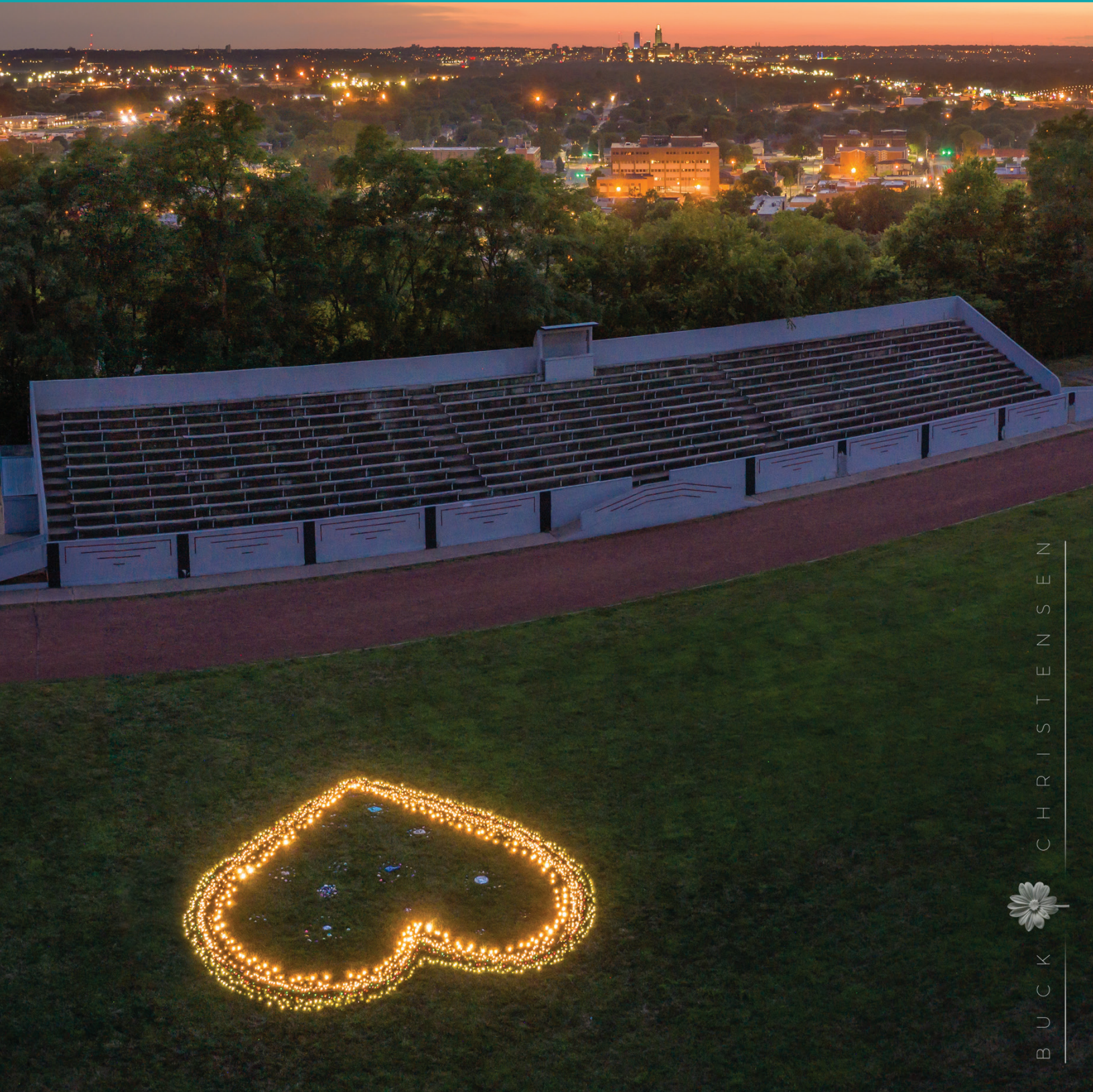


THE 7th 2nd INITIATIVE

INSIDERS UPDATE



CHRISTENSEN



BUCK

FROM THE CEO

Although COVID had a dramatic effect on our public events, I am very proud of the 712 team on the pivots they've made to engage the public and drive our mission over the past few months. Some of which you'll read throughout this mid-year update.

Our Farmers Market, Clean Sweep and Shoe Drive still went forward while implementing social distancing practices. And the Shamrock Shuffle with usually 400 participants went virtual to a weekly 5k format and now has 1,000+ members. Now instead of just an annual 5k to drive better fitness our citizens do a weekly 5k. Its outstanding; think of the calories burned.



The Block Party trailer did experience cancelations due to the pandemic, but the Backyard Movie Night has been checked out weekly (often multiple times a week) and is our new hot ticket item.

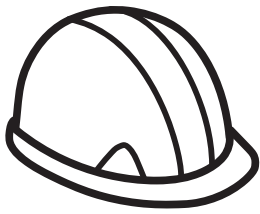
Then there's our development arm that has never been busier. With a generous Iowa West Foundation award late 2019, we capitalized the Downtown Revitalization Fund and had three developers submit applications this month that could infuse up to 37 market rate housing units in the Downtown and increase the local tax base by 100-1100%. For our project at 530 W. Broadway we hope to secure the remaining \$1.0 million needed by this fall with intent to break ground on the \$5.3 million renovation in January.

In the beginning of the year we also received an incredible award to start a Housing Revitalization Program from the Southwest Iowa Foundation to renovate or build 25 homes in the west end and central districts over the next five years. This, combined with our new homeowner assistance program Rock the Block, lifts our neighborhoods like nothing we have had in Council Bluffs before. And be on the lookout, a 712 Neighborhood Tool Trailer will be rolling out this month for citizen checkout. This, along with our neighborhood workshops and Building a Better Bluffs video series, helps create the cultural of renovation and pride of ownership we have all been dreaming of.

With all that's going on citizen engagement has been outstanding on all fronts; from 5K Fridays to volunteer housing demolition groups and sharing stories on our next redevelopment project at the former Iowa Clothes. It is the ideal model leaders envisioned when forming The 712 Initiative. Even with a world pandemic, we are having a great year because of this increased following and engagement. 712 Day was a great way to pause and celebrate the wonderful community assets Council Bluffs has to offer.

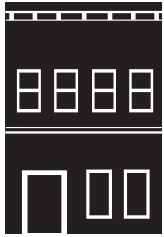
All of this could not be possible without your support. Its nearly an impossible task to make money on projects and events like these. The private sector is not interested for that very reason which leaves our organization to fill that gap. By fueling our team, we are able to leverage incredible support from the private, local, state, and hopefully next year federal level to this community's economy. Thank you for supporting this great organization and moving this community forward.

Sheryl Garst, CEO



\$12,000
invested through demolition volunteers

1,000+
engaged in online 5K community



\$60,000
awarded to new 100 Block project

100%
community garden plots planted



712 Day

This year we launched the inaugural 712 Day on July 12, 2020. A day to spread community pride and encourage people to remember why they love Council Bluffs.

We partnered with the City of Council Bluffs, the Chamber of Commerce, the Council Bluffs CVB, and PACE to provide this community effort to spread positivity. On 712 Day we had **250 rocks** placed in our heart of lights at old Kirn Park and collected many memories and points of pride from the participants.

In addition to the rocks, a number of local businesses posted a "I ♥ CB" photo to social media and/or adopted a creative special or item to represent 712 Day. For example, Full Fledged Brewery had a \$7.12 crowler special and 712 Eat + Drink had all of their Council Bluffs inspired cocktails on special that day.



Our goal is that this day becomes embedded in Council Bluffs' social and business fabric. We hope this becomes an annual day to recognize how special our community is and encourage people and businesses to take the day to spread the love for Council Bluffs.

OUR MISSION

The 712 Initiative is aimed at improving the economic vitality in redevelopment areas through investments in the built environment, activating public spaces, and delivering programs that increase social engagement and healthy lifestyles.

WEB & SOCIAL

Website: the712initiative.org



@712initiative



@FarmersMarketCB



@CreekTopGardens
@CelebrateCB

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DEVELOPMENT



HOUSING REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

After speaking directly with over 100 Council Bluffs residents last year, we heard the same thing over and over... "I wish someone would do something about that house." We all have that house on the block - vacant, run down, or neglected by an absent landowner. This year The 712 Initiative launched a housing revitalization program to start addressing those problem properties.

The goal is to renovate 25 homes in the west end and central district over the next 5 years for single-family use.

Projects so far:

2307 3RD AVENUE: 98% change in tax base once complete

- 2 Bed, 1 Bath
- 1,069 SF finished space & 450 SF unfinished basement/storage

702 BLUFF STREET: 43% change in tax base once complete

- 3 Bed, 1 Bath
- 1,500 SF finished living space & 1,500 SF unfinished basement/storage

2209 6TH AVENUE: 73% change in tax base once complete

- 4 Bed, 1.5 Bath
- 1,440 SF finished living space & 720 SF unfinished basement/storage

Our first purchase was 2307 3rd Avenue - a half block from Edison Elementary and two blocks from groceries and city park. When listed for sale, the home was noted as a great investment opportunity. The home had years of deferred maintenance, was run down and was dirty. We purchased the home and have started a full gut/renovation.

While working at the property, another interested buyer stopped to check out the work on the house and noted "I was just going to paint the walls and rent the house out." So that says something about the need for a program such as this. Once complete, it will not only elevate the entire block but an individual or family will be able to get into this home with an estimated \$650/mo mortgage (including taxes) and be able to start building their wealth.

For this program, The 712 Initiative was able to secure a Southwest Iowa Foundation grant to cover the loss on these properties - the level of improvement needed that won't be recaptured in the sale of the home. Down payment assistance (\$10,000 for 2 homes) is also available thanks to the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund.

To learn more about these homes and the program, visit:

the712initiative.org/development/housing-revitalization-program

500 BLOCK UPDATE

As the first of three major projects on this block, 530 W Broadway is expected to start construction in early 2021. The renovation of this vacant building will bring new commercial space and 19 residential units to our downtown. In May, Lund-Ross was brought on board as the general contractor and is working closely with Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture to better understand the condition of the 1890s building.



This building is the former home to Iowa Clothes, a staple in the community from 1919 to 1996. In early June we asked the community to share their memories from the store and were blown away by the number of people that commented and shared their memories.



Through this post we had the opportunity to talk with past employees and a family member of the original owner, Harry Cohen. We've always known the potential of this property due to its architecture and location, but little did we know how much the previous Iowa Clothes owners had an impact on so many individuals. From employment to being one of the first stores to buy on credit. The stories have been inspiring and public support for the project has been invigorating.

Funding is expected to be completed in October with anticipated construction in January 2021 and completion February 2022.

Due to the interest shown in the project at 530 W Broadway, we have created a Facebook group to share updates on our projects on the 500 Block as they move down the pipeline. You can find the group at:

www.facebook.com/groups/500Block

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION FUND

This program allows the 712 to work with property owners to improve our downtown buildings, a way to restore the area to a vibrant unified district and attract investments by both businesses and visitors. The program is gap financing in the form of low interest or interest only loans to leverage private financing. The form of assistance was amended in 2020 so that the funding could recycle and continue to come back to assist other properties within the downtown.

The first award for 2020 is 130 W Broadway, once an eye care office, and more recently discovered to be a space where stolen goods were broken down to be sold. A \$60,000 low interest loan from this fund will assist with a complete renovation of the 1st floor commercial space and 2 residential units on the second floor. The project will restore the building's façade to local historical standards and lead to a **62% increase** in value.

To learn more about the fund, go to:

the712initiative.org/development/downtown-revitalization-fund



5K FRIDAY

Earlier this spring we unfortunately had to cancel the Shamrock Shuffle, our annual St. Patty's Day 5K Fun Run, just days before the event. In an effort to continue to engage these runners and help encourage people to get outside and stay active we created an online community called "**#5K Friday – Fitness at a Distance.**"



#5KFriday

This Facebook group started out very small with a core nucleus of 20 people. Our Director of Programming and Events kicked off this group with weekly 5K runs (on Fridays of course) highlighting different attractions throughout our community where he would film a short video recap encouraging others to get active and join the online community. The videos have been posted to the online group, along with community fitness and interaction goals that are continually met and even surpassed each week.

Through consistent effort and strategic goal setting the group continued to grow, and the online interactions became more positive and more frequent. Currently the #5KFriday group has more than 1,000 group members representing 25+ states. You'll find that the group has 150 – 250 people completing 5Ks each week and continues to be a platform full of positivity and encouragement to live active and healthy lifestyles.

BUILDING A BETTER BLUFFS

This online video series was created as an effort to provide our community with short video resources to improve their home or simply improve themselves.

The series highlights local businesses and partners teaching the audience about new skills and subjects. The video series had a wide array of topics; ranging from home refinancing, how to hang a ceiling fan, and how to address emotional eating. The Building a Better Bluffs series reached more than 20,000 people over the initial 10 weeks this program was delivered.

These videos were posted to our Facebook page and also live on our website for easy access to these great resources. And even more videos are in the works through more community partners.

To view the videos, visit:

the712initiative.org/betterbluffs





CREEKTOP GARDENS

Our 90 plot community garden is tended this year by more than 40 gardeners from our local community.

Typically each spring the garden is prepared for the season by large group volunteer efforts. Due to social distancing we had to reimagine how maintenance would be accomplished this year.

Through many individual and small group efforts we were able to prepare the garden for the season and create a beautiful space for our 40+ gardeners. The biggest highlight of the season is that for the first time in Jeff Snow's tenure at The 712 Initiative **all 90 plots** are rented and/or planted, which is quite the feat. This gardening space is in full bloom with many of the plots being harvested regularly.

Unfortunately this season we've been unable to use this space as an outdoor classroom to host students from the Council Bluffs Community School District as we did last year. With the help of Community Funds from CHI Health Mercy we have filmed and produced educational videos in place of physical lessons at the gardens. The videos aren't just for students though, you can watch them yourself at: the712initiative.org/events/creektop-gardens

FARMERS MARKET COUNCIL BLUFFS

Despite having a delayed start (starting June 11 instead of May 7) and having to overcome a few hurdles to abide by local regulations brought on due to the pandemic, the 11th annual season of our farmers market has been having a safe and successful season.

Each week more than 500 people come to the market in search of local produce, fresh eats, and a variety of artisan crafts. These people are spread out over an entire city block and are encouraged to social distance and wear masks.

Locally grown produce is sold by **8 of our 30 vendors**. And the furthest produce travels to our market is only 34 miles; much less travel than you would find with your produce at the local grocery store.

The market has remained a great place to support local growers and artisan vendors while in turn being an outdoor option to do your weekly shopping. We are proud to help support these local businesses and give the community the opportunity to do the same.





ROCK THE BLOCK TOOL TRAILER

Our 100 Interviews project last year led to the creation of the Housing Revitalization Program but that's not the only program that was launched due to the community feedback. We also found a need in our community for a resource to equip and empower folks to improve their physical environment themselves.

That's where our tool trailer comes in. By providing affordable access to quality home improvement equipment, we are aiming to promote a much needed culture of renovation in our town.

Similar to our popular Block Party Trailer, the Rock the Block trailer will be chock full of tools to reserve for a Council Bluffs residents home project needs. Inventory will include a large selection of landscaping, carpentry, cement, and power tools. Even some scaffolding to help you safely renovate and paint those hard to reach spots.

Through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs and First National Bank of Omaha, the trailer will be launching in late summer for Council Bluffs residents to check out. Just like our previous programs this trailer will just require a refundable deposit, making it an essentially free tool to utilize for those big exterior projects someone just doesn't have the right tools for yet.



712 WORKSHOPS

In the spring we partnered with Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs to host two workshops geared towards home restoration to give homeowners the knowledge and confidence to make their HGTV dreams a reality.



Half seminar, half hands-on, the workshops were well attended, each meeting the 20 participant capacity that was set in place.

One workshop focused on the nine steps of restoration from scraping and paint removal through wood repair to the final paint coat, along with carpentry basics. The other focused on restoring windows and gave participants the skills to analyze their window condition, perform repairs, and restore wood and hardware. Participants were able to get hands-on practice with many things including paint preparation steps for their home and stripping windows.

We had a great time partnering with the local professionals from Lawrence Paint Co. for these workshops and hope to plan more workshops soon.



BACKYARD MOVIE NIGHT

With theaters closed and many families looking for fun, safe, and memorable activities for the kids, our Backyard Movie Night Program has been a perfect fit to fill the need.

After a soft-launch last year, 2020 has been the first official year for the program. So far, we've supplied 40 families and their neighbors with the supplies to host a movie night in their own yard.

Even our own staff has checked out the equipment to host a backyard party. But like everyone else they had to reserve their date in advance because the equipment has been quite the hot commodity. The Backyard Movie Night Program has been a great way for our community members to get the experience of going to the movies while remaining safe in their own yard.

You can reserve it yourself at: the712initiative.org/neighborhoods



DEMO VOLUNTEERS

As our Housing Revitalization Program started this spring we soon realized we could use a little extra help to complete some of the necessary renovations. In order to save thousands on demolition work for these projects, we recruited volunteers for light demolition work. (Social distanced and in small groups of course.)

We had some amazing volunteers step up to help and were able to demo the interior of our 3rd Ave house over the course of 3 weeks. Elevating the home to have a 21st century layout. The volunteers at our Bluff St project helped to pull up carpet to reveal beautiful hardwood floors, map the electrical in the home, and tear out some drop down ceilings.

Equipped with sledgehammers and pry bars our volunteers helped us remove the front and back porches, interior walls, and even a chimney. These are just a handful of the tasks that we were able to accomplish with the help of our volunteers. The full list is very impressive.

With the volunteers help we were able to save over **\$12,000 in labor costs** which we can invest right back into the projects. That's approximately the cost of 240,000 framing nails, 3,000 2x4s, 1,500 hardware kits, 60 interior and exterior doors, or the siding for a 2,000 sq. foot home. It all adds up!

A huge shout out goes to the 60+ volunteers that donated their time and talents to make these projects feasible during a pandemic. This includes but not limited to groups from **Lowe's, Edward Jones Investments, Berkshire Hathaway Real Estate, Creighton University, and PACE**. Many hands might light work and they truly helped to make a difference in these homes.





Our annual volunteer awards recognize those who have gone above and beyond to help our organization through volunteer work in the year prior.

Left: Heather Beekhuizen and First Christian Church were recognized as the 2019 Volunteer Group of the Year



Right: Ciandra Tripp was recognized as our 2019 Volunteer of the Year

TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Neighborhood Toolkit – coming soon

Whether you're a neighborhood association looking for grant resources to fund a project or a homeowner looking for some assistance, you can find what you need with our Neighborhood Toolkit; a new resource page on our website. We're compiling many local and regional resources to help our neighbors get connected with what they need. We are lucky to live in a place that access to so many great organization and foundations – and now you'll be able to find information in one place.



Rock the Block – coming soon

With our housing program in full swing, our organization wanted to affect more than just one home. Rock the Block will offer neighbors around our west-end renovation projects an opportunity to tackle that project they just haven't had the chance to do.

We were planning to launch the Rock the Block program in the spring but had to delay it due to the pandemic. Now the 712 is excited to move forward with the program in an adjusted format in early Fall with social distancing and safety precautions set in place. Soon there will be the opportunity to help your fellow neighbor and sign up for a variety of volunteer projects tied to enhance curb-appeal and complete exterior repair projects.

"Fall into Gardening" Seed Share – September 27

With the success of our 2019 "March Into Spring" Seed Share we had big plans for this year, but had to cancel it in the spring. We've rolled with the punches and have a new plan to keep the tradition going. Our annual seed exchange will now be held on September 27 at CreekTop Gardens to allow for social distancing and being outdoors, in collaboration with many community partners.

BIKEtober in the Bluffs – October 3

One thing has been made certain during these trying times, and that is that more people are out on bikes than ever before. Dust off those wheels, save the date, and get excited for our third-annual BIKEtober in the Bluffs on October 3! This year's event won't be too different from the previous year, thanks to the ability to be outside, but we plan to take several safety precautions to ensure everyone is safe and feels comfortable. There will be the standard 12-mile route, and for the more hardcore cyclists we're working on a 25-mile route.



Thank you to our many sponsors and supporters that have made a financial commitment to The 712 Initiative in the past year.



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