

MOSAIC

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IM
INTERFAITH
MINISTRIES
FOR GREATER HOUSTON



IM Board Chairman Shaukat Zakaria, Mayor Sylvester Turner, Judge Ed Emmett, IM President and CEO Martin B. Cominsky and Honorary Chair Neil Bush



Jim McIngvale, Neil Bush, and Martin B. Cominsky

IM TAPESTRY GALA WOWS WITH STORIES OF HARVEY HEROES

This year's Tapestry Gala will no doubt become one of IM's most memorable events, as we honored three of Houston's most notable heroes during Hurricane Harvey: Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale, owner of Gallery Furniture and philanthropist.

The May 10 event at the Hilton Americas touched an audience of more than 400 people with moving live performances, prayers that melded together multiple faiths, and special tributes to four IM volunteers who showed extraordinary valor during Harvey by assisting Meals on Wheels (MOW), Refugee Services (RS), Interfaith Relations & Community Partnerships (IRCP), and Volunteer Houston (VH).

As the keynote speaker, McIngvale insisted he did not need special recognition for his good deeds during Harvey – when he opened the doors to his stores and offered his showrooms full of mattresses and furniture to Houston's displaced population – an act that brought him national attention and praise.

His words were echoed by Emmett and Turner, both of whom shied away from taking credit for rescuing 60,000 people during the storm. They emphasized the heroic efforts of hundreds of civil servants – some who died while trying to rescue people from high waters.

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IM President and CEO Martin B. Cominsky, who presided over the event, spotlighted MOW volunteers Lauren and Chad Walters, owners of Electrical Tech Services, who offered their company's large trucks to help rescue senior clients; Tehmina Masud, an RS volunteer who raises money and helps refugee families acclimate to their new city as seamlessly as possible; Jeff Nuckols, senior vice president of Frost Bank, which gave IM to \$50,000 after Harvey – funds which were used in part by IRCP to help congregations and their members affected by the storm; and Arun Gir, executive director of iEducate and a VH client who relied on VH's Human Resources experts to select and match a new group of college tutors ready to help students after Harvey.

All honorees received medals and overwhelming applause from the audience, which included the gala's honorary chairs, Maria and Neil Bush; the presenting sponsor, Shell Oil Company; Brigitte and Bashar Kalai; Sippi and Ajay Khurana; Nihala and Shaukat Zakaria, IM Board Chair; the Zandstra family; Dr. Bimla and Swatantra Jain; the Subramanian family; and representatives from Frost Bank, CenterPoint Energy and Valley, an Elior Company, among others.

The gala raised nearly \$540,000 and will enable IM to continue its work of feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger and bringing diverse groups of people together for dialogue and service.



Sylvia Gilbert and Mayor Sylvester Turner



Arun Gir, Lauren Walters, Chad Walters, Tehmina Masud and Jeff Nuckols



Local singers Dee Dee Dochen and Mike Kahn



TEXANS CHEERLEADERS, ART CARS TEAMED UP FOR “MINI PARADE” TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR MEALS ON WHEELS

After opening his front door on March 19 and seeing five beautiful Houston Texans Cheerleaders standing on his doorstep with his weekday meal, Meals on Wheels (MOW) client Harold Molitor could only say one thing: “I feel like I’ve died and gone to heaven!”

That was the day that IM celebrated the national March for Meals campaign to raise awareness for the MOW program. And, IM did it in style!

The Houston Texans Cheerleaders donned their uniforms and pompoms and teamed up with the local art car community to deliver meals “caravan style” to senior clients in the Midtown area. IM invited the press to ride along, capture

the fun, and help promote the constant need for donations and volunteers.

The Cheerleaders helped pack breakfast bags for the seniors before hopping into art cars that were creatively constructed and painted to look like zebras, hippos, a toy wonderland and even a Santa Claus. The cars snaked their way through neighborhoods, drawing much attention along the way.

Not only were the lucky MOW seniors on the special route excited to receive their meals from the Cheerleaders, but they marveled over the cars that have participated in Houston's famous Art Car Parade for more than 30 years.



FROM THE CEO

and held summer interfaith Dinner Dialogues in homes across the area.

Though we hope there will not be another Harvey this summer, we are prepared for storm season. Our seniors received five days' worth of shelf-stable food, a case of bottled water, and emergency information for them and their pets.

Refugee arrivals continue to decline due to changing federal policy. However, we are committed to welcoming as many families to Houston as we can, and to serving the refugee neighbors already living here.

Our Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships (IRCP) department responded quickly to a tragedy in our community, the Santa Fe High School shooting. Thanks to our partners, Gallery Furniture, Points of Light, and the Coalition Against Hate, we participated in two special projects to remember the deceased and convey our condolences to the survivors. Santa Fe Stars encourages the public to write messages on paper stars, which will be collected by Gallery Furniture and presented to the school. Another

project, Santa Fe Banners, displays large banners at multiple locations throughout the Greater Houston area, primarily at faith communities, for well-wishers to sign.

Construction on the Brigitte and Bashir Plaza of Respect is beginning, and we hope to dedicate it by the end of the year. This inspiring outdoor space will honor the legacy of three iconic faith leaders: Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, Rabbi Samuel Karff, and Revered William A. Lawson.

Summer is usually a quieter time at IM, but I have a feeling this summer will be busier than usual! Good things are happening. IM is enhancing its services, rising to meet new challenges, and remaining true to its mission of bringing people of diverse backgrounds together for dialogue, collaboration and service. We could not carry out this important work without you – our supporters and volunteers. Thank you for all you do.

Martin B. Cominsky

President & CEO

Dear Friends,

The past few months have been very busy at IM. We publicly relaunched Volunteer Houston, held the inaugural Gershenson Lecture, started our new IMPulse young professionals group, celebrated the Heroes of Harvey at our Tapestry Gala, hosted an Iftar dinner and made welcome boxes for refugee families through the Eid for Refugees project, prepared Meals on Wheels seniors and their pets for Hurricane Season through Operation IMPact,



REFUGEE FAMILIES GATHERED AT IM FOR IFTAR AND EID CELEBRATIONS

During the season of Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk. They break fast at sundown with an Iftar meal. For the third year in a row, IM hosted an Iftar on May 18 for its refugee families with more than 100 attendees.

On May 19, IM volunteers participated in an “Eid for Refugees” event and assembled welcome boxes for newly arrived refugee families. The boxes contained essentials like toiletries, basic housewares, and cleaning supplies, and the “little things” that make a new house a home, such as tea kettles and tea.

Both events were sponsored by Taiba and its founder, Suzanne Itani.



INAUGURAL GERSHENSON LECTURE STRESSED NEED FOR EQUALITY

In honor of former IM President Elliot Gershenson, IM hosted the first of a lecture series in his name that featured Imam Yahya Hendi, the Muslim chaplain for Georgetown University, which is the first American university to hire a fulltime Muslim chaplain.



Imam Yahya Hendi
Muslim chaplain, Georgetown University

In a presentation called “Many Faiths, One Humanity, United for the Common Good,” Imam Hendi spoke at St. Philip Presbyterian Church on April 25 about the importance of dialogue for fostering respect and understanding as well as challenging stereotypes and prejudice.

Hendi emphasized that the origins of ancient religions can be traced to both men and women, and that women should be treated equally in the world. “Our religions cannot come forward unless they honor the best of what they have: women,” he said.

He also urged people to “stop, look and listen” earnestly to others with whom they differ. While prejudice and discrimination divide people, he emphasized the importance of building bridges to unite people. “The world is bigger than one religious community. Together we can confront all forms of fear by being compassionate and working together,” he said.

The sought-after speaker has presented a multitude of interfaith and general lectures throughout the United States, Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, and the Middle East for the past 14 years. In 2012 he was named one of the world’s most 500 influential Muslims.



Martin B. Cominsky, Elliot Gershenson and Imam Yahya Hendi

OPERATION IMPACT DELIVERS STORM MEALS, BOTTLED WATER TO MORE THAN 4,000 SENIORS

For the third consecutive year in a row, IM hosted an ever-expanding Operation Impact on June 2. Now serving Galveston County, the regional campaign distributed shelf-stable meals and bottled water to approximately 4,000 Meals on Wheels seniors, veterans, and disabled clients in preparation for Hurricane Season.

Supporting the effort, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett stopped by the MOW building on distribution day, as eight regional sites served as hubs for the distribution of supplies by approximately 500 volunteers. MOW clients also received hurricane kits with flashlights, whistles, pens, notepads, document dry bags, and emergency contact information.

This year’s title sponsor was St. Philip Presbyterian Church, and the key sponsor was The Alliance of Community Assistance.



FUNDING OUR MISSION...



Shell presents its annual donation to IM's Meals on Wheels program.

LEAVE A LEGACY

When making your estate plans, please consider making a planned gift to IM. A bequest, gift of life insurance or IRA distribution all leave a lasting legacy to IM, without affecting your current cash flow. You can have a tremendous impact on our work!

For more information on all giving opportunities, please contact Chief Development Officer Maria Magee at 713-533-4924 or at mmagee@imgh.org.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Construction on the Brigitte and Bashar Plaza of Respect will begin this summer, with the goal of dedicating the Plaza by the end of the year. Major capital campaign sponsors include: Patti and Richard Everett, Brigitte and Bashar Kalai, Shell Oil Company, and the Clark and Charlene Thompson Foundation.

IM is entering the final phase of its campaign to complete its Midtown campus. IM must raise funds to establish a Campus Reserve Fund to ensure its long-term upkeep and to complete needed renovations to existing buildings. Naming opportunities are still available.

For more information, please contact Maria Magee at 713-533-4924 or mmagee@imgh.org.

DONORS WHO MADE GIFTS OF \$1,000+ FROM MARCH - MAY 2018.

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP LAUNCHES WITH COMPELLING LECTURE ON HOW HOUSTON'S DIVERSITY COULD SHAPE THE FUTURE

Reaching out to Houston's young professionals who have an interest in making meaningful contributions in the most diverse city in America, IM launched the group IMpulse on May 2.

More than 75 participants came to IM to hear Stephen Klineberg, a sociologist and founding director of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, discuss the extraordinary demographics of Houston and how its young, working citizens can play a role in making the city's diversity an asset and prototype for America.

"This city, throughout its history, was a biracial, southern city dominated and controlled in an automatic and taken-for-granted way by white men. In the space of the last 35 years, it has become the single most ethnically diverse metropolitan area in the entire country," Klineberg said.

While Houston may be extraordinarily diverse, it remains one of the most segregated cities in terms of income – creating a significant gap between the wealthy and the poor. "There is concentrated advantage and concentrated disadvantage here. Concentrated poverty affects a person's ability to succeed in the public school system," Klineberg said.

If a child is not reading at a third-grade level in the third grade, he/she is four times more likely to drop out of high school. The single most powerful predictor of a child's third-grade reading level is if he/she started kindergarten ready to read, Klineberg said. "And, rich kids in Houston start kindergarten 1.5 to two years ahead of poor kids," he added.

As today's young professionals of all backgrounds enter the workforce and start families, they can help ensure that education is promoted, supported and funded so that all populations in Houston are successful. Klineberg said now is Houston's chance to put itself on the map as the nation's leading city that has leveraged its diversity to pave the way for economic and social success.



VOLUNTEER HOUSTON PUBLICLY RELAUNCHES ITSELF AS PART OF IM, REINVENTING ITSELF AS HOUSTON'S NEEDS GROW

After nearly 45 years of serving the Houston community, Volunteer Houston (VH) – the largest volunteer agency in the city – has experienced a changing of the guard. The organization that pairs volunteers with nonprofits with needs publicly became part of IM on April 16, revealing a new, personal approach to volunteering.

To celebrate, Houston dignitaries – including Houston Chief of Police Art Acevedo, HISD Area Superintendent Nicole Moore, Houston NAACP Executive Director Yolanda Smith, and Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale – joined local students to kick off multiple service projects to put VH's mission into action.

Joined by IM President and CEO Martin B. Cominsky at Hartsfield Elementary, the students worked with Rebuilding Together Houston to create "welcome home" signs for families returning to their

repaired homes post Hurricane Harvey. They packed first-aid kits for children in developing countries for Project C.U.R.E. and assembled pet toys from upcycled material with Houston PetSet for local rescued pets, among other activities.

In return, volunteers in the Houston community built the Hartsfield students a much-needed outdoor classroom on April 21 at Houston's only animal and environmental sciences magnet school, showing them firsthand the benefits of both serving and being served by others.

Sponsors of the April 16 and 21 events were Bridgeway Capital Management and Houston PetSet. Community partners were Rebuilding Together Houston, Combined Arms, Project C.U.R.E., Houston PetSet, Alzheimer's Association and Multicultural Education and Learning through the Arts.





Dayana Halawo (top left) with her family

SYRIAN REFUGEE SET ASIDE OWN TRAUMA, HELPED HOUSTONIANS DURING HURRICANE HARVEY

running from the police in Amman during routine inspections for illegal workers. Halawo sold her jewelry to send her son to private school.

News of better jobs in Cairo took the family to Egypt, a country where they felt safe until the Arab Spring brought about another round of violence. Fleeing another war, the family returned to Jordan and waited in precarious conditions for a county to welcome them as refugees.

After landing on U.S. soil in mid-2016, Halawo sobbed uncontrollably from both sadness and relief. She left her parents behind in war-ravaged Homs, but her children were now safe.

When IM's Refugee Services drove them to their apartment in southwest Houston, Halawo stood in the doorway in disbelief. "There were couches and beds in the apartment!" she cried. "We spent years in Jordan sleeping on the floor."

It didn't take long for Halawo, who was fortunate to learn English in Syria, to fully understand what life was like in America. "I can work if I want to work, and my children can go to school. We can go where we like," she said. "We are truly free."

After she and her family got settled, Halawo wanted to give back to the Houston community. When Hurricane Harvey ravaged the city in August 2017, Halawo saw an opportunity. "Everything was destroyed, but it was by water, not war," she said. "I knew I could safely help people."

Halawo volunteered to pick up food from a local Middle Eastern restaurant and distribute it to families in shelters. At a particularly overcrowded shelter, displaced Houstonians asked her if she knew of other places to go. "Come to my apartment," she offered.

For weeks, Halawo's family welcomed two families into their home where they lived in cramped conditions until FEMA could provide suitable housing for their guests.

"I didn't know them," Halawo said. "But I had to help them. So many people have helped me."

Today, Halawo tutors Arabic-speaking adults and children and dreams of becoming a case manager or interpreter for a refugee resettlement agency so she can continue to pay the blessings she has received forward.

Living in Homs, Syria with her husband and young son, Dayana Halawo loved her life. She belonged to a neighborhood cooking group, shopped at the market with her mother and was preparing for the birth of a second child.

A civil war in her country was furthest from her mind, but as the fighting came closer, Halawo and her family experienced what is now a common casualty in Syria: their house was bombed and destroyed. Fortunately, they were out that day, but the traumatic event forced them to flee with only a few of their belongings. They left behind their family-owned cosmetics store and friends, and literally ran from a series of unexpected wars and violence for the next five years.

Just prior to crossing the Syrian border to emigrate, corrupt authorities detained them and threatened to behead Halawo's husband, Mohammed, until the family could prove they were innocent people trying to find safety. Under tremendous stress, Halawo gave birth to a daughter.

The family fled to Lebanon and then to Jordan, where refugees are not allowed to work and their children are not allowed to attend public school. Halawo's husband found odd jobs in secret,



WORLD REFUGEE DAY

IM, in partnership with Catholic Charities, co-hosted World Refugee Day on June 20 along with YMCA International Services, Refugee Services of Texas and Alliance for Multicultural Community Services. Themed "Global Crisis, Local Solutions," the conference focused on how resettlement organizations, which are resettling fewer refugees as a result of domestic policy, can use their resources to further help refugee families with their many needs in making Houston their permanent home.

IM

SUMMER 2018 MOSAIC

INTERFAITH MINISTRIES

FOR GREATER HOUSTON

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Shaukat Zakaria
IM Board Chair



SANTA FE BANNERS & STARS

After the tragic shooting at Santa Fe High School on May 18, IM and Jim “Mattress Mack” McIngvale of Gallery Furniture partnered to create 50 large banners upon which the public can write notes of support and hope. The banners traveled around Houston, including Discovery Green park on June 1 – the date of graduation for Santa Fe High School seniors.

IM and Gallery Furniture also created the Santa Fe Stars program, whereby Houstonians could write encouraging messages on “stars” downloaded from the store’s website. The stars were collected on June 30 and will be shared with the Santa Fe community throughout the summer.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

AUGUST 7:

- Hinduism Lunch & Learn at the Hines Center for Spirituality and Prayer, 500 Fannin St. #100, from noon to 1 p.m.

AUGUST 13:

- Tour of Hare Krishna Temple, 1320 W. 34th St., from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 4:

- Baha’i Lunch & Learn at the Hines Center for Spirituality and Prayer, 500 Fannin St. #100, from noon to 1 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 15:

- Tour of the Baha’i Center, 2419 Fannin St., from 12:30 to 2 p.m.

For more information on all upcoming events please contact: **Maria Carrillo** at mcarrillo@imgh.org.