

Neighbor Spotlight: It's a Family Affair



Beth Paterno, Director of Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels Program & Mike Paterno, Volunteer

In 2019, Beth Paterno joined the Interfaith Neighbors Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels team. A retired schoolteacher and daughter of Interfaith Neighbors founder, Joe Marmora, Beth wanted to follow her father's lead and help to support the mission of Interfaith Neighbors. She initially thought she would be helping out part-time, but she soon became engaged in the work and is now the full-time Director of the Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels program.

It's been challenging since Beth became Director of the program. Shortly after starting, we were faced with the start of the COVID-19 health pandemic. Beth and the rest of the Senior Nutrition team came together to update safety protocols, recruit and train new volunteers, as many of our senior citizen volunteers understandably stayed home in the early days of the pandemic, and worked tirelessly to keep the program up and running on a daily

basis. Those that relied on the home-delivered meals needed the program's support more than ever. Many days Beth was on the road delivering meals herself, filling in for an absent delivery person. She brings to the program dedication and a passion that is infectious.

"I work with an incredible staff every day. It has become a happy place to work and volunteer for everyone who is part of the program. Since coming to the program I have reflected how in moving from being a teacher to director of Meals on Wheels, the two roles are both service and family oriented. In my role as a teacher, I connected with parents to help ensure their children's success. Now, there's a bit of a role reversal. I connect with children to talk about their parents' needs for living healthy, successful lives," says Beth.

In October 2020, the program was facing some staffing shortages in the kitchen due to normal attrition and the impact of the health pandemic. Each day, the Interfaith Neighbors kitchen prepares the 1,100 plus meals that are delivered to seniors across the county. Beth's husband Michael (Mike) Paterno saw the need for help and volunteered to help out in the kitchen for a few weeks. After a few weeks, he was hooked on the program too, arriving each day at 4:00AM, helping the kitchen run a little more effectively and with a lot more excitement. Music and singing can now often be heard coming from the Meals on Wheels kitchen in the early morning hours.

"Getting up early, knowing I am helping people who wouldn't necessarily eat if they didn't get their meals is a really rewarding way to start each day," says Mike about his volunteer service.

Over a year and a half later, Mike still arrives in the early hours of the morning and works for four hours preparing meals before heading out to his job in pharmaceutical packaging. He rarely misses a morning and has become a real mentor to the younger members of the kitchen staff. He loves to joke that his wife Beth is now his boss!

Become a Meals on Wheels Community Champion

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

Community Champions who make a gift at the \$250 level or greater will receive a banner they can proudly display in their place of business or home that demonstrates their support for Monmouth County senior citizens.

Gifts of any size are gratefully accepted.

Gifts at the following levels will receive a plaque to proudly display your support:

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

Use the enclosed envelope or visit www.interfaithneighbors.org/march-for-meals/ to give securely online.

To receive your banner, please contact Stephanie A. Ferrier at Interfaith Neighbors, Inc. 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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Interfaith Neighbors

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

March 2022



Program Spotlight: Celebrating 50 Years


The annual March for Meals celebration commemorates the historic day in March of 1972 when President Nixon signed into law a measure that amended the Older Americans Act of 1965 to include a national nutrition program for seniors 60 years and older. This year, Meals on Wheels programs from across the country are joining forces for the awareness campaign to celebrate 50 years of success and garner the support needed to ensure these critical programs can continue to address food insecurity and malnutrition, combat social isolation, enable independence, and improve the health of seniors for years to come.

Interfaith Neighbors began operating the Monmouth County Meals on Wheels program thirty-one years ago in 1991. Every weekday, we prepare and deliver over 1,100 meals throughout Monmouth County, through the efforts of over 125 volunteers and Interfaith Neighbors' staff, to seniors at home and municipal congregate sites

across the county.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic is still impacting everyone after two years, but the pandemic has highlighted just how important the Meals on Wheels program is for home bound senior citizens.

Many older adults struggled with hunger and isolation before the corona virus pandemic. These past two years have exacerbated these issues and increased the need for services like Meals on Wheels. Reporting from Meals on Wheels America shows an increase of seniors, aged 60 and older, have reported that sometimes or often they didn't have enough to eat from 2.8% pre-pandemic to 4.9% in 2020 - a 75% increase.



1 IN 4 ADULTS
aged 65 and older reported
ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION
during the pandemic.*

**This was substantially higher than the 1 in 10 (11%) older adults with Medicare who reported depression or anxiety in 2018.*

Here in New Jersey, eighteen percent of senior citizens are food insecure, meaning they are at-risk for hunger. Additionally, twenty-six percent of NJ seniors have a disability. The daily home visits of the Meals on Wheels program provide opportunities to not just meet nutritional needs, but also combat social isolation, address safety hazards, and provide a daily check in.



Nationwide, one in four senior citizens live alone, and one in four report they feel lonely. Often,

1 IN 4 SENIORS LIVES ALONE
1 IN 4 FEELS LONELY

the Meals on Wheels volunteer is the only person the homebound seniors see on a given day. For a homebound 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

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one's quality of life and financial resources.

Approximately 350,000 meals are prepared and delivered annually by Interfaith Neighbors Meals on Wheels for seniors and disabled persons. We operate 75 routes covering the 665 square miles of Monmouth County, delivering hot lunches, and for many participants, their daily breakfast. Each day our kitchen team, drivers and up to 125 volunteers make our program work. No one is required to pay for their meals, but donations are appreciated from recipients who are able and from the broader community.

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!

Donor Spotlight: Monmouth County Office on Aging, Disabilities & Veterans

Since 1991, when Interfaith Neighbors began offering the Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels program, the Monmouth County Office on Aging, Disabilities & Veterans Services (Office on Aging) has been our lead partner in operating the program.

The Office on Aging was established by the County Board of Commissioners in 1975 and utilizes federal, state and county funds to develop programs and partnerships to deliver essential services to the seniors of Monmouth County. Their objective is to enhance the quality of life of Monmouth County Older Adults and their caregivers with respect, care and accountability. They advocate for the elderly by advising local governments on the needs of older adults, recommending legislation where appropriate, and monitoring all programs funded under Title III of the Older Americans Act. In addition to the Interfaith

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Neighbors Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels program, Title III of the Older Americans Act also provides supportive services for information and assistance, outreach, benefits screening, legal assistance, nutrition education and counseling, transportation, certified home health aides, housekeeping, senior centers, Adult Protective Services, residential maintenance, telephone reassurance, friendly visiting, child care/Grandparent raising grandchildren, physical health, physical fitness, education and socialization/recreation.

“Monmouth County is committed to assisting our most vulnerable residents and the work that Sue Moleon and the entire Division on Aging, Disabilities and Veterans Services clearly exemplifies this commitment,” said Commissioner Director Thomas A. Arnone. “We are grateful to Interfaith Neighbors and all of our community partners for working with us to serve our senior citizens.”

This county agency not only provides funding, but support and expertise to non-profit service providers across the county who serve senior citizens. They are a wonderful resource to senior citizens and their families in connecting to resources or navigating the social services network.

“The Monmouth County Office on Aging provides irreplaceable assistance in helping us execute on our daily program of providing 1,100 meals to homebound and congregate senior sites across Monmouth County. Led by director Sue Moleon, and her team of Sam Pandure, Linda Jensen and Cherry San, their combined decades of experience and expertise help us navigate the multitude of questions that arise through our work on the various grants we receive to undertake Interfaith Neighbors' largest agency program,” comments Chip Craig, Interfaith's Associate Executive Director and Chief Business Officer. “They are always available for

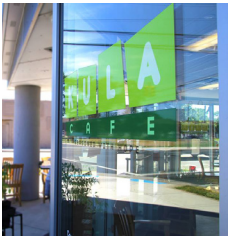
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consultation, never too busy, and always with a mind-set of helping us find answers and solutions to the questions and challenges we might be encountering.”

Interfaith Neighbors is grateful for their continued financial support and expertise in helping us to ensure that Monmouth County senior citizens do not have to choose between their housing or medications and a healthy meal. The Senior Nutrition/Meals on Wheels program is Interfaith Neighbors largest program both in terms of operating budget and staff and volunteers. The Monmouth County Office on Aging works with us to help enroll new senior citizen clients into the program, administers the bulk of the funding to support the program, and assists us with purchasing and connections to other service providers.

Kula Cafe at MacroBites Re-Opens for Dining & Training

Until March of 2020, the Kula Café, in Interfaith Neighbors' Springwood Center had become a mainstay in Asbury Park's developing Springwood Avenue corridor, until closing due to the health pandemic.



In late January, the current tenant at the Kula Cafe site, MacroBites, celebrated its one-year anniversary by reopening Kula Café and its training program.

On the menu are some of those familiar Kula Café items, such as the popular Blue Bishop and Griffins burgers, Apple Walnut and Kula Cobb salads, as well as breakfast. Also featured are the popular health-conscious items from MacroBites meal plans, such as the favored Hawaiian Wrap, Lemon Zest Tofu, New Orleans Strip Steak, and Southwest Shrimp.

MacroBites at Kula Café is open 8:30 am to 6 pm Monday thru Saturday.