

August's Theme is Summer Garden Memories. Here are a few favorite memories and thoughts from our AmeriCorps Refugee Rise Summer Team Members, Nguyen and Izzie.

*From Nguyen:*

"Weeding is usually one of the most tedious job in the garden especially when it is scorching hot out, but what made me enjoyed it so much was the conversations Izzie, Gedeon, Phillip and I had. We would talk about the differences in our cultures and would laugh at how ridiculous some were. At the end of the day, I felt like I was not working, but learning the diverse cultures Storm Lake has to offer.

I will definitely miss Gedeon's dance moves and singing. I enjoyed watching him dancing in the garden at the most random time and place. I think that is when I usually would crack up and bust out my "can't breath" laugh.

Farming is a big part of Iowa, yet not a lot of kids who live in a city get to see what farming is like. I hope that the Garden Project at The Bridge this summer helped the kids to expand their knowledge on farming/agriculture. I hope they will feel they have accomplished something because they have been there from the beginning, planting the seeds to harvesting."



*From Izzie:*

"The garden this summer has been full of its ups and downs, but my most favorite memory was the conversations we had. I learned so much about other cultures and family lives in that garden. I think the calmness and openness of the garden gives kids a better opportunity for trust. However, I didn't only learn from the kids, I learned so much from my coworkers. Not only about their culture, but about their faith, moral beliefs, and about their lives. I got to know so many people on a deep level because of the time in the garden, and now I can walk away with new friends and connections.

The garden program has opened up so many opportunities. To start off with, it gives children a chance to build a healthy relationship with good people. From my experience, the biggest thing taken away from the garden isn't the prizes or rewards they get, but the bonds that have started to form. We give kids the opportunity to expand on their problem solving skills by challenging them to new tasks and how they should complete them. We open up a new door for some of these kids, and we open their eyes to new ideas. We also try to encourage a strong work ethic while they are young so that they can take it with them wherever they may go.

The garden is more than plants and weeds, the garden is a place of peace and accomplishments and of happiness. It's a place where we connect and learn together. The garden is an open place with good pouring out from every seed."

