



Spring 2017

Spring Building

Interfaith Neighbors is set to begin construction of two residential projects approved by the City of Asbury Park—the 20-unit Turf Club Residences on Springwood Avenue (pictured below) and a five-bedroom home on Prospect Avenue for young men needing temporary housing while learning to live independently.

The Turf Club project is a mixed-income development comprised of 10 three-story ownership-investment properties.

“The first floor flat is a one-bedroom unit and the two-level upper unit is three bedrooms,” said Patrick Durkin, Interfaith Neighbors’ Director of Real Estate Development. “The purchaser of the property could decide which unit to occupy. We assume most would rent the ground floor one-bedroom unit, but it would not have to be that way.”

Shore Point Architects of Ocean Grove is the architect, and the same firm that designed the Springwood Center which

lies diagonally across the avenue from the Turf Club residences. Interfaith Neighbors built the Center which houses the Kula Café, the Asbury Park Senior Center, Interfaith’s Business Development Center, eight affordable apartments, the Ocean Family Success Center, and satellite Asbury Park police offices.

The new Turf Club residences also will be directly across the street from Springwood Avenue Park which opened last summer. Monday night concerts from late June through August lit up the avenue with musicians, city residents, music lovers from nearby towns, dancing, children playing in the park, and refreshments. Those concerts, presented by the Asbury Park Music Foundation and funded in part by Interfaith Neighbors, are set to continue this summer.

The second project this spring is known as the *Rights of Passage* transitional home for young men at 520 Prospect Ave., with the possibility in the future of the construction of a

second home on adjacent land for young women needing temporary housing. Covenant House operates the program to help young people in the process of gaining independent and secure housing.

“These two projects will advance in a meaningful and substantive way some of the work we have been doing within the West Side community over the past ten years,” said Paul McEvily, Interfaith’s Co-Executive Director. “First, with respect to the Turf Club Residences, this architecturally pleasing, mixed-use development project will include both market rate and affordable housing units, thus expanding the

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Spring Building (from front)

economic spectrum of households investing in and residing on Springwood Avenue—a sure sign that the Springwood Corridor continues to show real signs of rebirth and revitalization.”

“And second, the Rights of Passage project, being undertaken in collaboration with Covenant House, allows us to fulfill a long-held desire to address the problem of homelessness experienced all too often by young adults in Asbury Park,” McEvily said. “Homelessness of our young people is a problem we became aware of while administering the NJ Youth Corps of Monmouth County. While we still really don’t understand why the State of New Jersey felt it necessary to defund this critical program, the daily struggles of these young adults continue and we continue to try to find effective ways to address their many needs.”

Welcome, Harriet Lakusiewicz



We welcome Harriet Lakusiewicz, Interfaith Neighbors’ new Director of Human Resources, who joined our team when Lori Backer relocated to Hilton Head, SC.

Harriet began her responsibilities in October. Previously, Harriet was Director of Human Resources and Talent Management at Philadelphia Media Network, an umbrella company of the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News and Philly.com.

Harriet has also held positions in human resources, advertising and production at the Asbury Park Press. “I love the story of Interfaith Neighbors,” she said. “I love the mission, what Interfaith is doing and how it evolved.”

Harriet lives in Brick Township and has two daughters, a grandson and a granddaughter. Her interests include going to New York City and playing Mahjong.

What’s Next for Kula Café and Urban Farm



Interfaith Neighbors welcomes Gillian Edgar as the new general manager of the Kula Café and Training Program. Gillian took over in February and comes to us with 10 years of experience at Applebee’s where she managed high volume restaurant operations, implemented training procedures, and improved sales and profits margins.

Gillian follows Wendy Escobedo, our chef and manager who left in February for a new opportunity. Wendy started with the café and workforce program at its inception in 2013, and we thank her for her valued contributions. In turn, the Kula program became a pathway for Wendy to gain important experience with social enterprises, grants and funding sources as she goes forward in her career.

Gillian is a business associate working with Roger Boyce, Director of Interfaith’s Business Development Center. She grew up in Monmouth County and is a graduate of Ramapo College. She joins chef James McNulty and youth specialist Meg Flores in the café. A new part-time cook also will be joining the team. The café is open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.

Upcoming plans include Big Farm Salads made with produce freshly picked from the farm, Pay-What-You-Can Days, the relaunch of Sunday morning Story Time for children complete with a book drive by the First United Methodist Church in Oakhurst, and an expansion of the Farm-to-Table dinners started last year.

The farm has built up its sales of produce to restaurants which include Langosta Lounge, Seed to Sprout, Cardinal, Watermark, Moonstruck, and Russell & Bette’s.

Also continuing this year are the farm-work experience project, giving local residents the opportunity to earn money working at the farm, and the Green Thumb after-school classes for city children, learning about café and farm operations. Both are funded by the Elizabeth and Baretts O. Benjamin Foundation.

Interfaith Neighbors and Rutgers Mentor Aspiring Food Entrepreneurs



Diane Holtaway, Associate Director, Business Development, Rutgers Food Innovation Center

Interfaith Neighbors and Rutgers University have launched a partnership to help budding food entrepreneurs in Asbury Park and Monmouth County.

The Food Entrepreneur Program combines the expertise of Interfaith's Business Development Center and the Rutgers Food Innovation Center to mentor through the critical stages of acquiring business skills and product development to get a food or beverage product to the market shelf.

Fifty-eight participants attended the kick-off Food Business Basics Seminar in November at The ShowRoom Cinema in Asbury Park.

They learned that jams, jellies, sauces, soups, and salsas have been particularly popular start-up products, but whatever food or beverage concept they had in mind, they needed to be innovative—different from what is already out there.

By January, six entrepreneurs working in four teams (two with one person in each) began the free business workshops taught by Roger Boyce and Charles Simmons. Simmons said the workshops would focus on why a participant's product is unique, who they are selling to, pricing and costs, expenses and net income.

Those teams that come out of the workshops with successful business training later this year will go into the Rutgers Food Innovation Center, a unique incubation and development accelerator program, to get their products made and ready to sell.

Interfaith Neighbors will provide low-interest loans to pay part of the fees at the Rutgers program. A second set of teams is being mentored to be next in line for the business workshops and development.

Monmouth SCORE has been a sponsor of the program and Dean Nelson of Dean's Natural Food Market has signed on as a mentor to offer his 20 years of experience in the food business. Nelson said he expects that his stores in Ocean Township, Shrewsbury, Basking Ridge and Chester can be platforms for entrepreneurs developing natural products as long as they meet Dean's ingredient criteria.

Senior Meals Snapshot

Our Meals on Wheels Program progressed on the same level from 2015 to 2016, serving approximately 300,000 meals to seniors and disabled persons throughout Monmouth County.

Interfaith Neighbors operates 70 routes to deliver meals, and in addition to paid drivers, has approximately 500 volunteers helping to prepare and deliver 900 to 1,000 meals a day for people in their homes or at congregate noonday sites.

Those lunch sites are located at senior centers in Asbury Park, Neptune, Howell, Red Bank, Middletown, Keyport and Keansburg.

Three additional sites—the Long Branch and Bradley Beach senior centers and Asbury Towers in Asbury Park—are auxiliary sites where volunteers pick up meals and deliver them to residents in their homes.



Red Bank Senior Center volunteers Dorothy Davis, Marie Hawkins, Enilza Andrade, and Joe Mazza

Coming Together at Junction Hall

A top priority for Interfaith's Business Development Center Director Roger Boyce is to help create and carry out projects to sustain economic growth for Asbury Park businesses and residents.

To that purpose, both Boyce and Co-Executive Director Paul McEvily have served in recent years on the Board of Trustees at Second Life Bikes, the popular community bike store on Main Street that brings together many people in need of low cost bikes and repairs.

Executive Director Kerri Martin runs safety and bike repair classes and a program where young people 12 to 18 years old can work 15 hours learning the mechanics of bike repair and then claim a bike as their own.

Two years ago, Kerri faced losing the large warehouse space she had leased at 21 Main Street when the owner decided to sell the building. The price: \$750,000.

At first, the trustees tried a crowd-funding campaign, raising just \$45,000. Then Boyce put together an innovative partnership, pairing Second Life Bikes with the successful downtown Asbury group, Cowerks, a high tech hub looking to expand the office space leased to entrepreneurs, designers and programmers.



Late December 2016 line up: Gregory Edgerton, Danny Croak, and Bret Morgan from Cowerks; Roger Boyce, Kerri Martin, and Paul McEvily



Mid-March, 2017. After-school class from Our Lady of Mount Carmel School at Second Life Bikes. Recently constructed Cowerks office spaces above on second floor.

It worked. The two entities formed a holding company and purchased the building of 7,470 square feet, closing their loan with New Jersey Community Capital in December. Cowerks renovated the second floor mezzanine into eight private work offices and a conference room using a \$240,000 loan from the NJ Economic Development Authority for their expansion construction.

Coming up soon is the addition of the High Voltage Café known on the Asbury Boardwalk this past summer. The café will be on the first floor in the building.

They're calling 21 Main Street "Junction Hall." According to a business plan, the project "builds community for an underserved population while attracting high tech skilled population to the same venue. This creates a bridge between two groups that often are apart, which undoubtedly will provide the economic and social impact needed."

The new partnership also means that Cowerks and Second Life Bikes have a real estate stake at the city's southern gateway and a future potential of developing the building site up to eight stories.

"We lost space but gained new energy and ideas," Kerri said. "It will add a new vibrancy here."

J.E.T. Third Time Around



Co-Director Mychal Mills and students in March

Interfaith Neighbors' Junior Entrepreneur Training program (J.E.T.) returned for its third year this winter with 22 city students in sixth-to-eighth grade learning to work together to create and market a business.

This year the students from Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, Sisters Academy, Hope Academy and Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, worked in three groups on Thursday afternoons from January to April to create their businesses. They are making and selling customized sweatshirts, tee shirts and smart phone covers at the Made in Monmouth Expo at Monmouth University. Price range: \$10 to \$15.

After creating their companies, they made their business plans and presented them to local business experts to receive loans of approximately \$200 in seed money for each group. Interfaith Neighbors funds the J.E.T. program each year.

Students pay back their loans out of profits they make annually at the expo. As part of the program, they also share their profits with a favorite charity.

"This program is providing tools for our young people to have successful futures," said Mychal Mills, who directs J.E.T. with Charles Simmons. "I think it's a well-rounded approach because it provides practical skills. They're not just getting the knowledge. They're getting experience."

Four of the 22 students returned from last year, and several of them said they like being with other children their age from different schools in the city. It gives them a sense of diversity, they said.

"It's all the different cultures," said Juna Weedon, a sixth grader at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

Along with directors Mills and Simmons, the volunteer business mentors who make the program possible are: Sheila Etienne, Robert Weiner, Isaac Jones, Ashley Fabien, Jan Sparrow, Rodney Solomon and Chaniqua Buck.

How It All Started

Interfaith Neighbors continues every day to carry out the mission the agency began with nearly 30 years ago. Our Rental and Mortgage Assistance Department provides funding to individuals and families to pay rents, security deposits or mortgage payments so that they can stay in their homes or move into new ones.

Maura Comer, director of the department, gave some examples from recent times of many of the families helped each year:

A young single health care worker with four children, all of whom have special needs, lost income when the client she helped care for was hospitalized and no longer needed in-home care. We helped the mother pay her back rent and she is now working again and attending nursing school.

Interfaith assisted a mother and her 12-year-old son after the mom fell behind in her rent due to a recently diagnosed illness. Similarly, Interfaith helped a single woman who was living in a motel to move into a senior building after Interfaith paid her security deposit.

We also assisted a mother who was out of work for an extended time after she fractured her foot. She had an 11-year-old son with autism and a 19-month-old toddler. We helped pay two months back rent.

And, in another case, a father was out of work on disability and the mother was injured and unable to work her two jobs. Interfaith paid two months of their mortgage payments. The father has since returned to work.

There are many more cases, and the appreciation that comes back to Interfaith is in itself appreciated.

As reported in our 2016 Annual Report, Interfaith Neighbors provided \$445,514.42 in financial assistance to 367 family units or 654 individuals in 2016 with an average payout of \$1,668.59 per family. Funding came from state and county grants, congregations, and private and corporate donations. Security deposits continued to be a main need of families seeking to line up a place to rent.



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Direct from the Director

Spring is here, the dreary winter is behind us. For most, we have much to look forward to but if you are struggling to pay rent, raise your children while debts are piling up, then spring brings no joy. In fact, the working poor have no seasons!

There are many reasons why some people struggle. This is not a new phenomenon. Going back to the biblical days, there are many stories about the poor and the need to reach out and extend a helping hand. They were true then and they are true today!

We are in our 29th year. I can say that I did not expect Interfaith Neighbors—and certainly not myself—would be around this many years, mainly because I did not think we would be needed. How wrong I was!

I have learned much over these many years. There are many more good, compassionate and caring people than I realized. Many who want to help and are willing to share their treasure, no matter what size. They just need the right

vehicle to do so. I like to think that Interfaith Neighbors is that right vehicle.

If you haven't yet supported us, I urge you to come on board. Please visit us anytime. If you have supported us, we say thank you and want you to know that you are most appreciated. Your prayers for our continued work will go a long way as well!

*Joe Marmora,
Executive Director*

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