

Love Your Neighbor  
3300 Van Buren Street  
Hudsonville, MI 49426

## A LETTER FROM JODI

Olga's story makes me smile. I hope it makes you smile, too. God has invited us into relationships with each other that reflect all the joy, dignity, restoration, and promise that our God is the source of. Olga's deep compassion for other people make her a critical part of our community.


Her story also beautifully illustrates what change looks like in Love Your Neighbor's Life Skills Program: change happens in community. The resources like food, gas vouchers, housing support, counseling, and other critical items meet immediate needs, and are a way of caring for people in our program, but they are not the reasons that lives change.

God works these miracles through the relationships that form between Life Skills participants and their teachers, volunteers, and peer supports.

**Here at Love, we are working hard to create programs that can help with accessible housing and emergency resources (the areas that we are pouring our time and resources into right now), but we know this: it is when you volunteer to teach, to care for children, to drive, to walk alongside people that the change happens.**

Love Your Neighbor simply can't do what we set out to do without people stepping into the lives of people who are struggling.

Please prayerfully consider donating to pour into Life Skills, the earned resources provided, and the families who show up each week.



Jodi Cole Meyer  
Executive Director

Donate to support these new and growing programs to build the Kingdom of God.



In response to the lack of affordable housing, we partnered with the community to offer accessible housing during families' transitional phases.



With inflated food, gas, and housing costs, we realize the need of another Life Skills Program, which we plan to launch this fall in partnership with Hudsonville churches.



When local families need access to emergency food, the Ottawa County Sheriff Department will lead them to our emergency food pantry for resources.

Connect with us online at [www.lovewm.org](http://www.lovewm.org)

# A CELEBRATION OF OLGA'S STORY



 **LOVE**  
YOUR NEIGHBOR

Our 2022 Spring Newsletter



# The Rebuilding Of A Family

Olga tried to imagine the idea of raising her daughters alone, separated from her husband. The initial fear crippled her and the pressure to stay was unbearable. She felt stuck, no longer recognizing herself in her Florida home.

Tunnel vision overpowered and after countless years of feeling broken, helpless, and stuck, it finally broke.

Her vision cleared and in a matter of time, Olga's bags were packed and she left her hopeless situation to move to Michigan where her family lived.

In the early stages of her move, Olga felt weary and unsettled. Depression began to set in.

**"I was angry at God. I was making decisions on my own, without leaning on Him", stated Olga.**

Friends began to notice Olga's change in demeanor and felt called to help. It turned out, a short introduction went a LONG way. Olga was introduced to Wendy, a Love Your Neighbor staff member and graduate of Life Skills, who encouraged her to learn more about Love Your Neighbor's resources. After learning more about the Life Skills Program, Olga decided it would be a good fit for her and her family.

Just as Olga was digging in, the Life Skills Program transitioned online due to COVID. However, this did not put a halt to Olga's plans to keep following God's path. Her smile was persistent and her motivation outweighed any uncertainty with online learning. Her heart continued to open and the anger slowly began to subside.

After Olga completed the financial literacy course, she met Meghan, her peer support. Her heart began to fill with God's love and she was beginning to build a community, thanks to Meghan's positive guidance and encouragement.

**"I can walk into a room again and I am outgoing, happy, and hopeful. I realized that you have to depend on God to be transformed", explained Olga.**

Wendy also became an uplifting presence in Olga's life. She gave Olga a devotional book that has guided her journey with Christ. "I am now living life through CHRIST instead of relying on myself", Olga mentioned.

The doubt and despair that was weighing Olga down has lifted and her desire to mentor others during their season of struggle is an example of how important a Christ-centered community has become to her.

After recently graduating from the Life Skills Program, Olga already found her niche as a volunteer in Love Your Neighbor's food pantry.

Not only is she giving back as a food pantry volunteer, but she plans on utilizing her incredible cooking talents to provide food for our Life Skills appreciation dinner this Spring.

The Love Your Neighbor community can personally speak to the fact that Olga Velazques lights up every room she walks into, spreads her unconditional love to those around her, and wholeheartedly gives her heart and soul to God. It has been a blessing watching Olga grow into the woman, mother, and community member she is today.

**To put things into perspective, Olga entered the program with no boots or coat, and she is now leaving with boots, coats, a community, a relationship with Christ, and hope for her and her family. For that, we thank God.**

**Financial hardship is the initial reason why families join Life Skills.**

**40% of our community lives paycheck to paycheck, lacking housing and groceries for their family.**

**"My faith, the Life Skills Program, and my community brought back my joy."**

*Olga Velazques*

**Transformation is experienced through the hope and love of Jesus. Sometimes, Jesus is introduced to a family for the first time through the community of Life Skills.**

**"God truly transforms people by providing hope and community."**

*Olga Velazques*

**Each participant is paired with a peer support who guides & encourages them along the way.**

**66% of our graduates either become a peer support or serve in another area of the ministry.**



**Olga and her peer support, Meghan.**



**Olga Velazques**