

Neighbors Helping Neighbors (continued)

the Stone Foundation of NJ, the Interfaith Neighbors Homeless Prevention Program staff put in place new procedures and began almost immediately to help families with immediate urgent needs like food cards, utility payments, needed car repairs and rent or mortgage payments.

Since that initial grant, we also received support from the Jay & Linda Grunin Foundation, the Jules L. Plangere Family Foundation, Jersey Mikes, the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, the Monmouth Park Charity Fund, the M&T Bank Charitable Foundation, the Manasquan Bank Charitable Foundation, the NJ Pandemic Relief Fund and many others.

In April, Interfaith Neighbors was the beneficiary of the second in a weekly series of benefit concerts performed by local shore area musician Pat Roddy. Pat Roddy’s fans and IFN supporters contributed over \$7,800 to the COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund that evening! The Spring Lake Theatre Company also reached out and hosted an online performance on behalf of Interfaith Neighbors raising over \$5,000. And, Danny & Maria Clinch, owners of Transparent Gallery in Asbury Park contributed \$5,000 in profits from an online sale of his Danny’s artwork to Interfaith Neighbors’ fund! The generosity of those that are able to help their neighbors in need has truly been breathtaking.

Maura Comer, director of the Homeless Prevention Program, which is administering the COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund, says, “Many of those that are calling us have never had to ask for help before. It is a very emotional and difficult time for them. I’ve had many sleepless nights since the start of all this, worrying for these families and trying to get them assistance as quickly as possible.”



Pat Roddy

 (continues)

Neighbors Helping Neighbors (continued)

Each and every story is compelling. One of the families we were able to assist first contacted us in the middle of April. The mother is combatting stage 4 cancer and has been on disability. She lives with her adult son who works and cares for his mother. The son lost his employment due to COVID and was struggling to get his unemployment. Interfaith Neighbors was able to assist them with food cards and rent for May and June after they borrowed money from a friend to pay April’s rent. Once the son’s unemployment begins, or he is able to return to work, they should be financially stabilized.

Another family we assisted is led by a single mother with four boys ages 15, 8, 6, and 4. The mother contracted COVID-19, and her last day of work was March 21st. Unable to leave the house, she applied for disability, but was denied and is waiting for her unemployment payments to begin. As the only earner in the household, when she stopped working, there was no money coming in. Interfaith Neighbors was able to help with food cards, two months of rent and a utility payment. Once the client receives benefits she should be good for the summer.

At the time of this printing, Interfaith Neighbors has been able to assist over 110 individuals or families with over \$125,000 in assistance from the COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund. Interfaith Neighbors’ Homeless Prevention program was the organization’s founding program and has been in operation for 30+ years. In a normal year, the program assists approximately 350 families with between \$500,000 and \$750,000 in direct assistance. As a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis, we expect to reach more than 500 families with \$1,000,000 in total assistance this year.



Maura Comer, Director of Rental & Mortgage Assistance, working from home.

Supporting IFN’s COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund

As we all begin to adjust to what is being dubbed the “new normal” and many are able to return to work as businesses reopen, many of our neighbors will continue to struggle in the coming months. For some, the jobs they left in March are permanently gone. For others, they may be returning to reduced hours. What we know is that the financial impact of this economic disruption will last for many months for some families.

We are grateful for the support of businesses, foundations, and the many individuals who have contributed to our fund so far. We continue to accept donations to the Interfaith Neighbors COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund. If you would like to contribute to the financial recovery of Monmouth County families, you can give via credit card at Interfaith Neighbors’ website at www.interfaithneighbors.org/covid-19fund or by check payable to Interfaith Neighbors mailed to our main offices at 810 Fourth Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ 07712.

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.



Interfaith Neighbors, Inc.
810 Fourth Ave
Asbury Park, NJ 07712
W: interfaithneighbors.org
E: info@interfaithneighbors.org



Summer 2020 Serving Our Neighbors During the COVID-19 Health Crisis

To say these last few months have been difficult for all of us seems to be an understatement. I truly hope this update finds you and your families well. We know that many have suffered health challenges, financial challenges and that these times have brought an emotional toll to us all.

Here at Interfaith Neighbors, our mission to help those less fortunate, aiding with the basic necessities of life, is more important than ever. Since mid-March, we have focused our efforts on two of our core program areas - Homeless Prevention and our Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels Programs.

We can all be proud of the performance of our dedicated staff here at Interfaith Neighbors. Many on our team transitioned seamlessly to working remotely from their new home offices at dining room tables. While we were forced to cancel events and put several of our neighborhood programs on hiatus or limited functionality, many of our team members volunteered to redeploy to support the Senior Nutrition Program or our Homeless Prevention Program.

Since our Senior Nutrition team can not work remotely, they have been bravely and tirelessly working to ensure our daily meals are prepared and delivered without any gaps in our service to homebound seniors since the start of the crisis. Later in this update you’ll hear some stories from our staff drivers and of the dedication of our volunteers who have kept the program’s wheels on the road.

In our Homeless Prevention Program area, our team

 (continues)

has been working extended hours to respond to an unprecedented level of requests for assistance. We have established a COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund. When the crisis hit, so many, especially in our service-based economy here at the Shore, found their jobs lost or incomes dramatically reduced. While waiting for unemployment insurance payments and a return to work, families were suddenly faced with challenges with basic needs - food, utility and car payments, and of course rent and mortgage payments - that were suddenly out of reach. You'll learn more about some of the families we have been able to help later in this newsletter and the tremendous support we have been experiencing from so many in the community in serving families like them.

I continue to pray for the health and well-being of all of our neighbors as we endure this difficult time. And, I am grateful and overwhelmed by the good will I see every day through our volunteers, staff and donors.

May God Continue to Bless You -

Paul L. McEvily, Executive Director

Neighbor Spotlight:
Meals on Wheels Continues
to “Deliver” through the
Pandemic

In mid-March, as we all learned of the coronavirus and our state began to shut down, the Interfaith Neighbors Meals on Wheels team jumped into action. Across Monmouth County, we were all advised to stay at home and senior centers closed their doors. Seniors and those with underlying health problems learned they were most at risk from the virus. And, the Meals on Wheels program became more important than ever.

Interfaith Neighbors immediately put safety protocols in place in our Meals on Wheels kitchen and with all our drivers and volunteers. Staff tracked down personal protective equipment for staff and volunteers. Program Director Dante Agresti worked with Senior Center

directors at the program’s congregate sites to determine which seniors who usually received their meals at the senior centers would need to be added to home delivery routes. Volunteer Coordinator Beth Paterno worked with volunteers and staff to be sure all our delivery routes continued to be covered every day. Many of the program’s volunteers are senior citizens themselves, and, understandably, some needed to stop delivering meals to protect themselves. However, from the start, the community came through with new volunteers signing up to the point we had to establish a wait list for new volunteers.

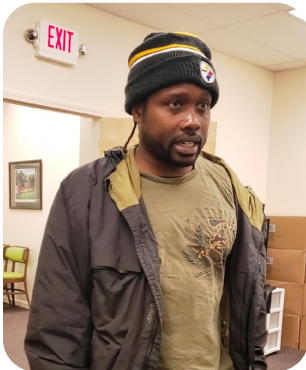
Ask any Meals on Wheels driver or volunteer what they like best about their job and the answer is most often a resounding - the people.

Our Nutrition Director Dante Agresti said the program means a lot to everyone involved, from County officials to the drivers and volunteers that help deliver over 1,100 daily meals to homebound senior citizens.

“Being able to keep seniors in their homes and being able to check on them is a very important part of the program,” Agresti said. “Our staff drivers, the six or seven guys, all get attached to them.”

This became more and more evident as the health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. Ten-year Meals on Wheels driver Brandon Terry began buying the difficult to find household paper products for seniors along his route with his own money.

“Once you get used to people and you get out on the road and start talking and communicating with people, you sort of build up a connection to them,” he said.



Brandon Terry, Meals on Wheels Driver

And during the height of the pandemic, Terry’s affinity for those he serves was amplified when he helped save the life of a resident along his route. Unable to get an answer at the door, he persisted in gaining entry. The resident had fallen and most likely had been struggling for hours, officials said.

“A lot of them you see can’t do things for themselves and have no one around to help them so it compels you to try to help them as much as you can,” he said. “That will make your day a little bit longer but it makes you feel good in the end.”

Agresti, who worked on the cold meals assembly team and as a driver before being tapped to lead the department, agrees.

“It is not uncommon for the drivers to give the seniors along their routes gifts or attend their birthday parties,” he said. “They love stuff like that and the seniors love them coming by every day. The drivers that we have here all get attached to the seniors.”

On a recent Wednesday, driver Dennis Eagan, who typically works a 6 am to 2:30 pm shift, began the day by helping Kitchen Supervisor Linnette Wall and Chef Baptiste Pothier prepare the day’s hot meal. He then set out to make deliveries to three of our volunteer meal pick-up sites - the Bradley and Neptune senior centers, and the Ocean Township Community Center. He then left to make deliveries to residents in Asbury Park, Allenhurst, Long



Linnette Wall and Jason Scaglion Prepare Meals

Branch; which includes residents living in three Asbury Park senior buildings and those living in Long Branch Housing Authority homes.

“I just like helping people,” he said of the job.

Since mid-March, the program has added approximately 50 new seniors to its delivery routes. It is also now delivering meals to an area hotel that is housing members of the county’s homeless population that have been infected by the virus and are in quarantine recovering. As the crisis continues, the program is in discussions with local municipalities to temporarily expand meal deliveries to area senior citizen housing complexes so they can continue to stay safe in their homes.

To support the Interfaith Neighbors Meals on Wheels program, please visit www.interfaithneighbors.org or call 732-775-0525, ext. 220.

Program Spotlight:
Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Back in March, when the stay-at-home order was announced, all of our lives changed overnight. For many families, the COVID-19 health crisis has resulted in economic crisis. Much of the Monmouth County economy is hospitality- and service-based, one of the first industries to be effected in the response to the crisis and the last to recover. Many individuals and families have either lost their employment entirely or are facing greatly reduced hours. And for some, as the state begins to re-open, their jobs are no longer there.

As the crisis began, several local foundations and businesses stepped up and reached out to Interfaith Neighbors and other area non-profits to see how they could help. Before the end of March, Interfaith Neighbors had received funding allowing us to establish the COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund to provide support to individuals and families experiencing financial distress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seeded initially with funds from