



Boys & Girls Club Mural Participants with Diane Shelton and Mural Artist, Jason Sissino.

how to best be of service. We need to understand their needs, hopes, and struggles to know which programs to implement,” Diane explained. “I hope my work increases awareness about Interfaith and the services we provide, promotes community involvement, and assures community members’ voices are involved in planning and decision-making conversations regarding their community,” Diane shared.

Diane is the embodiment of our founding principal of ‘neighbors helping neighbors.’ Through her connections, organizing, and leading by example, our community and organization get better every day.

Donor Spotlight: Hackensack Meridian Health System

This is the sixth year that Hackensack Meridian Health System (HMHS) has been investing in “Healthy Communities” through a relationship with Interfaith Neighbors, focusing on the “social determinants of health.” This investment has been centered on healthy eating and access to healthy foods, but it has also supported community education initiatives. Initially, HMHS invested in IFN’s Kula Urban Farm’s Farm Without Borders, but last year, they expanded their support to include the BHEC Program’s Community Food Connection.

“Our work to address the social determinants of health, including housing, nutrition, wellness, workforce development, and early child education mirrors the work HMHS wants to support across the many communities its footprint covers,” noted Chip Craig, Co-Executive Director and Chief Business Officer at IFN. “Working together to address the many facets of a community’s health makes for a positive impact.”

HMHS’s funding of the Community Food Connection directly supports the purchase of farm-fresh, local produce from Fernbrook Farms. This produce is distributed to 17 food pantries in the Asbury Park area every week for the entire growing season. Last year, 200 families were supported with this fresh, weekly produce, and this year Community Food Connection is expanding its capacity to 400 families weekly.

“It’s encouraging that Hackensack Meridian identifies the connection between health and food and is dedicated to providing funding to Community Food Connection,” Karyn Moskowitz, BHEC Coordinator, stated. Moskowitz is adamant that access to fresh, healthy produce can be preventative to many of the health issues residents in food deserts, like Asbury Park, face. Hackensack Meridian is doing great work to promote health in the community. They are not just treating the issues when they arise, but are working to be ahead of health issues that are caused by insufficient diets and living habits. This is in line with the BHEC Initiative’s mission to address the social determinants of health through changes in the built environment and community system.

“We could not do this important work of keeping our community healthy without Hackensack Meridian, and all our other donors. Access to a consistent supply of fresh produce is the basis of a vibrant and thriving community so we are thrilled with the support.” Karyn explained.

Save the Date! Joseph J. Marmora Golf Outing



Please save the date of Monday, September 18, 2023 and join us for Interfaith Neighbors’ annual Golf Outing at Deal Golf & Country Club.

Sponsorships and foursomes are available now!

The event will feature our Golf Course Raffle, with winners receiving a foursome of golf at one of 25+ private New Jersey courses and a 50/50.

For more information:

Call: 732-775-0525 ext. 220

Visit: www.interfaithneighbors.org/golf

Online registration is open now.

Want to get involved at Interfaith Neighbors?

There are lots of ways you can help!

GIVE • LEARN • VOLUNTEER

To learn more about the community issues we address or for more information about volunteering, joining our team, or ways to give, visit: www.interfaithneighbors.org or call 732.775.0525.



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Program Spotlight: Community Food Connection

The Community Food Connection, initiated by Interfaith Neighbors (IFN), has already made a lasting impact on food justice in the Asbury Park area and hopes to spread its influence by organizing more individuals, community groups, foundations, farms, and health-care systems to combat food insecurity together. The Community Food Connection is a community-led coalition that connects Asbury Park food pantries and other community spaces to share information and resources, to ultimately have an impact on eliminating nutritional insecurity and



Karen Moskowitz, Building Healthier More Equitable Communities Coordinator

Community Food Connection... (continued)

increasing food access. This coalition is an outgrowth of the Building Healthier, More Equitable Communities (BHEC) program, led by the Philadelphia-based Reinvestment Fund, and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Four cities, Asbury Park, Camden, Paterson and Newark, were selected to participate in the BHEC program in 2021, and IFN is the designated lead agency for Asbury Park. IFN BHEC Coordinator, Karyn Moskowitz, has played an integral role in the coalition.

“Growing up in the Garden State, eating fresh produce from farm stands, I was veggie-obsessed from a young age,” Karyn said. She described her passion for food justice and her realization, while working in Louisville, Kentucky that numerous individuals lack access to consistent, affordable, healthy food.

“According to the NJ Economic Development Authority, Asbury Park is the 17th ranked food desert in severity in the state. And the number one cause of death in our country is heart disease. What we’re dying from is preventable, and we need to invest in creating access to fresh, healthy food to stop it,” Karyn stated.

Karyn’s knowledge and enthusiasm, combined with Interfaith Neighbors’ and BHEC’s mission and resources, has led to numerous initiatives in Asbury Park to combat these issues. Community Food Connection linked with NJ family-owned Fernbrook Farms, that was passionate about their food being distributed to those lacking access to fresh produce. Last year, with funds from the BHEC Grant, Hackensack Meridian Health, and many individual donors, IFN purchased produce from Fernbrook Farms, supplying 200 families

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Community Food Connection... (continued)

with fresh, local produce every week. This season, 400 families will be receiving this produce weekly from 17 food pantries in the Asbury Park area.

Another success for food justice in Asbury Park germinated by the Community Food Connection is a popular farmer’s market, Asbury Fresh Market, accepting NJ SNAP benefits for low income families! The coalition is working to expand these conversations with other farmer’s markets.

“We’re focusing a lot more on workshops and demos this season, as many people who now have access to fresh, healthy food don’t exactly know how to prepare it. We’ve created veggie tip sheets and recipes, and plan on hosting cooking classes” explained Karyn.

In fact, this past May, Community Food Connection partnered with the Asbury Park Mayor’s Wellness Committee for “Stigma Free May.” This challenge explored the connection between behavioral health and nutrition, challenged citizens to adopt a plant-focused diet, and had numerous events with community partners. Some of these events included cooking demos, panel discussions, and guided meditations.

The coalition’s work does not stop at Asbury Park. Karyn is part of the Statewide Food Policy Council. Two recent workshops, in collaboration with Newark, focused on “Reimagining Local Food Systems” and “Food is Medicine.” Working with other cities to advocate for statewide policy change is important to the coalition, as well as the BHEC initiative.

As the Community Food Connection gears up for its second growing season, they can use all the help they can get! Visit the IFN website to find out more how to get involved and volunteer. Fighting for food justice every day, the Community Food Connection keeps planting seeds and growing roots, so our food system can continue to improve.

Neighbors Spotlight: Community Connections

Diane Shelton seems to know everyone, serving on many committees, while organizing events and initiatives all over Asbury Park. A staff member at Interfaith Neighbors for over five years, Diane is making a deep impact on the lives and communities around her.

After growing up in Neptune and graduating from Neptune High School, Diane went on to earn her B.A. in Sociology and a Master’s in Social Work. As a social worker, she noticed there were patterns in the issues her clients were facing, and there needed to be systemic change to address their needs on a larger scale. This realization led her to macro-social work and her position as the Community Outreach Specialist at Interfaith Neighbors.

“My role at Interfaith Neighbors is to be a liaison between our organization, the West Side of Asbury Park, community partners, and stakeholders,” Diane explained. She aims to bring encouragement to the community, and act as a role model and a connector.

“Community events are so important because they allow individuals to become familiar with our organization and its incredible resources. We want to build trust in the community and give them spaces to express themselves and connect with one another,” Diane answered when asked about her initiatives and



Diane Shelton, Community Outreach Specialist

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Connections...(continued)

events.

Under a grant from the Regional Foundation, Diane facilitates Springwood Avenue Rising, Asbury Park’s Got Talent, and annual mural projects. Springwood Avenue Rising was created while preparing for the 50th Anniversary of the civil unrest that took place on Springwood Avenue in Asbury Park. Diane explained that the community wanted to find ways to emphasize commemorating the black-owned businesses and the vibrant community of the West Side of Asbury Park, instead of focusing on the unrest. Events, including a Springwood Avenue History Tour, along with other initiatives were planned, but were interrupted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. With public events now coming back, they have engaged in speeches at libraries and have had two Roundtable Discussions centered around Community History and Involvement of Men in the Community.

Asbury Park’s Got Talent is an annual community event Diane also facilitates. She explained that this is a “youth-led, adult-guided” event that was born out of kids expressing their desire to have space to display their talents. Each year, try-outs are held with reputable judges, and those who make it, go on to the Final Showcase. This year, the showcase was held on May 6th and it was an overwhelming success with incredible performances and community bonding.

Diane also oversees yearly mural projects in Asbury Park, funded by the Regional Foundation. She strives to have each mural embody a different story and neighborhood collaborations. For instance, the most recent mural project was a collaboration between a local artist and kids from the Boys and Girls Club, while the upcoming project is planned to be a woman-centric mural to promote awareness around women’s rights.

“It’s essential for Interfaith Neighbors to be connected to the community we serve because only then can we know

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