

Neighbor Spotlight:
Margaret McGinn

For over twenty years, Margaret McGinn served the Meals on Wheels of Monmouth County program as an employee of Interfaith Neighbors, retiring this past fall.

What began as a part-time volunteer commitment in 1999 quickly led to a new career for the 63-year-old, who worked as a publishing industry employee before taking time off to raise her two children.

“When the kids were in middle school, I started searching for part-time work that would work around their schedules,” the Minnesota native said. “I wanted something that would allow me to run around.”

And despite her affinity for delivering the meals, she was hired two years later to serve as a kitchen aid at the congregate meals Howell site.

“You know how they say never say never,” she said. “One day they had a party, and the long-time site manager Marie Barris said if you want to stay and give a hand after you do the run, why don’t you come back. I said, oh thank you but I like to deliver the meals. Boy was I wrong.”

McGinn’s 21-year tenure took her from site manager for congregate meals in Howell to serving in Keyport and then in Red Bank for the past decade.

“When I first began, I thought this was an avenue to



help people, to bring something to their day,” she said. “I think I felt I was helping them, but, and you’ll hear this from a lot of volunteers, we get so much more out of it than you would think. Meeting the seniors was an extraordinary revelation about how they live, sometimes with such grace, with so little, in poverty or in ill health, and, for some, in isolation. I kind of felt this would be a nice thing to do for them but, in all honesty, you start to see how remarkable it is that these people let you walk into their lives and into their homes, but they walk into your hearts. How utterly kind they are with our volunteers was a pleasant surprise.”

In Red Bank, McGinn managed a team of five kitchen volunteers who prepare over 70 daily meals for delivery throughout Red Bank, Fair Haven, Rumson, Lincroft, and Middletown, as well as another dozen for the congregate site guests.

“They have been volunteering for over 20 years and some do have children in their sixties,” McGinn said. “One of our volunteers is Josephine Smiga, a 92-year-old who still helps in the kitchen.”

McGinn refers to the Meals on Wheels service as a humbling honor.

“When we walk through that door, we walk into their lives in a very personal way,” she said. “It’s difficult to see sometimes the condition people are in; sometimes the homes would be in poor shape, or they themselves would be in poor shape, but if you look beyond that, you can see them.”

Everyday, over 125 volunteers arrive at one of the Meals on Wheels Monmouth County sites to help prepare or serve meals at one of the congregate sites, or to pick up meals to deliver door to door to homebound senior citizens. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Beth Paterno at 732-775-0525 , ext. 227 or via email at bethp@interfaithneighbors.org.

Become a Meals on Wheels
Community Champion

Meals on Wheels Monmouth County, operated by Interfaith Neighbors, Inc., invites you to become a **Meals on Wheels Community Champion**. By selecting a sponsorship level, you can show your support of Monmouth County senior citizens and your investment in their health and wellness.

Gifts of any size are gratefully accepted. Sponsorships of \$250 or more will receive a plaque to display that demonstrates your support for Monmouth County senior citizens.

Plaque Sponsorship Levels:

- \$1,000 - Community Champion Gold Sponsor
- \$500 - Community Champion Silver Sponsor
- \$250 - Community Champion Bronze Sponsor

Visit www.interfaithneighbors.org/nutrition-meals-on-wheels/march-for-meals/ to learn more or make your gift online.

To receive your plaque, please contact Stephanie A. Ferrier at Interfaith Neighbors at 732-775-0525, ext. 220 or via email at stephanief@interfaithneighbors.org.

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.

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March 2020
Program Spotlight: Delivering So
Much More Than Just a Meal

Interfaith Neighbors, Inc. began operating the Monmouth County Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels program in 1991. Every day, over 1,100 meals are delivered throughout Monmouth County by hundreds of volunteers and Interfaith Neighbors staff to seniors at home and at six municipal community congregate sites across the county. But, what we deliver is so much more than just a meal.

Each March, the national advocacy organization, Meals on Wheels America shines a spotlight on both the need for funding and also the great work that community-based Meals on Wheels organizations are doing to address the risk of hunger and isolation for America’s seniors through the **March for Meals Campaign**.

MARCH FOR MEALS - JOIN US!

- Volunteer - give an hour and change a life.
- Make a Donation - help underwrite meals and transportation
- Advocate - speak up for our senior citizens!

Twenty-two percent of New Jersey residents are senior citizens. Seventeen percent of those seniors are food insecure, meaning they are at-risk for hunger. Additionally, twenty-six percent of NJ seniors have a disability. Frequent in home visits provide opportunities to meet nutritional needs, combat social isolation, address

safety hazards, and provide holistic care.

One in four senior citizens live alone, and one in five report that they feel lonely. Often, the volunteer who delivers their meal is the only person they see on a given day. For a home-bound senior citizen, these daily meal deliveries and check-ins are often what allows them to

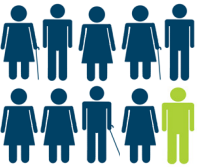
stay in their homes and continue to live independently. Staying in one’s own home can make a huge difference both to one’s quality of life and to one’s financial resources.

Meals on Wheels can provide a senior citizen meals for an entire year for roughly the same cost as spending one day in the hospital or ten days in a nursing home.

While hunger and isolation can affect anyone with limited mobility and declining health, financial strain makes them so much worse.

Eight percent of New Jersey senior citizens live in poverty, creating a reality that after paying for housing, utilities and medical expenses, there is often very little money left for food. And, although impoverished participants are especially susceptible to not getting the nutrition they need, income level is not a factor in the requirements for receiving Meals on Wheels.

Approximately 340,000 meals are prepared and delivered by Interfaith Neighbors to seniors and disabled persons annually. We operate 75 routes covering the 665 square miles of Monmouth County, delivering hot lunches, and for some participants, their breakfasts. Each day, our kitchen staff, our paid drivers and up to 125 volunteers make our program work. No one is required to pay for their meals, but donations of \$2.50 a meal or \$12.50 a week are gratefully appreciated. Meals on Wheels Monmouth County provided by Interfaith Neighbors is funded by Monmouth County, U.S. Department of Agriculture, donations from meal participants, and generous donors.



9 OF 10 SENIORS say Meals on Wheels helps them live independently.

Neighbor Spotlight: Kevin Riley, 13 Year Meals on Wheels Volunteer

Two years prior to retiring from a North Jersey fire department, Howell resident Kevin Riley answered the call to volunteer with the Monmouth County Meals on Wheels program, administered by Interfaith Neighbors.

It’s a responsibility done in earnest; knowing he may be the only point of contact for the nine seniors he serves at Meadowbrook in Tinton Falls. The 13-year volunteer said he knows their routine, when they have a doctor’s appointment, and can quickly ascertain if they are feeling a bit under the weather or if something may be awry.

“This woman is a very nice lady,” he says before knocking on Mrs. Walker’s door, explaining how before she began receiving the daily meal delivery, she kept an eye on a neighbor he once served.

“She used to always check in on him; even cook breakfast for him,” Kevin said. “She took good care of him. She is a very good neighbor.”

After a quick knock, the door immediately opens.



“Hi Mrs Walker, how are you doing; how are you feeling,” he asks as he enters her apartment.

“Oh so so, I have something else going on now,” she responds. “I’ve got to go back to the doctor’s to have another EKG.”

“Well I wish you luck with all of that,” he says. “Also Mrs. Walker I want to let you know I’m not going to be around for a little bit because I’m going on vacation. But I’ll see you when I get back.”

“Ok, so will the other one come,” she asks.

“Yeah, Yeah,” he assures her.

“Ok, well I’m used to you,” she says laughing. “Thanks a lot.”

The 69-year-old retired firefighter said he does get attached to some; recalling a 90-year-old former Jersey City Prosecutor’s Office detective John Thomas.

“He lived downstairs on the first floor,” the New York native said. “He had such great stories and had a grip like an NFL player. He was a remarkable guy.”

The next delivery was to Mary Emmons, a 92-year-old jovial woman who sat waiting in her wheelchair at the entrance to her kitchen.

After briefly catching up, she tells Riley, “I like all of these meals, but there’s only one

I can’t eat; the one with all the mayonnaise.”

Riley, who served as a firefighter for 27 years, is one of 200 volunteers that dedicates an average 2.5 daily hours to Interfaith’s meal delivery program.



“It gives me a little something to do,” he said. “I feel like I’m doing something good and it keeps me busy. It’s nothing too demanding and I get the satisfaction that I’m helping people and doing something useful.”

Interfaith Neighbors prepares and delivers 340,000 homebound meals per year and 36,000 meals to congregate sites across Monmouth County, Nutrition Director Dante Agresti said.



Kula Cafe Now Open on Weekends!

The Kula Cafe, operated by Interfaith Neighbors, recently announced expanded business hours. The local eatery is now open on Saturdays from 9AM to 3PM and Sundays from 10AM to 4PM.

All of the young adults working in the cafe are part of our job training program.

They have committed to spend a minimum of 16 weeks learning all of the job roles in our cafe. All revenue generated by the Kula Cafe goes directly towards supporting the training program. When you give your business to Kula you help support our youth, our cause and our community!

