

Clay Care Kits: Creativity, Care, & Community

Summer 2026

When families in Twin Cities neighborhoods began navigating the uncertainty of increased immigration enforcement in January 2026, many students stopped attending school, and households faced added stress. In response, Northern Clay Center created Clay Care Kits—small, hands-on art kits designed to bring moments of creativity, calm, and connection directly into homes. As often happens in times of crisis, the idea for these kits came together quickly, with the support of many NCC staff and community members.

While each kit was small, the intention behind it was much bigger: to remind families that creativity, expression, and care remain available even during uncertain times. A small ball of clay can become a figure, an animal, a flower—or simply a moment of quiet focus and imagination.

On two separate occasions, volunteers—including NCC staff, board members, teaching artists, students, and community members—gathered to assemble the kits. Each \$3 packet contained three 1-oz pieces of colored polymer clay, one wooden sculpting tool, instructions translated into Spanish, Somali and English, and a QR code linking to a video tutorial. Volunteers hand-wrote notes like “You are important” and “Spring is coming” on each bag. The first session produced 300 kits; the second, 550 more. Amid the hum of conversation and the clatter of supplies, it was clear that this was more than packing—it was a community



Top Image: Volunteers help pack 300 Clay Care Kits in January. Bottom image: A close up of some completed Clay Care Kits.



TA message on a kit says "Have fun making!". "Carve Sculpt Build Bake" says another.

coming together and showing up.

From classrooms to community centers, from food shelves to families in Scott County, our Clay Care Kits reached over 850 households thanks to partnerships with Minneapolis Public Schools, Esperanza United, COPAL, Bench Pressed, Native Youth Arts Collective, Juntos Podemos—a South Minneapolis food shelf created in response to Operation Metro Surge—and San Pablo St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Partners shared their excitement and gratitude:

"Wow, this is really cool."

"Thank You SOOOO much!!!!"

"Wow, this is amazing! Thanks for thinking of us!"

"Thank you and the volunteers for creating these bags."

"Families will LOVE this!!"

One partner reflected on the impact:

"We distributed 22 kits to families in Columbia Heights, 4 kits to Crystal, and 2 to Forest Lake. This initiative is a collaboration with a parent leadership group designed for parents and their children to participate together. Some parents surprised their children by sharing

their talents, creating a meaningful bonding opportunity and giving children quality time with their parents."

Another noted how the kits provided creative outlets even when regular programming was paused:

"Most of our winter programming is on hold as families are iced in their homes, but little clay kits will be a great way for youth to continue being creative and remembering that they have so much love and support around them."

NCC's Community Outreach programs aim to meet community needs with flexibility and compassion. Sometimes that means bringing teaching artists into classrooms or community centers; other times, it means delivering creativity directly into people's hands. Programs like Clay Care Kits are possible because of the generosity of donors, volunteers, and community partners who believe that art is essential and should be accessible to everyone.

Please consider donating directly to Outreach so we can continue programs like these by clicking [HERE](#).

If you're interested in organizing a program like this with your organization or community, please contact the Community Engagement Manager at juliarodman@northernclaycenter.org or call 651-339-8007 ext. 313. We look forward to hearing from you!