



As part of UCOM's strategic plan for the next five years we will be focusing on sustainability, eco-consciousness, and client self-sufficiency. The Growing Green Neighbors initiative will center on helping our neighbors learn to grow their own foods, making local farm markets accessible, and encouraging more ecofriendly and energy efficient practices in the home. These concepts will be at the forefront of UCOM's programming over the next five years.

To date UCOM has already begun several new projects under the banner of our Growing Green Neighbors initiative and more are in the works!

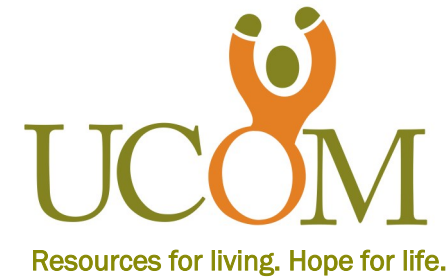


"The time spent gardening turned into fun family time with the boys!"

More Information:

Find out more about our programs on our website! www.ucomgr.org

For questions about our programs or to volunteer, please contact our Growing Green Neighbors Coordinator at GrowingGreen@ucomgr.org



UNITED CHURCH OUTREACH MINISTRY

GROWING GREEN NEIGHBORS



www.UCOMgr.org

Square Foot Gardening



As UCOM's first project in our Growing Green Neighbors initiative, the Square Foot Gardening program is intended to help members of our community become more self-sustaining.

- UCOM distributes a 4x4 raised garden box along with soil and seeds to each family.
- Participants section boxes into 16 one foot squares and choose from crops that grow well in the area to raise in their gardens.
- Monthly meetings are held at UCOM where participants can talk with a master gardener or farmer, ask questions, and receive helpful hints and advice.
- Experienced volunteer gardeners periodically visit the families throughout the summer to help address any specific concerns they may have.
- Gardeners become mentors and teach the skill to a friend or neighbor who will receive their own garden box the following summer.

Square Foot Gardening Cont'd

This has been a project that participants can get excited about! When asked what made them eager to participate they responded by saying:

- "The idea of growing what you eat is awesome!"
- "The opportunity to learn how to grow my own food—it's a lost art!"
- "Everything! I love being able to eat fresh veggies!"
- "The need for food"

Project Fresh

- Project Fresh provides an opportunity for low income seniors to include more locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables in their diets.
- Throughout the year UCOM identifies eligible seniors, age 60 or older, who may be interested in shopping at a farmers' market.
- Enrollees receive a one hour educational presentation that combines program details with nutritional information. (put on by MSUE)
- Program participants are given between \$20 and \$40 worth of coupons to be used to purchase Michigan fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets.
- The program runs from June 1st through October 1st.

This program is administrated and funded by Senior Meals in collaboration with MSUE .



Farmer's Market Rideshare

Who: Any UCOM clients

What: UCOM will be taking 15-20 clients to the farmers market where they will be able to spend an hour shopping for locally grown and produced foods.

When: Thursday late afternoons during the summer



Where: A local Grand Rapids farmers' market

Why: A big part of being a green community is eating healthy, local, and sustainable foods, however many clients in our area don't have access to this.

Families with food stamps can participate in the Double Up Food Bucks program, which allows food stamp recipients to spend up to \$20 a week and receive \$40 worth of produce.

Project Fresh participants can also use their coupons here

CFL Bulb Site

UCOM is a recycling site for used CFLs. Because compact florescent light bulbs contain a small amount of mercury, it is important to dispose of them properly.