

**April 1 LoveCola Project: Changing the Community**

**“Neighborhood-by-Neighborhood”**

City of Refuge Church is building relationships while serving its community through a special one-day project on Saturday, April 1. While LoveCola and Home Works of America are coordinating with the church to reroof a neighbor’s house, City of Refuge members and volunteers will host a block party to engage individuals and families living nearby. According to Home Works’ Kenny Robertson, the home improvement ministry is intentionally moving to a project model that connects with a nearby church so that community relationships can continue to grow long after the project ends.

“We realized the opportunity for a local church to do more after a Home Works project is complete, since projects have typically finished with no follow up,” Robertson explains. “So LoveCola joined forces and we are looking for ways to link a local church in a more concrete way with other local churches cooperating together.”

JayWill Wilson pastors City of Refuge, an Eau Claire church plant that began meeting in the Belmont Baptist Church facility in 2021. City of Refuge members have been prayerwalking the neighborhood and spent a great deal of time identifying the recipient of the reroofing project. The project’s homeowner lives a block from the church and is a faithful attender.

“We are especially excited about this day, because it will happen ahead of our two-year anniversary the following Sunday, which is also Easter Sunday,” Wilson says of the project.

Home Works and LoveCola have partnered in many Midlands ministry projects, including the [reroofing of GraceChurch of Columbia](https://columbiametro.org/new-roof-at-gracechurch-of-columbia-evidence-of-kingdom-work/) in 2022. Robertson says Home Works accepts applications from homeowners who are unable to afford a variety of structural repairs, and the April 1 reroofing is just one of about 20 projects currently being served. He expects that City of Refuge’s impact could mirror what New Heights Baptist in the Irmo area was able to accomplish through a similar project that saw seven churches, Columbia International University students, and members of the local fire department partner together to serve that community.

“That kicked off a vision for how this could be done,” Robertson says, adding that volunteer support is critical to helping a congregation like City of Refuge effectively reach into the community. “Volunteers are needed to help carry materials, remove debris, prepare food, direct parking, and help with the block party. There is a lot of work to be done, and it’s not just putting on a roof.”

This is how the CMBA Family of Churches relates. On April 1, City of Refuge needs many extra hands to serve as church representatives in the neighborhood to help the community further identify the ministry with the congregation closest to them. According to Wilson, his congregation has “committed to loving the neighborhood well and creating a true presence there as much as we can. So having a project like this and of this size will show we really mean it.”

LoveCola is coordinating the [online volunteer sign up](https://colanetwork.shelbynextchms.com/external/form/6947ff2f-54b4-4d27-9ce1-df93010ad59a) process for the City of Refuge project. CMBA churches are encouraged to invite their individuals, small groups, and mission teams to partner in this local missions opportunity in “our own backyard.” According to Robertson, the experience might open even more doors to serve locally.

“On April 1, volunteers are going to be ‘City of Refuge Church supporters.’ This builds cooperation among churches, and serves as a great reminder to just live on mission.” Robertson says. “Volunteers can transfer anything they do during this project back to their own neighborhood. Maybe you have a neighbor across the street who can’t physically cut their shrubs, this a good reminder to go and help others with what they need.”

For his part, Wilson says this opportunity can also allow CMBA churches to see God’s Kingdom spread neighborhood by neighborhood. “Volunteering is saying ‘I want to invest in the Kingdom of God in this area,’ and then know that when the opportunity comes to invest in your area, other CMBA churches can jump on board there, too. We can change our communities neighborhood-by-neighborhood.”