

IM SUMMER 2017

INTERFAITH MINISTRIES

FOR GREATER HOUSTON

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Paula Sutton
IM Board Chair



Small Acts of Kindness Make Big Difference



No hyperbole. It would be impossible to fulfill our mission without our corps of 4,000 dedicated volunteers. Each one is special to us. Some, though, stand out for their level of commitment.

The term “volunteer,” for example, doesn’t do Janice Hughes justice. A 3-year veteran, Jan wears many volunteer hats. She delivers Meals on Wheels two to four days a week, helps with administrative work, delivers aniMeals once a month, serves on the aniMeals committee, recruits other volunteers and was instrumental in launching aniMeals’ highly successful Wellness Fairs.

She is also spearheading aniMeals’ partnership with Emancipet, which makes high-quality spay/neuter and veterinary care affordable and accessible to all pet owners.

“Jan has taken ownership of the partnership between aniMeals on

Wheels and Emancipet,” says Heather Mann, Volunteer Coordinator for

aniMeals. “Through her efforts, over 20 of our clients’ pets have been either spayed or neutered, received a rabies vaccination and been microchipped.”

Jan was nominated by IM for the Texan Plus Champion Award, and she is one of five finalists across Southeast Texas. The award winner will be chosen by popular vote online. Voting starts on July 31 and goes through September 18. The winner receives a \$25,000 grant for their charity! Check our Facebook page and website for more details on how to cast your votes.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please reach out to us at volunteerinfo@imgh.org or 713-533-4981.

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A PUBLICATION OF
INTERFAITH MINISTRIES FOR GREATER HOUSTON
SUMMER 2017



TAPESTRY GALA, HONORING SHELL OIL COMPANY, RAISES CLOSE TO \$550,000



Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston (IM) was proud to honor Shell Oil Company at its ninth annual Tapestry Gala, held May 3, 2017. Close to \$550,000 was generated by the festive evening, which celebrated Shell’s philanthropic efforts in the community and Houston’s great diversity in cultures, ethnicities and faith traditions.

More than 500 guests were on hand at the Hilton Americas-Houston to recognize Shell and to support IM’s many programs including Meals on Wheels/aniMeals, Refugee Services and Interfaith Relations.

“IM was deeply honored to recognize Shell for its generous contributions and strong commitment to the Houston community,” said Martin B. Cominsky, IM’s President & CEO. “Shell is a valued partner of IM. It has been one of the lead sponsors of Meals on Wheels for years and Shell employees are stalwart volunteers in our program to feed more than 4,000 homebound seniors each weekday.”

The evening included a shared prayer from different faith leaders, as well as inspiring musical selections. It

concluded with the presentation of the 2017 Tapestry Award to Shell by Houston City Mayor Sylvester Turner to Scott Ballard, Shell’s Executive Vice President for Human Resources.

This year’s gala chair was Philamena Baird and IM Board Member Swatantra Jain served as finance chair, with IM Board Chair Paula Sutton leading the board’s efforts. Lisa Malosky served as the evening’s emcee.

The evening’s guests included: Shell EVP Scott Ballard, Harris County Judge Ed and Gwen Emmett, Houston City Mayor Sylvester Turner, Cindy and John Kellum, Paula Sutton and Bill Gross, Philamena and Arthur Baird, Bimla and Swatantra Jain, Karyn and Charles Crisp, Susan and Dan Boggio, Terry and Martin Cominsky, Karen and Jay Harberg, Sippi and Ajay Khurana, Brigitte and Bashar Kalai, Houston City Councilmembers Amanda Edwards, Steve Le, Mike Laster and Robert Gallegos, Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo and 2016 Tapestry Gala honorees Lily and Charles Foster.

FROM THE CEO



I was recently thinking about comments I heard from one of our Meals on Wheels seniors. The senior's name is Ms. Patsy and she is 82 years old.

Ms. Patsy said she loves her meals, because the food is good and always hot, but something else she said was even more telling. Said Ms. Patsy, "My driver is very nice and he makes my day when he asks me how I am feeling this morning."

Meals on Wheels isn't just a meal for Ms. Patsy; it's a lifeline to the rest of the world, and in many cases, the only person she will see all day. Her assessment of her Meals on Wheels service is one we hear often from our seniors. And it is shared by thousands of seniors living in the Gulf Coast area who need and depend on Meals on Wheels.

This includes hundreds in Galveston County who will soon benefit from expanded Meals on Wheels service.

On Tuesday April 11, 2017, Galveston County Commissioners voted unanimously to transfer responsibility for the county's Meals on Wheels service from Galveston County Parks and Cultural Services to Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston's (IM) Meals on Wheels program.

The new program will be called **Meals on Wheels Galveston County** and will be staffed by Galveston County employees and volunteers.

IM is currently providing meals to 52 clients in Galveston County through other programs, but this new agreement means that IM can help provide a full scope of services to all 302 Meals on Wheels clients in the county. This includes a breakfast meal program for those seniors who are particularly frail, and access to other services through IM's client services department.

The partnership will also lead to a reduction in the waiting list of Galveston County seniors needing Meals on Wheels service.

And, **aniMeals on Wheels**, which IM currently operates with the Galveston Island Humane Society, can expand. This program provides dog and cat food to feed seniors' pets, who are a source of valuable companionship and love.

We are excited to launch this partnership in the coming months and encourage Galveston County residents to get involved in Meals on Wheels. This includes helping elderly family members and friends enroll in the program, and volunteering to deliver meals or pet food to aniMeals clients. It's estimated that one in six seniors in this country struggles with hunger. It's a sad and sorry statistic that IM and Meals on Wheels Galveston County can do something to change. Meals on Wheels does make a difference in the lives of seniors like Ms. Patsy.

Get involved with Meals on Wheels today! To learn more how you can volunteer or donate to this valuable program, visit www.imgh.org.

Martin B. Cominsky
President & CEO

OPERATION IMPACT HELPING SENIORS WEATHER THE STORM



More than 55 teams of volunteers rallied at five locations around Houston June 3rd for IM's second annual **Operation Impact** – a one-day event to deliver shelf-stable meals and cases of water to Meals on Wheels seniors.

Operation IMPact provides seniors with five meals and water in the event a hurricane or other inclement weather interrupts regular meal deliveries.

Volunteers who gathered at IM's Meals on Wheels offices were joined by Harris County Judge Ed Emmett and Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen.



In addition to IM's Meals on Wheels offices, volunteers also delivered from the Houston Food Bank, Covenant Lutheran Church, CenterPoint Energy and Humble Area Assistance Ministries.

"We can't thank enough the volunteers and location hosts for helping deliver these vital provisions," said Warren Wenner, Vice President of Meals on Wheels. "This service is important because we don't want our seniors to go hungry because of flooding and severe weather, but we also want to protect our drivers from dangerous conditions."

A YOUNG REFUGEE GETS A NEW START

Six-year-old Hani has seen more horror in his short life than most people see in their lifetime.

His family was living in Damascus when the war started. One day, bombing broke out near his home. His dad was in the city and unable to return home because of all the explosions. The walls and ceilings rattled and debris kept falling from the ceiling. Hani was terrified! Fearing for her children's lives, Hani's mom made the children stay in a closet until the bombing finally stopped the next morning. However, the gunfire continued. Luckily, Hani's dad made it home safely during a short ceasefire. Fearing for her family's safety, Hani's mom decided that her family had to leave their home to find safety. They immediately left and found a town where there was less fighting and gunfire.



Hani and his family lived in an old school house for 11 months, but they were safe... until the war started approaching their new home. Once again, they had to leave. Hani's parents took a taxi to Lebanon and then flew their family to Jordan, to safety. After much waiting, earlier this year they finally made it to their new, permanent home in Houston.

Hani hasn't started school yet, but he enjoys going to the library with his friend Candy, a volunteer from IM. He really enjoys all the educational games at the library and makes friends there easily. Most of the games are in English, which is challenging for Hani, but he is a smart boy and picks them up quickly with Candy's help. He just started speaking full sentences in English and continues to learn more words every day.

To help refugees like Hani by making a gift to Refugee Services, go to www.imgh.org or call 713-533-4924.

IM HOSTS EID FOR REFUGEES

IM recognized Ramadan with two special events in June. Staff and volunteers celebrated an Iftar dinner with refugee families on June 9th at IM's Great Hall and on June 10th volunteers assembled 100 care packages for refugee families.

More than 50 refugees joined IM staff and other community representatives for the festive Iftar, which was sponsored by the Itani Family. The evening began at sundown and included a call to prayer and a special proclamation from the Mayor's office.

On Saturday, 200 volunteers made brightly wrapped care packages of toiletries and household items to welcome new refugees to the Houston community.



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