

# Stories

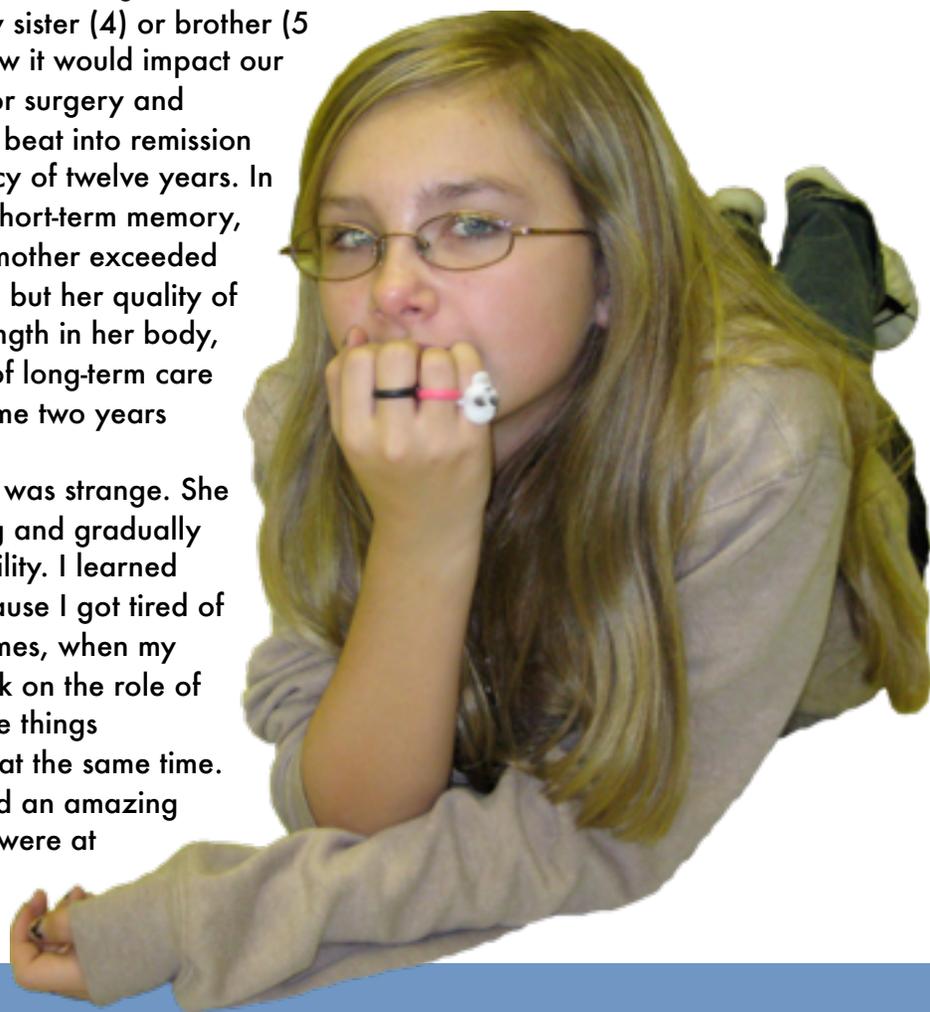
The Newsletter of New City Neighbors

## Trouble - Eric Schalk

I started to write this article a week before Christmas. My intent was to write about the growing problem of homes being broken into in our community. Before I could complete the article, something happened that shook me in a way I hadn't felt previously. On December 23, 2010 my mother passed away after twenty five years of fighting the effects of cancer.

When I was seven, she was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor and given six months to live. Neither I, nor my sister (4) or brother (5 months) knew what was happening or how it would impact our lives. Despite the odds, she survived major surgery and significant radiation. The tumor had been beat into remission and the doctors gave her a life expectancy of twelve years. In the process of irradiating the tumor, her short-term memory, and pituitary gland were damaged. My mother exceeded the twelve years they originally gave her, but her quality of life began to decline. She slowly lost strength in her body, her mind weakened, she was in and out of long-term care facilities and finally entered a nursing home two years ago at the age of 54.

Due to my mother's illness, my childhood was strange. She taught me how to cook when I was young and gradually encouraged me to take on that responsibility. I learned how to wash clothes at a young age because I got tired of losing items to the "dryer." There were times, when my father was starting his business, that I took on the role of parent to my younger siblings. All of these things frustrated me, but all of them shaped me at the same time. I survived a lot of instability because I had an amazing church family that surrounded me. There were at least two women who served as mothers and they took the time to listen to me as



Winter  
2011

Seeking to be a diverse, welcoming ministry that works with Northeast Grand Rapids neighbors to restore and develop their community.

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I spilled my heart. The church provided relief, stability and hope during many years when I struggled greatly and I am who I am because of their love and patience.

I'm telling you this because the more I do ministry in the city, the more I realize my story isn't that unique. It may not be cancer, but there are many children struggling because their parents are unable to care for them, or simply make the choice not to. These children need people like you and me to come along side of them, care about them, provide encouragement and point them to Jesus.

New City Neighbors is in the business of loving children. The kids we work with need Jesus, hope and adults who care. This is what we seek to provide with every ministry we run. As 2011 unfolds, I'm inviting you to consider partnering with us like never before to help ensure that many more children have the opportunity for hope. Consider volunteering with some girls at GEMS, help with Bible studies at EMS, or maybe just volunteer to drive kids home in our 15 passenger van. Become a gardener so that you can build relationships with people who need a friend.

Volunteer to read to students at Breaktime. Provide a meal at one of our ministries and buy baked goods from the Bakery. If you live far way, or simply aren't able to participate in these ways, consider becoming a regular donor. The truth is, we can't operate our ministries without financial support from people like you.

The children in this community need hope and encouragement and with your help, we can provide them with this in 2011.

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## Thinking About the Future

I've always wished I had the DeLorean from *Back to the Future*. There are definitely some times in the past I'd like to visit to prevent myself from saying something stupid. Two instances immediately come to mind, and if you want to hear them, you'll have to ask me in person. I'd also like to go to the future and see what New City Neighbors is like in five, ten and even fifteen years. My hope is that it would be both radically different, and yet incredibly the same.

New City Neighbor's has always had an identity entrenched in youth ministry. Almost all of our ministries focus on children who live in our community and thrive on our holistic approach to life transformation. While we love these ministries, and believe that they will be a part of us for a long time, we are trying to discover other avenues of ministry that God may be calling us to. As we look ahead, we are working to answer the question that some of you have asked; what will NCN look like five years from now?

To answer that question we have begun the process of strategic planning. We are currently working to survey parents, volunteers, teachers, and our community to evaluate our ministries, determine current needs, and look for opportunities for growth. This process isn't just about growing NCN, it is about empowering neighbors to take action on their own behalf. We want to find out what our neighbors are good at and help them find a place to serve their community and make it a place they are proud of.

We are excited about this process because we know that God will use it to enhance our current ministries and open the doors to opportunities we haven't explored.

We look forward to sharing our findings with you and inviting you into this learning process. Like you, we believe that NCN has a place in this community for years to come and while we may look different five years from now, we will still be pursuing the same mission to restore and develop the Creston community.



### **A Way to Bless NCN and Challenge Eric**

Need To Breathe has a song with a chorus that begins with "I will run when it looks like love." How do you make running look like love? I think that you run in a way that brings glory to God and blesses his kingdom work. That is what we are trying to do with our first ever *Run Eric Run* fundraiser.

*Run Eric Run* is about raising funds, helping kids become healthy, and rallying people for a good cause. Here is how it will work:

**Level 1** - Youth Running Group. Starting in March we will begin working with neighborhood kids to prepare them for the Fifth/Third Jr. 5k. Our goal is to get kids in better shape and help them take part in raising money for the programs that benefit them. Kids will be soliciting pledges for their race in hope of raising \$300 to sponsor a child in Breaktime.

**Level 2** - Run for NCN. Instead of pledging funds, run in the Fifth/Third Riverbank run and get people to pledge money to NCN. A friend of NCN did this last year and nearly raised \$5,000.

**Level 3** - Make a pledge to sponsor Eric in the Fifth/Third Riverbank Run. The amount of money pledged from the three combined levels will determine how far he runs. If we receive \$1,000 in pledges, Eric will run the 5k race. If we receive \$5,000, Eric will run the 10k race. If we receive \$10,000, Eric will run the 25k race and hopefully survive. We'll track the pledges on the NCN website with a thermometer. The race is May 14 and the training has already begun. Join us today by pledging online or through the mail!!!

### **Ministry Wish List**

- 4 Sheets of 3/4" Plywood and 20 8' 2x4's to build a Pit Dodgeball ring - \$300
- Rototiller - \$500



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### Other Opportunities

1. Bring a meal for EMS or Breaktime - there are always plenty of openings and we'd love the help.
2. Buy Baked Goods - In late June the Bakery store will be open for business and you can daily get your fill of fresh baked goodness.
3. Become a monthly donor - The gift of a monthly donation allows us to better financially plan.
4. Become a driver - volunteer to drive the van on EMS nights. We generally take 15-20 students home each week and could use someone to drive our fifteen-passenger van.



### Volunteer Opportunities

#### Garden Plot

If you live near Fourth Reformed Church, and enjoy gardening and meeting people, you should consider getting a plot in our garden. Plots are cheap and allow you to get to know neighbors, grow great produce, and see a different side of the community.

### Adopt a Breaktimer!

Help neighborhood children have an amazing summer by adopting one of them for Breaktime 2011. With meals, field trips, and supplies, it generally costs NCN \$300 to have a student attend Breaktime. By adopting a student for \$300 you are helping to ensure that he/she has daily nutritious meals, academic activities, daily exposure to the Gospel, the chance to develop new friendships, a reading tutor, and field trips to places like Lake Michigan, where many of them never get to go.

When you adopt a Breaktimer, we will provide you with information about the child as soon as Breaktime begins. You will also receive regular updates of how that child is doing throughout the summer. If you would like, you can also choose to come to Breaktime and each lunch with your student or be that student's reading tutor.

If you want to take advantage of this great opportunity, simply make out a check to New City Neighbors for \$300 and write "Adopt a Breaktimer" in the memo line. If you have any questions please contact Eric Schalk at 970-4817 or [erics@newcityneighbors.org](mailto:erics@newcityneighbors.org).