

Neighbor Spotlight: Patti Lombardi



Patti Lombardi started her career at Interfaith Neighbors on May 3, 1999. It all began when Patti decided to return to school, after raising her children ,to get her degree that would allow her to launch a new career.

She enrolled at Brookdale Community College to pursue a degree in Human Services. As she was finishing the program, she was required to participate in an internship with a community organization.

It turns out that Patti is a member of the First United Methodist Church of Oakhurst, one of the founding congregations of Interfaith Neighbors. Patti had heard about Interfaith Neighbors and their mission and programs at church, so she made an appointment to explore doing her internship in the Rental & Mortgage Assistance Program. And, the rest is history.

When she arrived at Interfaith Neighbors and began working with families applying for assistance through the Rental and Mortgage Assistance program, she realized how so many of us are unaware of the struggles others are facing every day. It might even be the family you sit next to at church every Sunday.

“I love what I do. If I could, I would do it for free,”

Patti says. “So many families struggle with the high cost of rent and low wages.” Many of those she helps are working more than one job, struggling to cover their rent or mortgage, pay for childcare, car insurance and food, while earning minimum wages.

“As a mother, I can’t even imagine what it would be like if I was at risk of losing my home and not knowing how I was going to keep my children safe,” Patti expressed. “We try very hard to intervene and prevent a family from losing their home.”

When Patti was asked about her most memorable client, she couldn’t narrow it down to one, telling the stories of several families and individuals that touched her over the years. She shared letters and cards that families had sent her in thanks after their housing situation was stabilized. People cry tears of relief and appreciation when Interfaith offers the help they need to solve their housing crisis and get back on track.

Patti Lombardi especially loves Interfaith’s Adopt-A-Family program. Many different groups (congregations, businesses and foundations) and individuals adopt over 100 families each year Interfaith has assisted over the previous year. The sponsors and families are matched, and sponsors provide holiday gifts and food to their adopted families. “Helping parents ensure their kids can experience the joy and wonder of the holidays is so rewarding. It’s also touching to see a mother or father surprised with a gift as well.” Patti also feels pride in seeing the changes to Asbury Park during her years at Interfaith and knowing that she was a part of this revitalization.

Interfaith Neighbors assisted 327 Monmouth County families with Rental or Mortgage Assistance in 2018, distributing over \$487,000 in direct payments to landlords, mortgage companies or utilities.

Have You Considered Interfaith Neighbors in Your Estate Planning?

Making plans for charitable giving in your will can enable you to achieve your financial goals and benefit Interfaith Neighbors. No other planned gift is as simple to implement or as easy to change should you ever need the assets during your lifetime. A bequest may be right for you if:

- You want the flexibility to change your mind.
- You want continued access to your resources, should you need it.
- You are concerned about outliving your resources.

Remembering Interfaith Neighbors in your will is a wonderful way to make a lasting gift. Large or small, your bequest will make an important contribution to our long-term strength and our ability to serve our neighbors.

We encourage you to work with an experienced attorney to create a will or living trust that accomplishes your goals for your estate. You can learn more about giving to Interfaith Neighbors via a bequest at [www.interfaithneighbors.org/planned-giving](http://www.interfaithneighbors.org/planned-giving).

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](http://www.interfaithneighbors.org) or call 732.775.0525



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Program Spotlight: SOAR - Seizing Opportunity & Maximizing Potential

On August 21, 2019, Nashiem Frazier and McKayla Carpenter walked across the graduation stage at Monmouth University’s Pollak Theatre in Long Branch.

The pair, through support from Interfaith Neighbors’ SOAR program, were among over 120 graduates who completed the Eatontown-based Advantage Career Institute [ACI] Medical & Dental School certification program.

SOAR is Interfaith’s intensive personal and professional development program that works with high school graduates and/or those who have obtained their high school diploma via the GED to



Nashiem Frasier receives his ACI diploma.



maximize their potential by launching beyond entry-level employment into a career path.

Frazier, a 22-year-old Asbury Park native, who now lives in Neptune, said SOAR was an opportunity he could not turn down.

“It was a chance for me to elevate and strive for something great,” he said. “What I got out of [participating in] the SOAR program is that anything you put your mind to, you can really do it, and that it doesn’t stop at one level - just keep pushing.”

SOAR launched in the Spring of 2019 as a pilot with four participants. Led by our Business Development Center Associate Director Gillian Edgar & Program Director, Semaj Vanzant Sr., SOAR Colleagues participated in an 8-week curriculum focused on building professional and life skills that prepare them to be successful from day one of their new careers.

Edgar and Vanzant carefully designed training tutorials, with the assistance of Interfaith’s Education Specialist, Kerwin Webb, that address everything from professionalism and networking, to life skills and financial literacy.

“We are not looking to replicate existing industry training but to make the area’s apprenticeship, certification and training programs accessible to SOAR participants,” Vanzant said.

SOAR is designed to eliminate the barriers that typically keep driven and talented individuals who are not college bound from achieving success. Upon completion, colleagues can earn a full Interfaith Neighbors scholarship for certification training in their selected career pathway. When applicable, a stipend is given to help with living costs, transportation, and daycare assistance, as well as expungement services.

For the ACI medical training additional barrier-

busting financial support is given for necessary physical exams, school supplies, scrubs and/or medical shoes.



McKayla Carpenter on the graduation stage.

“The cost of these vital things alone would likely prohibit most of our colleagues from being able to attend this type of certification school,” Edgar said.

All career pathways offered through SOAR will be in ‘high growth’ local industries identified to have more jobs available than qualified people to fill them.

SOAR certified training partnerships include the aforementioned ACI, which features a medical and a dental assistant certification as well as a medical and dental administrative assistant program. Each program incorporates a 100-hour internship.

The SOAR program leaders have also worked with Brookdale Community College to design an Information Technology training program, are in discussions to design an auto technician training program, and are designing a solar installation training pathway. Once the industry certification process is complete, our SOAR team, which includes career coaches who serve as mentors for at least two years, works to connect colleagues with one

of our end-point employers, such as Hackensack Meridian Health and RWJBarnabas’ Monmouth Medical Center.

Carpenter, a 26-year-old mother from Asbury Park, said she’d been struggling to find work. Since giving birth to her daughter Nori [soon to be 2], Carpenter’s goal was to find a career direction in order to earn a living wage. Prior to walking the stage and taking her certification exam, she obtained a job in her selected medical billing and coding career pathway.

“With the help of Mr. Semaj and Miss Gillian and the whole Interfaith neighborhood, they came together with an awesome program named SOAR,” she said. “I’m very appreciative.

“The SOAR career pathway trainings are subject to industry certification training schedules, and not all pathways are offered at all times. To learn more about the SOAR, visit [interfaithneighbors.org](http://interfaithneighbors.org).

### Donor Spotlight: The Stone Foundation of New Jersey

The Stone Foundation of New Jersey was founded in 1998 by members of the Huber family. To date, the family has awarded over \$5 million in grant funding, with a focus on Monmouth County. The Stone Foundation works with organizations that are intent on community building or the environment. They look to see how an agency fits into the broader fabric of the communities they serve.

The Stone Foundation first became involved with the revitalization of the West Side neighborhood of Asbury Park when they joined with the Monmouth Conservation Foundation to provide the balance of funds needed by the City of Asbury Park for the construction of Springwood Park.

Most recently, they awarded Interfaith Neighbors



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with a \$15,000 grant in support of the SOAR program.

“The interconnectedness of Interfaith Neighbors’ programs, which are really addressing the needs of the community, and focusing on the existing residents is what led us to support Interfaith Neighbors. And, SOAR is an extraordinary example of that,” says Sam Huber.

Interfaith Neighbors is grateful for the continued support of the revitalization of the West Side neighborhood of Asbury Park by the Stone Foundation of New Jersey.



Sam & Caroline Huber at a visit to the Interfaith Neighbors Kula Urban Farm.

### Joseph J. Marmora Golf Outing in support of Interfaith Neighbors



Joe Marmora thanks golfers and wishes them a good day on the course.

Many thanks to all the volunteers and supporters of Interfaith Neighbors’ Joseph J. Marmora Golf Outing held on September 23rd at Deal Golf & Country Club. The event raised over \$100,000 in net proceeds to support Interfaith Neighbors’ Rental & Mortgage Assistance Program. Please visit [www.interfaithneighbors.org/golf](http://www.interfaithneighbors.org/golf) to see photos and a list of all our supporters and volunteers.