Summer 2026 Newsletter

Crowded Closet
MCC THRIFT SHOP

Challenges and hope on Kenya learning tour

Recently, Crowded Closet Operations Manager Alisa Ketchum traveled to Kenya as part of a textile learning tour with ten members of the MCC Thrift and Peace Practice network from the US and Canada. The purpose of the trip was to better understand where secondhand clothing goes after it leaves thrift stores like Crowded Closet and to learn more about the global impact of textile reuse and waste.

MCC Textile Salvage Learning Tour members navigate the bustle of Gikomba Market vendors and their goods.

pride in their work and a strong sense of community

One of the most impactful experiences for Alisa was visiting Gikomba Market in Nairobi. As one of the world's largest second-hand clothing markets, it receives 11,000 clothing bales per day. Everywhere the group walked, people were sorting, repairing, redesigning, and reselling clothing with incredible creativity and purpose. Garments that might be considered "waste" in the United States were being transformed into valuable products through skill, entrepreneurship, and resourcefulness. Alisa was especially moved by the pride people took in their work and the strong sense of community woven throughout the market.

A Gikomba Market vendor proudly displays his upcycle-designed goods for sale.

Crowded Closet Operations Manager, Alisa Ketchum, enjoys hospitality and learning from a member of the Masai Tribe.

The trip also exposed the group to the difficult realities of global textile waste. At Dandora Dumpsite, they witnessed the overwhelming scale of discarded clothing and other waste that can no longer be reused. Seeing individuals work in dangerous conditions to recover recyclable materials was both heartbreaking and eye-opening. Yet even in the midst of these challenges, Alisa encountered organizations, designers, and entrepreneurs working toward sustainable solutions through textile recovery, recycling, and creative reuse. "There was a noticeable sense of pride and joy in the [shop owners]. This was one of the most eye-opening parts of the day—seeing a community that while economically challenged displayed resilience, hospitality and happiness in ways that were deeply moving." The experience reinforced the importance of Crowded Closet's mission and served as a powerful reminder that caring for people and creation must go hand in hand.

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Upcoming Events

Tu	7/14	Shop Tour led by Amy
Th	7/16	Work Night
Sun	7/19	Donation Drive-thru, downtown Iowa City
Th	8/6	Work Night
Tu	8/11	Shop Tour led by Amy
M	8/17	Summer Potluck #2
Th	8/20	Work Night
M	9/7	Closed - Labor Day
Tu	9/8	Shop Tour led by Amy

Crowded Closet
MCC THRIFT SHOP

851 Hwy 6, Iowa City, IA 52240

Changing lives locally and around the world. Shop. Donate. Volunteer.

Growing the Volunteer Office

As Crowded Closet continues to grow, so does the Volunteer Office team that supports the many volunteers who serve each week.

This summer, Erin Ramer will transition from Processing Manager into a new role as Volunteer Engagement Coordinator. Erin brings years of experience, strong relationships, and a deep understanding of the Closet community. Her warmth, encouragement, and care for volunteers will be a tremendous gift to the Volunteer Office.

We are also excited that Alex McGinnis will remain on the team as Volunteer Administrative Coordinator as she relocates to Chicago in July. While we will miss Alex's daily presence, she will continue supporting volunteer onboarding, scheduling, VicNet management, and other administrative systems remotely. Alex remains a key part of the team and plans to return regularly for meetings and special events. Eva Anderson will continue serving as Volunteer Manager as the Volunteer Office team works together to support and encourage the volunteers who make the mission of Crowded Closet possible.

Left to right: Volunteer Engagement Coordinator Erin Ramer, Volunteer Manager Eva Anderson and Volunteer Administrative Coordinator Alex McGinnis.

Volunteer Office | 319-800-5574 (call/text)
crowdedcloset.volunteer@gmail.com

Volunteer Curtis Yoder prepares donated vacuums for resale at the shop.

Faithfully serving behind the scenes

For many years, Curtis Yoder has been a steady part of the Crowded Closet community, serving with humility, care, and generosity. One of Curtis's behind-the-scenes ministries has been preparing donated vacuums for the sales floor. Every few weeks, vacuums are gathered up and taken to Curtis's workshop in Kalona, where he tests, cleans, repairs, and prepares them for resale. Because of his work, Crowded Closet has been able to offer reliable vacuums at reasonable prices to bless neighbors throughout our community.

While Curtis will continue his involvement with Crowded Closet, he plans to retire from vacuum servicing later this fall. If this sounds like a role you or someone you know might enjoy, we would love to hear from you. Please reach out to the Volunteer Office at 319-800-5574 (call/text) to learn more.

Thank you, Curtis, for the many ways your faithful service has blessed Crowded Closet, the local community and our neighbors around the world through the work of MCC.