

Direct from the Director

Our Rental Assistance department helped a Latino family with four children. The father works two jobs, but surgery kept him out of work for two months. He is now back to work, but could not make up two months of lost wages. We assisted, and they avoided eviction and homelessness.



Joe Marmora

Another case was of a woman with custody of two step-children and a fourteen year old who is blind. Their father left the family and the step-mother “stepped up to the plate.” She was struggling and asked us for help. We also “stepped up to the plate” and helped her.

A ninety-five year old Meals on Wheels recipient wrote, “I look forward to my lunch time every day. The volunteer who brings my meal puts joy in my life.”

Speaking of joy, we rejoiced over the news of Maria*, one of our Youth Corps graduates, having become a U.S. Citizen. And, how about this for job training results: Tristan working for a retail outlet, Oliver at Dunkin Donuts, Robinson at Ruby Tuesday, Christian* at Jersey Shore Medical Dietary, Karen at the Asbury in housekeeping, Tori at Jersey Mike’s Subs and Shaquan at Ruby Tuesday!

** You can read Maria’s and Christian’s stories on the inside of the newsletter.*

A lovely couple with a two year old and a newborn became first-time home buyers by purchasing the latest house we built in Asbury Park. Joy surfaced again, written all over their faces as their “dream came true.”

Many people come to our door, the young, the elderly, the poor and those trying to rise above poverty. All are seeking our help, because that is what we do. And, we do it because of you, our donors!

Joe Marmora
Founder and Executive Director

Kula Farm and Kula Café = Jobs, Training, Health

Interfaith Neighbors’ Kula Café and Kula Farm share a mission of providing healthy meals and fresh produce as they build their respective social enterprises. They also have combined their energies to become a growing hub for paid jobs, education and training for older teenagers and adults in the Asbury Park community. The paid hospitality training and internship program for young people has been in place in the café for four years. A recently launched paid “farm experience program” for older youth and adults of all ages has taken off the past year.



Kula Farm Customers

The Kula Café at 1201 Springwood Avenue recently welcomed new full-time cook Atia Neal, who is rooted in the Asbury Park neighborhoods. She says she wants “to be a voice for Kula” in the community.

Our adjacent farm at 115 Atkins Avenue sells produce from its year-round greenhouse and seasonal outdoor farm to local restaurants. Across Springwood Avenue, Kula Farm created a new “Farm Without Borders” initiative, a garden that is a public

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Golf Outing

Monday, September 18, 2017
at Deal Country Club

There’s still time to register!
For more information about sponsorships,
golf registration or donations, please call
Joe or Stephanie at 732.775.0525

place for people to sit and meet, harvest produce, and volunteer to water and tend the garden. Local residents who are paid through the farm experience program help manage the new garden. Throughout the summer and fall, the Kula Farm hosts Farm to Table events, inviting members of the community to enjoy a special evening with a dinner prepared by a local guest chef. Watch our Facebook page and website for more information and come out and experience the Kula Farm for yourself!

Throughout the summer, the café and farm gain important visibility with the successful Summer Concert Series Monday nights at Springwood Avenue Park just across the street that brings out music lovers from within and outside the city. The concerts are in their second year and Interfaith Neighbors is a lead sponsor.



Full-time farm manager Lisa Bagwell working in outside farm beds on a July evening

There are lots of ways you can help!

GIVE • ADVOCATE • VOLUNTEER

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

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Rights of Passage



Rights of Passage home under construction – July 2017

In 1988, a group of congregations assembled from throughout Monmouth County to address the issue of homelessness. From that first meeting, Interfaith Neighbors was born.

Fast forward 29 years, and Interfaith Neighbors has grown to take on additional issues that face our community, but the issue of homelessness prevention is still a priority, with Mortgage and Rental Assistance, and Affordable Housing Construction programs ongoing.

Access to affordable housing is still a challenge in Monmouth County. Many families are only one paycheck from losing their home. And, our

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experience in working with out-of-school teens has demonstrated that far too many teens are essentially homeless, bouncing from couch to couch of friends and extended family.

Earlier this year, Interfaith Neighbors and Covenant House New Jersey came together to announce a new partnership. Construction began in April on a five-bedroom home for young men aged 18 to 21 in Asbury Park, and will be completed in November. Interfaith is the developer and will be the owner of the home. Covenant House will operate the Asbury Park-based Rights of Passage (ROP) program out of the home.

The ROP program is an innovative transitional-living program that addresses the long-term needs of at-risk, runaway and homeless kids. Residents live in semi-independence for up to 18 months, leading ultimately to an apartment of residence of their own. Through ROP, program participants learn life skills; are required to complete their education and hold down a job; and have ongoing access to counseling services.

“The joy is ours—The journey is theirs,” said Kevin Ryan, President of Covenant House International. “I promise you the least interesting thing about these kids is their homelessness.”

Paul McEvilly, Co-Executive Director, Interfaith Neighbors said, “Once it all goes well with the new house for young men, the adjacent lot will be used to build a similar home for young women.”

Covenant House is hoping this partnership with Interfaith Neighbors can be a model to be carried to other cities.

A Security Deposit and Month's Rent Can Make All The Difference

Many of the families and individuals that Interfaith Neighbors has helped keep their homes over the past 30 years found themselves in financial difficulty due to a serious illness or injury that interfered with job income.

Much less often, the reason is a flood or fire. Earlier this year, a mother and her two children

needed to relocate after a fire began in an apartment below them and destroyed their own home as well. The family had working income but needed that extra help of a security deposit and first month's rent to relocate. Interfaith Neighbors was able to help, and they found a new apartment in the same town.

Maura Comer, director of the Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program, says there's a trend of families with two incomes being susceptible to losing their homes. “We see a lot of working families—two adults working—and then one little thing happens which can set them back,” Comer said.

According to Interfaith Neighbors' latest annual statistics, the program provided \$445,514.42 in financial assistance to 367 family units (654 individuals) in 2016!

Board of Trustees Welcomes New Leader to its Ranks

The Interfaith Neighbors, Inc. Board of Trustees welcomed a new member this past June. Robert E. Hogan has been involved with Interfaith Neighbors for the past six years as a member of the Annual Golf Tournament Planning Committee, and he



Robert E. Hogan

now joins the Board of Trustees. Bob is President of the Hogan-Knotts Financial Group, Inc., Red Bank, NJ. As an expert in financial planning, he is a highly sought-after speaker on the topic, and brings his expertise to Interfaith Neighbors as we undertake the development of a planned giving program. Bob also volunteers his time with the Bob Beckett Memorial Fund and the American Cancer Society, Monmouth County Division. Bob and his wife live in Manasquan. Welcome Bob!

The Path to Employment

Meet Christian. Christian is a current participant in the Kula Café program, a community-driven social enterprise addressing high unemployment and lack of opportunity for young people in the Asbury Park area.



Christian at the Kula Café

Christian's mother passed away only weeks before he found the Kula training program. At 19 years old, he is now not only responsible for supporting himself, but also trying to take responsibility for his 13-year-old sister.

He always comes to the Kula Café ready to work, with a smile on his face, and is well on his way toward mastering all positions available in the café.

While he hasn't finished the program yet, he has been diligently using the employment resources offered by the program to look for permanent employment. And, we are happy to announce his success! In April, Christian landed a part-time job in the Food and Nutrition Department at Jersey Shore University Medical Center and has been balancing both that job and his continued participation in the Kula Hospitality Training Program since. He hopes his hard work will help him access college where he would like to major in Psychology.

A Friendship For Life

Maria Amran, 24 years old, became a U.S. citizen on June 7, 2017, a longtime goal and one that can pave the way for her pursuit of a career in law enforcement.

It took five long years from the first paperwork submission to raising her right hand and taking the oath. During that time, Maria closely bonded with Interfaith Neighbors Youth Specialist Meg Flores, who headed the Youth Corps when Maria

completed the 12-week Youth Corps program in 2014. With continued support from Meg, Maria went on to get her GEED, her current job at WaWa in Hazlet, and now rents her own home in Belford where she is raising four-year-old son, Jordan.

Maria was born in Yemen and grew up in the United States. Her bond with Meg when Interfaith Neighbors administered Youth Corps helped Maria to grow in trusting others, she said.

“Her help and support and love not only helped me to get where I am, but also the Youth Corps family became my family. Just to know someone cares. I know I can always run to her.”

“This only opens another avenue for Maria,” said Meg. “Whatever Maria sets her mind to do, she does.”

Maria's next goal is studying criminal justice at Brookdale. “Now that I have my citizenship, it gives me a better chance to get what I want,” she said.



Maria with her mentor Meg Flores

Gift & Estate Planning

Want to make a lasting impact for future generations in Monmouth County? From gifts of stock, including Interfaith Neighbors in your estate, to gifts of real estate or personal property, there are multiple ways to make a profound impact in addition to your annual support.

Call 732.775.0525 or e-mail stephanief@interfaithneighbors.org to discuss how you can leave a lasting legacy.