

Neighbor Spotlight:
Pepsi Beverages Co.



L to R: Brian Popick, Lucia Porter, Steve Shincarick, Carmella Johnson, Rashon Clark, Anthony Calabrese, Nick DeFilippis, Kevin Mueller

Interfaith Neighbor’s Kula Cafe Hospitality Training Program strives to prepare area young adults with skills and abilities to enter the vibrant hospitality sector growing across Asbury Park, but to also acquire certain soft skills necessary to be a responsible, productive employee. Beginning in 2013, PepsiCo began to donate product to Kula Cafe, enabling it to keep its prices low, but also expressed a desire to engage more deeply with program participants. In response to this desire, “Kula Cohorts,” was established, whereby employees at Pepsi Beverages Company in Ocean Township meet regularly with Kula trainees and share their job and professional knowledge.

That early commitment has not changed, and six to eight members of the PepsiCo team, from sales representatives to delivery supervisors to secretarial staff, come to meet with Kula participants on the first Wednesday of each month, said Kevin Mueller, supply chain associate manager and point man for the PepsiCo team.

“The thing with our corporate ideology is we always give back to the community, in fact, we thrive on it,” Mueller said.

He said it’s often quiet when they start the Cohort meetings, but over time, when everyone remembers each other’s names, and they share their backgrounds, connections are made and the program works.

Kula graduates Tychelle Williams and Ja’Quail McMillian say the Cohorts activities provide good professional support.

“It helps you put your basic skills in perspective of what you want to do in life,” said Tychelle, 20, who graduated from Asbury Park High School in 2016 and plans to begin culinary studies at Brookdale in the fall.

“When they come in, we do different activities,” Ja’Quail explained. “They don’t just look at us. They help you talk about yourself and find things in common. I didn’t know I could just sit down with a stranger and be comfortable talking with them.”

Ja’Quail, 22, a graduate of Academy Charter High School, also wants to pursue a culinary career with Brookdale.

Meg Flores, Interfaith Neighbors’ youth specialist who manages the Kula training program, said the interaction with the PepsiCo team allows Kula’s young people to learn what it’s like to work in a much larger company, and yet, they also see that some aspects of a job at PepsiCo and Kula are the same.

PepsiCo’s Mueller said PepsiCo donates its beverage products to a number of area nonprofits and various fire and police companies. Interfaith values and salutes their willingness to give back to the communities they serve.

Considering a Gift to
Interfaith Neighbors?
A Charitable IRA Rollover
Might be Right for You

The federal government recently extended legislation that makes it more attractive for certain individuals to support organizations like Interfaith Neighbors with funds from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). This special provision allows some people to exclude from taxable income certain transfers of IRA assets that are made directly to charities like Interfaith Neighbors.

To qualify, the gift must be made by an individual aged 70 ½ or older; transferred from an IRA directly to a permissible public charity, such as Interfaith Neighbors, and completed in the 2019 calendar year for the 2019 tax year. If you have not already taken your required minimum distribution, a qualifying rollover gift can count toward this requirement.

Speak with your financial advisor to see if a Charitable IRA Rollover can both support Interfaith Neighbor’s cause and improve your tax obligations.

Want to get involved at Interfaith Neighbors?
There are lots of ways you can help!

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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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June 2019
Program Spotlight: Kula Urban
Farm - Rooted in Community

On a Friday afternoon in May, Gail Dixon, her niece Myleah, 8, and nephews Shamar, 10, and Isaan, 12, joined Kula Farm Manager Lisa Bagwell in planting radishes, collard greens, and a rainbow garden of orange and yellow marigolds and red salvia in the back yard of Bethel AME Church’s Community Center on Atkins Avenue.



Dixon cousins planting. L to R, Myleah, Gail Dixon (aunt), Farm Manager Lisa Bagwell, Isaan, and Shamar

Bethel and Kula Farm are in their first season of transforming the land adjacent to the farm into a garden to grow produce for the church to give out to the community. The Dixon cousins and other children in the church’s Young People Department have made working in the garden a youth project centered on learning and giving back.

On the Farm (continued)

For a number of years, Interfaith Neighbors has been actively engaged in offering programs to help Asbury Park’s West Side community residents develop a healthy, hopeful community. The Kula Urban Farm and Farm Without Borders delivers community programming directed at nutrition, healthier living, as well as helping to develop jobs for area residents.



Ewelina Makowska & Naomi Paynter, Neptune.

Now in its fourth full season, the Kula Farm can still come as a surprise to many coming upon its greenhouse at 115 Atkins Avenue, across from Springwood Park. Few expect to see such a farm in the city of Asbury Park. But like its sister, Kula Café, which opened in April 2013, the state-of-the-art greenhouse, seasonal beds and community gardens have taken hold in Asbury Park, providing fresh produce for the café, selling produce to local restaurants and the public, and providing harvested free vegetables for the community. The farm sells plants to those who can afford it and gives plants to those who can’t. It invites all to visit and encourages guests to grow food for their households.

But, what still might not be well known is the day in, day out progress Kula Farm has made in a most essential mission—providing job training and actual paid jobs for residents, some of whom have gone on to supervisory positions at the farm. Those jobs are the result of generous philanthropic support allowing Interfaith Neighbors to reach across Springwood Avenue and use vacant land to grow food for the community. As of May of this year, 32 residents have worked in the 60 hour paid program and five have been hired to longer-term positions.

Ewelina Makowska is assistant greenhouse manager,

and Doni Gray is assistant hydroponic grower. Elizabeth Cao is supervisor and community liaison in charge at the Farm Without Borders. Robert Beatty and Charles Ade also have held the long-term positions.

For Ewelina Makowska, the greenhouse is her terrain where she’s an expert in managing the micro-green growing system and the vertical hydroponic towers. “The farm’s taken root in the community,” Ewelina said. “Anyone who lives around here and has a garden comes by to talk. Engaging the community, I think that’s most important.”

Liz Cao has become the face of the Farm Without Borders, maintaining the community gardens where people can come and take what they need and also participate in planting. Liz had no previous experience in gardening but has taken to it.

Doni Gray, works 15 hours a week and takes three buses to get to work. “The thing I like about the job is the life cycle, going from seeds to growing up and turning into food,” he said. “It helps me to see the transference in life.”

The continued growth and success at the farm can be attributed to Farm Managers Lisa Bagwell and Thijs van Oosterhout. They’ve built a farm business next to the café that each season brings fresh ideas, new knowledge, and new ideas to attract new visitors and benefit area residents.

“I like to be able to engage with as many residents



Elizabeth Cao, Farm Without Borders Supervisor & Community Liaison

in the neighborhood as I can,” Lisa said. “And, I like to be able to transform unused land into a productive garden and grow vegetables.” Lisa came to the farm with community garden and farm experience and is also known for her popular trash assemblage artwork. Her passion for gardening, art, and people are on display at the farm.

Thijs is part of a farming family from the Netherlands. He is an environmental scientist, aquatic ecologist and a professor at Georgian Court University. He focuses on the science and the details of the greenhouse operations. He spoke of adding Epsom salt to provide more magnesium for the plants and increasing CO₂ to speed plant growth. The greenhouse seems at times to be his laboratory. “Our goal is to make the farm self-sustainable,” he says.

Back on a Friday in May, Alan Powell visited the farm and took home some okra, peppers and tomato plants to join the collard greens, kale, strawberries, cabbage, butter lettuce, melons and pumpkins he has planted this year. Alan, a retiree from Neptune, comes each season to get some growing tips, seeds and plants for his garden.

The farm is open and operating Monday through Saturday from 10 to 3 p.m.

Donor Spotlight: TD Charitable Foundation

TD Charitable Foundation has been a long-time supporter of Interfaith Neighbors, awarding over \$75,000 in grant funding over the years to support Interfaith Neighbors’ Affordable Housing program. This spring, the TD Charitable Foundation awarded its latest grant of \$10,000 to Interfaith Neighbors in support of the Kula Urban Farm.

TD Bank’s “The Ready Commitment” initiative has refocused their charitable giving to impact positive

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TD Charitable Foundation (continued)

change increasing financial security, environmental quality, inclusive communities and equitable health outcomes. Their recent grant to Interfaith supports the overall Kula Farm program, the Kula Farm Experience program, and provides for farm supplies.

Interfaith Neighbors is grateful for the TD Charitable Foundation’s continued support of our efforts and is proud to partner with them in our mission of improving the quality of life for individuals, families and the communities in which they live.

Joseph J. Marmora Golf Outing in support of Interfaith Neighbors

Interfaith Neighbors is pleased to announce that the Joseph J. Marmora Golf Outing will be held Monday, September 23, 2019 at the Deal Golf & Country Club. Please save the date and visit the event website at interfaithneighbors.org/golf for registration and sponsorship information.

Last year, this annual event that supports Interfaith Neighbors’ Rental and Mortgage Assistance program was renamed in honor of Joseph J. Marmora, founder of Interfaith Neighbors. The Rental & Mortgage Assistance program remains one of Joe’s passions. We are fortunate that he continues to attend assistance meetings in his retirement.

