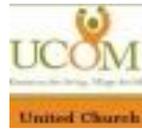


UCOM-Godfrey Lee Partnership



Mission: United Church Outreach Ministries (UCOM) mission is to: "build community in southwestern Kent County by providing material and educational assistance to meet basic needs, improve quality of life, and promote self-sufficiency"



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COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Food Support

- Client Choice Food Pantry, serving most of Southwest Kent County, one of the largest pantries in the city. Clients are able to self-select balanced food choices once a month. In emergency situations, provides a three-day food supply.
- NOW Pantry, Nutritional Options for Wellness, collaborative effort between Spectrum Health and many ACCESS pantries. Improves access to healthy food for those with a chronic illness. Clients shop weekly.
- Senior Commodities- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Provides additional help for individuals over the age of 60 who meet certain income requirements. Participants receive a monthly pre-packed food box.
- Mobile Food Truck-provides additional food to the needy in the community.



Youth Education

- Believe 2 Become Summer Learning Program, literacy program designed to combat summer learning loss, focuses on reading comprehension, but engages students in other curriculum as well. Provides 32 extra hours of instruction during the summer break. GRPS students from grades 1-5 are eligible to enroll.
- Homework House- Provides one on one tutoring in basic skills, assistance with homework assignments, and enrichment programs. Services provided to Cesar Chavez Elementary and Southwest Community Campus (Grades K-6).
- Schools of Hope-Afterschool reading program, operated by UCOM at Southwest Community Campus for 1st-3rd graders.



Growing Green Neighbors

- Square Foot Gardening-helping members of the community become more self-sustaining. Individuals in the community are given a 4x4 raised garden box along with soil and seeds. Clients are able to select plants and as a condition of enrollment, are asked to tend the garden all summer, attend a monthly meeting hosted at UCOM where they talk to a Master Gardener or Farmer, and teach the skill to a friend or neighbor who then receives their own garden box the next summer.
- Compact Florescent Light Bulb Distribution-partnering with West Michigan Environmental Action Council to help the community become more energy efficient. Distributes CFLs, and recycling used CFLs.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Growing Green Neighbors (cont)

- Project Fresh-an opportunity for low-income seniors to include more locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables in their diets. Coupons and education are given to eligible seniors who are interested in shopping at local farmers markets.

Clothing Pantry

- Gently used clothing is distributed to adults and children in need in the community.



Financial Skills

- Instructors offer basic budgetary and banking skills to help empower the Hispanic community to succeed and achieve their full potential (four lessons are provided).



Restore Hope

- Utilizes the principles of restorative justice to impact the most acute needs of those reentering society following incarceration. The program is called Dave's House and focuses on advocacy, community education, and direct services. This program may not be appropriate for direct interaction given the criminal history of clients.



Income Tax

- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)-volunteer tax preparers for low income workers, via Kent County Tax Credit Coalition. UCOM acts as a host site for this program.

Health Screening

- Health Screening-free to clients, in partnership with the Calvin College nursing program, including blood pressure checks, blood sugar screening, and referrals to Spectrum Diabetes Program and other community health and dental clinics, as needed. Also provides supplies such as walkers, canes, etc.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Work Skills Training Site

- Reciprocal partnership for volunteers-providing various job skills training programs, including job interview training, soft skills training, evaluation and recommendations as requested to potential employers, among others.



STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

For questions regarding any of these Student Academic Service Learning Opportunities, please contact Shawn Keener at the number listed above.

There are Student Academic Service Learning Opportunities for Elementary, Middle and High School students at UCOM. For most of these opportunities there are clear Math and English curriculum connections. Additionally, there are chances to incorporate elective classes such as art, Spanish, marketing, photography and more.

Elementary: The majority of volunteer opportunities can be structured for all grade levels, including elementary. Smaller groups on a shorter time frame with higher adult to student ratio are ideal for elementary students.

Middle: Middle School students have the opportunity to work for a longer time frame and provide more sustainable, multi-level services for UCOM.

High School: High School students can take their Service Learning opportunities further by working individually (as well as in groups) on specific aspects of programming that not only align with their curriculum, but personal and future career goals as well.

Clothing Pantry

There are two clothing pantries, one with casual clothing for all ages, and a professional clothing pantry. The Clothing Pantry is available to anyone who uses the Food Pantry, and is open during the same hours (see 'Food Pantry' below for hours of operation.) The Professional Clothing Pantry is open based upon need, but can be accessed for a Service Learning Project during UCOM's general hours of operation. There is a need for sorting and organizing all clothing, as well as merchandising and creating attractive displays. Additionally, the professional clothing pantry needs individuals who can assess condition of clothing and decide if it's appropriate for the pantry. This would be an excellent project for a Home Economics or perhaps a Fashion Merchandising elective. Even elementary aged math students could use their skills to help sort clothing by color, size, and type.

Volunteer Store

Individuals who use UCOM's services are encouraged to volunteer for the organization. For every hour a person volunteers, they get 1 point to use in the volunteer store, which has items ranging from small home appliances to toys. Needs include: organizing, packing, sorting, and estimating a point value of items in the Volunteer Store. A longer term project is creating a paper index card tracking system for volunteer hours and points used for each individual. The indexing project could be done both on and offsite, as needed. This could be a semester or year long project for a math class.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Food Pantry

The food pantry is open to those in need on:

- Tuesdays from 9:00 am-3:00 pm and 5:00-7:00 pm
- Wednesdays from 9:00 am-3:00 pm
- Thursdays from 9:00-11:30 am and 5:00-7:00 pm
- Fridays from 9:00-11:30 am
- OFFICE HOURS are Monday through Friday 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Students can serve during any of the open hours for any unit of time

Needs include: breaking down and repacking bulk food products into serving sizes (weighing and labeling) restocking shelves, and helping clients make correct food choices based upon the food plate (more information about UCOM's commitment to healthy eating and the food plate is available here: <http://ucomgr.org/foodpantry>). This is an ideal opportunity for nutrition, health, science, and math classes to connect to their curriculum via service.

Landscaping Projects

There is a seasonal need (spring through fall) for weeding, planting flowers, spreading compost (from compost bin), raking leaves and mulching the area surrounding UCOM.

Donations

Items are always sought for donation for various projects. While students do not need to personally donate items, they can create and deliver donation letters to local businesses to request these items. Additionally, this helps advocate for UCOM and make the local community aware of the services provided by the organization. This is an excellent project for marketing in public relations classes. English classes can assist by writing the letters of requests and art classes can use the donated items to create the end products listed below:

- Stuff backpacks with school supplies (beginning and end of school year)
- Create baby baskets for new moms (year-round)
- Holiday gift baskets (November, December)

Data Entry

A variety of data entry tasks can be completed by keyboarding or computer students. Additionally, students can assist with or host a class on basic computer skills and related technological issues. This can be scheduled with Shawn Keener, contact number above.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Personal Care Item Drive

This could be a year-long project, with students collecting items, sorting by type, holding a contest to see what class could collect them most, etc. To start this project, please contact Shawn Keener at the number above. This is a constant need for UCOM.

Square Foot Gardening

Square Foot Gardening is done seasonally, starting in the spring and into the summer and fall. Volunteers are needed to build the boxes, get seed donations and organize donated seeds. Additionally, students could have a gardening box on school property and create their own square foot garden. Afterwards, they could teach the community how to do the project with creation and distribution of brochures, holding a class, creating an event, etc.

To schedule this, please contact Shawn Keener at the number listed above. The boxes can be created at anytime, but everything else would be based upon growing schedule for plants.

Tutoring

High School students can tutor reading or assist with Homework House. Grades K-6 are served at Caesar Chavez Elementary (K-5) and Southwest Community Campus (K-6). Each Homework House session runs for ten weeks and volunteers are asked to commit to at least one day a week for the duration of the session. Tutoring sessions are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:45-4:45 PM at Cesar Chavez and 4:15-5:15 PM at Southwest.

If you are interested in setting this up for your students, contact coordinators: Ashley Juvonen & Kristina Meyer at:

Kristina.meyer@ucomgr.org

Spanish Translation

This project is in high demand at UCOM, as much of their clientele is Spanish speaking. UCOM needs signs created or translated in Spanish. There are opportunities to translate or create flyers/brochures detailing UCOM's services. This can be an ongoing project for a Spanish class, and can be done both on and offsite.

Photo / Art

Specialized projects are limited only by your imagination. For example, a photography student created a photo documentation of UCOM for her high school class; this could be replicated or expanded. A student or teacher could design an entirely new photo project. There has also been a request to create rotating (portable) murals for different parts of the building. Contact Shawn Keener if this is something you are interested in doing with your students.