



Love INC
Love In the Name of Christ

LOVE LETTERS

A PUBLICATION OF LOVE IN THE NAME OF CHRIST

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Rosewood Church, one of Love INC's church partners, is an outreach-minded church located in Jenison. Kaitlyn Peterson, their Director of Children's Ministry and a volunteer at Love INC, uses their Summer of Service initiative to create service events designed to support the local community. Rosewood is a great example of a church body who encourages servant hearts and who seeks to develop relationships and opportunities for service in their own neighborhoods. They exemplify this servant heart whether they are supporting Love INC by stuffing backpacks for local students, helping clean up the streets and yards of their neighbors after a large storm, or serving with organizations like Brooklyn's Promise or the Veteran's home.

Rosewood's mission is to create accessible opportunities for members of their church to reach out a hand to support their neighbors.

After the storms this past July, Kaitlyn and the lead pastor of Rosewood, Austin Vondracek, saw a need and without hesitation, created a spontaneous opportunity for the community to fill it. When the storm hit, it took out power, destroyed houses, and created debris blocking the roads and littering the yards of Georgetown residents. Kaitlyn notes, "Georgetown doesn't have a service or a location to dispose of brush. The storm devastated members of the community who couldn't afford the \$800 services of yard waste clean-up companies." Kaitlyn wanted to support the community beyond simply being a cooling center in the 100 degree heat, so she took the initiative to organize a clean-up event. She posted to a Facebook group asking if there were members of the community that would be willing to donate trailers to help clean up debris following the storm.

**1st night: 85+ volunteers and 20-25 trailers
2nd night: 100+ volunteers and 30-35 trailers
Total: 72,000 cubic feet removed in 3 nights**

Through a network of church members, Rosewood Church was able to use 20-35 donated trucks and trailers over the two-night clean up. Victory Farms also donated a place to dump the debris in response to Kaitlyn's service project. The Georgetown Fire department even volunteered to unload the debris from the trucks that came to dump, and over 85 volunteers from both the church and the community showed up for each evening. Rosewood's efforts encouraged other churches to jump in on organizing a third night to finish the clean-up efforts in the town. Kaitlyn emphasized that the success of serving the community is not determined by perfect organization but in lowering the barrier to service. "Service works when we as a church take care of the details, providing opportunities for individuals to volunteer," she said. This approach to service allows any generation of the church or the community to join service projects. Eventually volunteers grow to love serving and even suggest new volunteer opportunities. Kaitlyn noted that the events are particularly important for the children at Rosewood,

"We don't have VBS because we've experienced serving in the community leaves a bigger impression on the kids. They remember having fun volunteering. They are always asking me if we will be doing this service project again next year. Age isn't a factor in serving God's kingdom."



By teaching people how to volunteer and providing opportunities to serve, Rosewood's community gains an ability to see the need in their own neighborhood, and to grow hearts that are more inclined to spontaneously act to meet those needs. Not only do they build bonds by serving the community and leading by example, but they also strive to serve each other. Whether it is older members coming alongside young children to assist them in their activities, or preparing meals for one another, the service starts within the church and overflows to the community. Thank you, Rosewood Church, for taking action when you saw an opportunity to serve your neighbors.

Top: a trailer dropping off debris to the growing pile at Victory Farms.

Bottom: Volunteers from Rosewood clearing debris alongside community members.

