



Interfaith Neighbors
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2017 Annual Report

Rental and Mortgage Assistance

In 2017, Interfaith Neighbors provided \$482,280.88 in rental and mortgage assistance for 324 families or 732 individuals. The average payout was \$1,488.52 per family. In the past five years, we assisted 1,869 families. Funding came from state and county grants, private and corporate donations.

In 2017, we assisted intact families, single moms, single dads, elderly individuals on fixed incomes. We assisted people from towns throughout Monmouth County. "Our clients continue to tell us they are extremely grateful for this help, and we develop a sincere understanding of what they're going through," said Maura Comer, Rental and Mortgage Assistance Director.

We assisted in Monmouth County's annual Point-In-Time count of the homeless, our annual holiday program and the Need To Feed Holiday program at Kula Café.

We have a new part-time employee, Nancy Kennedy.

Nutrition Division (Meals on Wheels of Monmouth County)

The Meals on Wheels program in 2017 provided approximately 300,000 meals to seniors and disabled persons in Monmouth County. The kitchen staff at the 810 Fourth Avenue headquarters in Asbury Park cooks and prepares approximately 900 to 1,000 meals a day.

Interfaith operates 70 routes to deliver meals, and in addition to paid drivers, has approximately 500 volunteers helping to prepare and deliver meals for people in their homes or at congregate noonday sites.

Those lunch sites are located at senior centers in Asbury Park, Neptune, Howell, Red Bank, Middletown, Keyport and Keansburg, Three additional sites – the Long Branch and Bradley Beach senior centers and Asbury Towers in Asbury Park --are auxiliary sites where volunteers pick up meals and deliver them to residents in their homes.

Interfaith delivered meals weekly to participants in a Freehold Borough senior computer class at the Rug Mill senior housing complex. We also partnered with Beacon Health and Social Services to deliver meals to their homebound clients.

We continued to serve 600 breakfasts a day to the most needy Meals on Wheels recipients, and deliver two meals on Saturday mornings to 25 percent of our residents who have reported having no one to help them on weekends and holidays.

Our holiday meal program continues to be successful.

We still have not recovered from Sandy in terms of numbers of seniors served in the Bay Shore because many seniors had to leave when they lost their homes and a number of those seniors did not come back.

We continued the box lunch program for senior clubs at a cost of \$4 a meal which helped pay for the breakfast program. Allentown Senior Club signed on as the newest club to get the box lunches in January 2017, joining clubs in Holmdel, Clifford Beach and Neptune.

We have not had a decrease in meal recipients as a result of the state of New Jersey allowing insurance companies to reimburse meals a senior gets from for profit vendors. The difference between those programs and Meals on Wheels is that we see the seniors every day so there is that interaction.

Housing Development

Interfaith Neighbors in 2017 completed construction of the Rights of Passage home for five young men at 522 Prospect Avenue, Asbury Park. This home was built as part of a collaborative partnership with Covenant House, which leases the home from Interfaith Neighbors and operates its Rights of Passage transitional living program, helping residents move from homelessness to successful independent living.

The two-story house has five bedrooms, each with its own bath and a spacious first floor living area. Officially dedicated in January, 2018, Paul McEvily named the house Meg's Place for our Youth Specialist Meg Flores whose determined advocacy to meet housing needs of young people led to our partnership with Covenant House.

Four Kula program participants, either graduates or trainees moved into the home in February 2018. Interfaith Neighbors will begin construction of a second transitional home, Rights of Passage Phase II, on the adjacent lot in fall of 2018 for five young women. "We are well aware there is equally strong housing needed for young women," said Patrick Durkin, director of real estate development.

In the area of home ownership, construction of a three bedroom single family home at 922 Mattison Avenue was completed the home was sold to a family in May 2017.

The Park View AP project has advanced in the planning stages and will result in 10 two-story detached town homes to be built on Springwood Avenue. Each new owner-resident also will have a one-bedroom garage apartment behind their home that can be leased, generating income.

The homes in a previous design received city approvals but bids came in \$3.5 million

over budget in 2017, a development attributed to the property's storm water system and the cost to build the structures as designed. We began the process of redesigning the project and getting new approvals.

We're continuing a project to develop new property for a Pathway to Home Ownership program in Asbury Park where residents can live for a year or two and have part of their rent become escrow as they work through the program to be able to buy their own homes.

Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program (NRTC)

Interfaith Neighbors continued to carry out projects funded through the New Jersey Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program.

This has been major funding to underwrite housing, economic, employment, recreation and family stabilization projects on Asbury Park's West Side and comes from corporations which commit the funds and receive 100 percent write-offs on state taxes.

We plan to use the remaining funding from the Project V year for site work for the Park View AP homes.

Half of the Project VI funding of \$757,750 was completed by the end of 2017. Still to be used were funds designated for the following: \$200,000 for Park View AP, \$85,000 for property purchase, and \$65,000 for the Asbury Park

In September, 2017, we filed application for Project VII funding after an earlier application went unfunded. We've learned at the outset of 2018 that Project VII was funded for \$985,000.

That money is designated for the Park View AP homes, the Rights of Passage Phase II home, and the Pathway to Home Ownership program.

Also, there is funding for our collaborating agencies and partners including Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Community Affairs Resource Center, Junior Entrepreneur Training program run by KYDS at the Boys and Girls Club, the Second Baptist Church's Fine Arts and Technology summer camp, and a film and editing project at the ShowRoom.

There also is funding for a new Career Corps program and the free summer weekly concerts at Springwood Avenue Park.

Interfaith is continuing community planning for the West Side neighborhood and focusing on future development in the next decade, particularly on the Springwood Corridor. A Wells Fargo grant in 2017 has helped funding for that planning. The plan focuses on two areas: a neighborhood commercial zone in the Springwood Avenue Redevelopment Plan west of Atkins Avenue and the Gateway section at the intersection of Memorial and Springwood avenues.

Business Development Center (BDC)

Six business teams came through the BDC's Food Entrepreneur Program, a joint venture with Rutgers University Food Innovation Center to help budding entrepreneurs

in Monmouth County develop a food product. Three of those businesses were launched by the end of 2017.

Ryan Nelson, son of Dean Nelson of Dean's Natural Food Market, was one of those entrepreneurs and he created and marketed a Viva Energy Bar. Dean Nelson offered to continue his assistance in the program, offering shelf space and allowing participants to use some of his business' technology to price out their products and have access to vendors. The program continued into 2018.

The BDC operated the afterschool Junior Entrepreneur Training Program for the third year with 22 city students in sixth-to-eighth grade learning to create and market a business. Charles Simmons and Mychal Mills coordinated the program from January to April. Student teams created customized sweatshirts, tee shirts and smart phone covers which they sold at the Made in Monmouth Expo at Monmouth University. In 2018, the program is expected to be run out of the Boys and Girls Club of Monmouth County. Interfaith Neighbors is continuing financial support.

Briana Nichols began working part-time for the BDC and brought her teaching and education expertise to redesign the Kula Urban Farm Green Thumbs program. She developed a new curriculum to give middle-school-aged children greater exposure to science, biology, ecology and the connection of agriculture to social justice. Her work also meant that the Green Thumbs program can expand in 2018 to students in more schools.

Briana wrote additional curriculum for one-day workshops and helped in the BDC's planning for a new Career Corps program. Plans for 2018 include further development of the Career Corps initiative and additional career training programs.

The BDC's leased office space in 2017 which includes the Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce, was almost at full capacity. The BDC and Kula Café provided backstage support for the Springwood Park free summer concerts on Monday nights.

Kula Café.

Interfaith Neighbors brought on chefs Bilal Mohammed and Jennifer Freeman to the café after a transition period that followed longtime chef Wendy Escobedo's departure early in 2017 to a position at Soul Kitchen in Red Bank. Gillian Edgar took over as manager of the café at 1201 Springwood along with her responsibilities as business associate to director Roger Boyce at the BDC.

The café had a 5 percent increase in sales in 2017. Twenty-one young men and women came through the training program. Of that total, two were terminated and one had to drop out because of personal circumstances. The remaining 18 completed the program and had jobs at the time of their graduation. Seventeen graduates earned their ServSafe certification.

The café saw increased patron support from the immediate local community, a trend that is continuing, and also increased catering sales. The café and Kula Farm launched the notably successful Farm to Table dinners and cocktail parties with local celebrity chefs donating their time and expertise along with Kula's chefs to benefit the Kula programs.

The Kula Café trainees were able to work alongside those expert chefs, learning an additional level of service. The dinners took hold in the community and area, increasing the number of individuals being introduced to and learning about the farm and café programs.

The café also participated in the city's annual restaurant tour. Going forward in 2018, Interfaith Neighbors plans an innovative remodeling of Kula Café.

Kula Urban Farm

Kula Farm at 115 Atkins Avenue noticeably soared in its second full year of operations in 2017. Under farm managers Lisa Bagwell and Thijs van Oosterhout, the farm increased productivity in the greenhouse by adding more vertical hydroponic zip-grow towers, a new large hydroponic micro-green growing station and a hydroponic bato bucket system for growing tomatoes. Workers started harvesting rainwater from the greenhouse roof to use in the hydroponic systems.

Several new clients were added, and as of December, 2017, the farm was supplying produce to 15 area restaurants.

Kula Farm opened Farm Without Borders (FWOB), on land Interfaith Neighbors owns directly across Springwood Avenue from the Kula Café. The Farm Without Borders, funded by the Friends of the Spring Lake 5, was run entirely by residents of the Westside Community. They grew and harvested tomatoes, strawberries, cucumbers and herbs given to seniors given to local residents.

Late in the year, Interfaith Neighbors and the Elks Lodge 3409 signed an agreement to allow the farm to expand its FWOB to land the lodge owns so that FWOB will have additional space to grow food. This will allow the FWOB to expand to three times its original size.

Kula Farm continued its new Farm Experience Program, a 60-hour paid work program. The farm hired on three managers and had seven additional graduates complete their work program. Five of those graduates will be back to paid positions through the 2018 season.

The farm and greenhouse were the site of the Farm to Table dinners and cocktail parties (see Kula Café report above).

The farm hosted workshops on fermentation and fire cider, held its first annual open house with several demonstrations and vendors, and continued free vegetable giveaways on Saturdays in neighborhood garden outside the greenhouse on Atkins Avenue.

“The farm continues act as a resource to the local community interested in gardening and growing their own food by offering free plant starts, seeds, materials and gardening advice to area residents,” said manager Lisa Bagwell. “We hope to expand this mission by consulting with interested residents and businesses in starting their own gardens.”

The farm in 2017 continued hosting the Green Thumbs afterschool program which Briana Nichols has redesigned for 2018 (See report above under BDC Section).