

Neighbor Spotlight: Meals on Wheels Staff & Volunteers

We would like to share with you the outstanding performance of our Meals on Wheels team during the course of the past year. From our paid staff, our senior center partners and our dedicated volunteers, every one of them went above and beyond to ensure that Monmouth County senior citizens were cared for from the onset of the COVID-19 health pandemic.

Our Meals on Wheels Administrative team, including Director Beth Paterno, Associate Director Dante Agresti, Transportation Coordinator Brandon Terry, and Volunteer Coordinator, Nancy Kennedy, ensured that we had the person-power and needed supplies to keep the program going. They established and implemented new health and safety protocols, secured personal protective equipment, redesigned delivery routes and jumped in their own vehicles to cover volunteer routes when needed.

Our Site Coordinators Barbara Anderson, Cheryl Schmelze, Mary Anthopoulos, Anne Bacon, Florence Filtz and Teresa Richard, worked with their contacts at county senior centers to ensure seniors who now needed home meal delivery due to COVID-19 risks and restrictions were added to routes. They worked with temporarily closed senior centers to ensure safe protocols were in place to allow for our morning meal deliveries and safe



Michael Paterno, Volunteer; Azion Wilburn, Kitchen Aide & Brandon Terry, Transportation Coordinator

pick up of meals by volunteers for door to door delivery. Our kitchen team kept the ovens warm and the meals nutritious throughout the past year. Interfaith Neighbors team members from other departments also assisted as our output numbers increased to help ensure the daily meals were prepared, packaged and loaded each morning. Part-time kitchen worker Shalee Jones was promoted to fulltime driver, becoming our first female driver on staff. We welcomed several new parttime kitchen workers, Azion Wilburn, Shaneal Jones and Guy Hogue as well.

Our fulltime drivers and hundreds of volunteers kept our Meals on Wheels program on the road. Utilizing increased health & safety protocols, these dedicated people continued to deliver over 1,100 meals every day to senior citizens across Monmouth County. Wearing masks and gloves and practicing social distancing, they were still able to deliver so much more than a meal each day. Their daily stops provided companionship for homebound, isolated seniors. Often the only person a senior might see each day, these deliveries also provide a daily health &



Denis Eagan, Driver; Baptiste Pothier, Chef; Azion Wilburn, Kitchen Aide & Michael Paterno, Volunteer

as we always say at Interfaith Neighbors, “We love our volunteers! We can’t do it without them!”

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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April 2021 Program Spotlight: Meals on Wheels Delivers! Every Day

MARCH FOR MEALS
WITH **MEALS ON WHEELS**

Interfaith Neighbors, Inc. has been operating the Monmouth County Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels program since 1991. Every day, we deliver over 1,100 meals throughout Monmouth County, through

the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and Interfaith Neighbors staff, to seniors at home and at six municipal community congregate sites across the county. But, with the pandemic, this past year was a very different year, and it highlighted just how important the program is for home bound senior citizens.

As the world changed in light of the COVID-19 health pandemic, Meals on Wheels programs across the country faced unprecedented challenges in keeping their programs operational as the need for their services exploded.

Immediately, senior centers across Monmouth County closed their doors. For many seniors, these centers were where they received their daily meals and socialized with their neighbors. Interfaith Neighbors immediately began to strategize with our senior center partners. We quickly added those seniors who could no longer visit the senior centers for their meals and couldn’t get out to shop, or were unable to cook for themselves, to our at home meal delivery routes.

The program’s administrative staff jumped into action with the State of New Jersey Department of Health

Meals on Wheels Delivers... (continued)

& Senior Services to ensure continued delivery of necessary provisions to allow the program to continue unimpeded and uninterrupted as the nation faced supply disruptions across all sectors. We also researched and implemented strict health & safety protocols for all staff and volunteers responsible for preparing and delivering the daily meal program to protect both themselves and the senior citizens we serve from the COVID-19 virus.



Nancy Kennedy, Meals on Wheels Volunteer Coordinator

Many Meals on Wheels volunteers are senior citizens themselves and with government guidance that those over 55 were at the highest risk to severe illness, many, understandably, requested a hiatus from their volunteer duties. Nancy Kennedy, who had been working with our Rental Assistance Program, was promoted to Interfaith Neighbors Meals on Wheels volunteer coordinator. She jumped into action and put the word on the street that we were in need of volunteers. The response was overwhelming. College students and others, home from college or working virtually, stepped forward to volunteer, and soon we had a volunteer waitlist. The Meals on Wheels team worked together to vet and train these new volunteers as quickly as possible so we successfully had no interruptions in service.

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. This year, the need is so much greater. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 health pandemic is still with us. As the national vaccination program is underway, we can see light at the end of the tunnel, but we are far from a return to “normal”.

Meals on wheels Delivers...(continued)

Twenty-three percent of New Jersey residents are senior citizens. **Eighteen percent of those seniors are food insecure, meaning they are at-risk for hunger.** Additionally, twenty-six percent of NJ seniors have a disability. Among older adults who have difficulties with daily activities, two out of three receive limited or no home- or community-based care. 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 four report that they feel lonely. Often, the volunteer or Interfaith Neighbors’ staff member 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.**

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 \$3.00 a meal or \$15.00 a week are gratefully appreciated from recipients. 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.

Donor Spotlight: Meals on Wheels of America & You!

As all of us across America learned of the COVID-19 health pandemic and its effects on our daily lives began to come to light, our funders and supporters immediately went to work to provide additional support to ensure our Meals on Wheels programs had the resources we needed to continue to keep our wheels on the road.

Meals on Wheels America, our national partner in providing meals, established the Meals on Wheels COVID-19 Response Fund to assist local meal programs in responding to emerging needs as a result of the pandemic. Interfaith Neighbors applied for and received two grants from this program. The first grant helped Interfaith Neighbors respond to initial needs as a result of the pandemic. We purchased personal protective supplies for our staff and volunteers. We worked with our state food suppliers to stock a two week supply of certain food items as supply chains across the country were experiencing disruptions. Two days of shelf stable meals were purchased for every client in our program to prepare for possible program disruptions. And the initial grant helped fund increased staff expenses as our program costs increased.



New delivery vehicle made possible by Meals on Wheels America grant.

In June, Meals on Wheels America requested a second round of funding requests from local organizations to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic on local programs. Interfaith

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Donor Spotlight (continued)

Neighbors applied for and received funding to purchase an additional meal delivery van to assist in addressing our increased levels of service and eventual need for vehicle replacement. Additionally, this grant funded our ongoing partnership with the Asbury Park Dinner Table project to expand our meal service to up to 200 additional senior citizens living in Asbury Park Public Housing.

Here, locally, you and many others stepped up to support Monmouth County senior citizens. As the pandemic began, Interfaith Neighbors was in the midst of its annual March for Meals campaign. Local leaders were scheduled to learn first-hand the importance of the program by delivering meals themselves. Local individuals and businesses were investing in the program through our Community Champions sponsorship program.



2020 March for Meals Community Champions- AVP/Branch Manager Matthew Meserole and his team at 1st Constitution Bank with Paul McEvily and Stephanie Ferrier from Interfaith Neighbors.

As the pandemic progressed, many individuals and businesses came forward to support the Meals on Wheels Monmouth County program through donations, sponsorships and by volunteering their time delivering and distributing meals.

We are grateful for your continued support of our projects and programs. And, especially grateful to all who helped us us to continue to be there for our senior citizens when they need it the most.