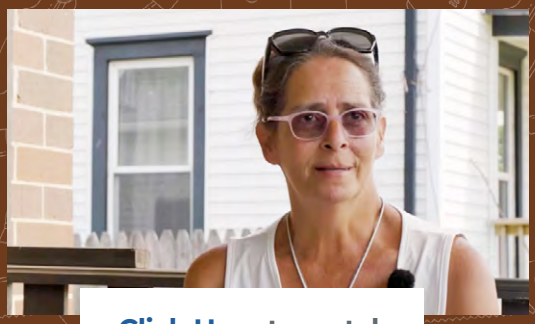


David once facilitated meetings at a correctional center for incarcerated men.

A friend he met there, Joseph, was now released and getting back on his feet, and David took him to Groundswell Cafe for breakfast. David told him about the Pay-It-Forward program at Groundswell and how it was designed to be a place where everyone was welcome, regardless of their ability to pay. And how did he respond? He dug into his pocket and placed $100 in the donation jar. He then recognized another Pay-it-Forward guest that was also recently released from the correctional center and invited him to join the table. Groundswell Cafe provided a remarkable moment of connection, generosity, and community that came full circle. For more information on Groundswell Cafe, visit **groundwellcafe.org**.

For Kristi, Transform brought something priceless: peace of mind.

Her grandson uses a wheelchair, and she constantly worried about his safety on the deck. After Matthew 25 volunteers completed repairs, he now has a safe place to roll around and enjoy being outside. "This is truly life-changing for my daughter and grandson," Kristi shared. "I can't thank Matthew 25 enough."



Click Here to watch the 2026 Transform Week Video



After a major life change, Mr. Moore was looking for a safe, affordable place where he could start fresh.

At the restored Coe-Paul-Westrom House, he found more than a place to live. He found a home that gives him the comfort, independence, and peace he was seeking. Today, he describes living there as "nothing but amazing" and has the stability to keep moving forward. Learn more about our housing programs at **matthew-25.org/housing**

A Youth Development Program student arrived at Matthew 25 describing themselves as often negative.

Eight weeks later, something had changed. Working outdoors, learning new skills, and being surrounded by supportive people helped them develop a more positive mindset. "Even on the worst days of my life, the people and environment around me make it easier to be more positive and happy," they wrote. "I always come home in a better mood."



Click Here to watch the 2026 Youth Development Program Video



Learning from t Growing for the

When rain falls at the Cultivate Hope Urban Farm, staff no longer have to wonder how much reaches the ground or how long that moisture will last.

A new weather station is giving Matthew 25 real-time information about rainfall, temperature, heat index, and soil moisture. Made possible through a grant from the Giacoletto Foundation, it has already become much more than another piece of equipment. It is a hands-on learning tool that can help the farm grow food more wisely, conserve water, and better understand the changing conditions around us.

"One inch of rain a week is usually considered enough," explained Kendal Hausmann, Matthew 25 Education Director. "But now we can see how quickly that moisture is leaving the soil and whether we really need to be watering."



Weather Dashboard

That knowledge matters during hot Iowa summers. Before any outdoor work begins, staff can check the heat index to determine when extra water breaks or schedule changes are necessary for staff, volunteers, and students working on the farm.

The most exciting early discovery has come from soil sensors placed in three different growing areas: a traditional field plot, a raised bed, and a beetle bank filled with native plants and mulch.

The results were not always what staff expected. Raised beds absorbed water quickly, but they also dried out quickly. The field soil gained moisture fast and held it longer. The beetle bank took more time to become fully saturated, but once wet, it retained a high moisture level.

Those differences could influence how the farm grows food in the future. Heavier mulch and more ground cover,



he Weather, Future

for example, may help keep moisture in the soil during dry periods. As the team tests new growing methods, sensors can show whether those changes are making a difference.

The weather station will also become a practical tool for both growing food and teaching young people. Farm staff can use local weather and soil data to make more informed decisions about watering, planting and other crop management, helping protect yields and ultimately grow more food for the community. The information also creates new STEM opportunities for weather-related activities in food camps and the Youth Development Program. Tracking patterns, graphing changes, and making predictions with the data lets students discover how weather and soil affect food production.

Local classrooms in Cedar Rapids will benefit, too. Because the station connects through Wi-Fi, its data can be shared remotely with teachers and students whose schools do not have weather stations of their own. They can use information gathered at the Urban Farm to graph trends, compare growing conditions, and make predictions based on weather patterns close to home.

Farming has always required careful observation. This station adds another layer, replacing some guesswork with information gathered from the land itself. It can help staff decide when to water, when heat-sensitive crops such as peas may be reaching their limit, and how different growing spaces respond to rain.

Over time, the weather station will help Matthew 25 have a better understanding of our local climate, as well as teach students of all ages how closely weather, soil, water, and food are connected. These lessons may help all of us prepare for a future in which using our resources wisely is more important than ever.

Click Here to track the weather at the Urban Farm!

Giving in a Way That Works for *You*



At Matthew 25, we believe strong neighborhoods are built by people who care about one another. Every day, our work is made possible by people like you who choose to invest in our community.

There are many ways to support Matthew 25, and some may be options you haven't considered before.

Give monthly. A recurring gift—even a small one—provides steady support throughout the year. It helps us plan programs and projects throughout the year.

Double your gift through your employer. Some employers will match charitable donations made by their employees. Check with your employer's HR department to see if your gift to Matthew 25 could be matched. It's a simple way to make your generosity go even further.

Give through your IRA. If you are 70½ or older, you may be able to make a qualified charitable distribution directly from your IRA to Matthew 25. This can be a meaningful way to support our work while also fitting into your financial plans.

Leave a lasting legacy. A gift in your will or trust, or naming Matthew 25 as a beneficiary of a retirement account, life insurance policy, or financial account, can help carry your commitment to our community into the future. Planned gifts can be made in ways that work with your individual goals and circumstances.

These are just a few ways you can make a difference. Whether you give today, give monthly, or include Matthew 25 in your future plans, we are deeply grateful. Thank you for being part of the Matthew 25 community. However you choose to give, your support helps make this work possible.

Have questions or want to learn more? We'd be happy to talk with you about the different ways you can support Matthew 25. Please contact Jana Bodensteiner.

jana@matthew-25.org
319-362-2214



The Week That Changed the Summer continued

...healthy conflict resolution, and trained in farm and food safety. They also learned the ins and outs of supporting Groundswell Cafe, from food preparation to making pizzas for the Cultivate Community Markets.

"I loved getting to know the summer interns so well. We really connected that first week, which led to an amazing summer leading all the students."

Once the full summer program began, the students applied those lessons. Each leader led a team of two or three student employees, choosing their team's tasks and helping ensure the work was completed correctly. Throughout the summer, students harvested produce, prepared CSA shares, worked at Groundswell, planted and weeded crops, participated in workshops, and visited farms and organizations throughout the area.

Leadership Week also produced something staff hadn't fully anticipated: stronger relationships. As one student shared, "I loved getting to know the summer interns so well. We really connected that first week, which led to an amazing summer leading all the students."

That connection carried through the entire summer. Crew leaders, interns, and volunteers began the season with a shared understanding of the work, and just as important, with relationships already taking root.

For a program built around helping young people grow, Leadership Week offered a powerful next step: giving students the tools, trust, and opportunity to help others grow alongside them.

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

Growing Strong Neigborhoods



The Week That Changed the Summer

CULTIVATE HOPE
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

For the first time, returning Youth Development Program students started the season with a week devoted to learning how to lead, and its impact lasted all summer.

This new addition, called Leadership Week, gave returning students an opportunity to build their confidence, strengthen relationships, and prepare for greater responsibilities throughout the summer.

Since 2017, the Youth Development Program has helped young people build confidence and skills. Returning students have taken on leadership roles over the years since they are familiar with the Urban Farm and the work that comes with spending the summer there. But staff recognized that knowing how to do something, whether planting, harvesting, or using a tool safely, is different from knowing how to teach someone else.

Leadership Week was created to bridge that gap. Before the rest of the students arrived, these student leaders spent four days alongside summer interns and dedicated volunteers preparing for the season ahead. They practiced the team-building activities they would later help lead, learned about different leadership styles, and even helped establish expectations for the summer, including the group's cell phone policy.

They practiced giving productive feedback, learned about... *continued on inside...*

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Matthew 25

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