FY 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Celebrating 50 Years Of Dialogue, Collaboration And Service
Dear Friends,

The 2019 fiscal year was a special milestone for Interfaith Ministries – our 50th anniversary! It is hard to believe that we have been serving the Greater Houston community for half a century. Our programs have evolved as times have changed, but one thing has always remained the same – our commitment to bringing people of diverse backgrounds together for dialogue, collaboration and service.

Our milestone year was one not only of reminiscing, but also of looking to the future. Our Tapestry Gala celebrated the last five decades and honored Brigitte and Bashar Kalai, who made the leadership gift for the Plaza of Respect named in their honor. The Plaza was dedicated in April 2019 and is an inspiring outdoor space for interfaith education and community gatherings.

We expanded our four main program areas during this year. Meals on Wheels feeds homebound seniors and disabled adults. The program is now in five Southeast Texas counties, making it the largest Meals on Wheels in Texas. We continue to deepen the scope of our “meals and more” model – providing case management, referrals, lunch, breakfasts and emergency meals. Our Hospital to Home program, which serves meals to recently discharged hospital patients, continues its work with Houston Methodist and Memorial Hermann, and gained a new partner in Harris Health. Animeals is now serving over 1,300 dogs and cats of homebound seniors with pet food and also preventative vet care in partnership with the Houston Humane Society. Thanks to our Pets to Vets program, volunteers assist seniors with taking their pets for medical appointments.

Even as new refugee arrivals have dropped due to changing federal policy, our Refugee Services program continues our tradition of welcoming the stranger and bolstering refugee resilience. As we continue to welcome new refugees from around the world, we have expanded our comprehensive services to refugees already living in Houston, empowering them not only to survive here, but to thrive. Our Women’s Empowerment Group continues to grow, offering socialization and life skills for Arabic-speaking women. We gained a new partner this year in Islamic Relief USA, as we work with female refugees to successfully acculturate into American life.

Interfaith Relations and Education are at the heart of our mission. Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships continues to bring people together through dialogue, collaboration and service with the goal of instilling “respect for neighbor”. This year saw the creation of two new groups- the IMpower women’s initiative and the IMpulse young leaders group. We are working to increase our reach into diverse communities and foster understanding in an increasingly divisive culture.

The newest member of our family, Volunteer Houston, connects companies and people with their passions. By connecting volunteers with nonprofits across the community, we build capacity to meet community needs. We are quickly becoming the City’s “go to” source for volunteers.

Our campus has also been growing. In December 2018, we purchased a building adjacent to our campus on Fannin Street that will allow us to expand Meals on Wheels and volunteerism throughout our agency. Many donors stepped up to make this possible, as we continue to raise funds to renovate the building for use. Through your continued support and generosity, we are expanding our programming to serve more people in need.

Interfaith Ministries has made a great impact in its half-century of service, with victories to celebrate and challenges to overcome. As we embark on our second century of service, we go forward boldly with a new Strategic Plan intended to guide our work to best meet changing community needs and to capitalize on our strengths as a connector. We do not know what the future will hold, but rest assured that we remain committed to our mission. Interfaith Ministries is here for Houston.

Gratefully,

Martin B. Cominsky  
President & CEO

Shaukat Zakaria  
Chair, Board of Directors
Brigitte and Bashar Kalai

The lead gift of $1 million for the plaza was made by Brigitte and Bashar Kalai. The couple is well-known in Houston for their philanthropy and community service. Their Muslim faith inspired them to make the gift to Interfaith Ministries to honor all faiths. They are grateful for the diversity of Houston and wanted to support the City’s spirit of unity, while also creating a place of respect that would serve as a light for future generations.

Inaugural Spirit of Respect Award

In celebration of our 50th anniversary, the Spirit of Respect award was established to pay tribute to a religious or civic leader who has been a champion for building respect in our community. The inaugural award was given to Rabbi Roy A. Walter, a former Board Chair of IM. He and future awardees are recognized with plaques on the Plaza.

The Pillars of Light

A highlight of the Plaza is the Pillars of Light, three vertical sculptures made of dichroic glass which reflect light during the day and are illuminated from within at night. The pillars honor: Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, sponsored by The Clark and Charlene Thompson Foundation; Rabbi Samuel Karff; and the Rev. William A. Lawson.

The Banner of Respect

Sponsored by Shell

Crafted from beautiful hammered metal, the Banner of Respect hangs high above the plaza and features the word “respect” in 13 languages. The languages chosen reflect Houston, the world, and various faith traditions.

The Circle of Faith

The Circle of Faith contains symbols of eleven faith traditions that have been part of Interfaith Ministries over the years. Yet there are many other faiths—including yours, perhaps—in Houston and the world. The mirror reflects that all are welcome in this space.

Patti and Richard Everett Forum

The Patti and Richard Everett Forum is a focal point for the Plaza’s learning opportunities. The Forum includes a flat-screen television and provides a space for people to gather and learn.

Lead Sponsors

Our sincere thanks also to the following sponsors, for their generous support:

- Susan and Dan Boggio/ PBK
- The Estate of Dorothy Hines
- Joyce & Ambassador Arthur Schechter
- Gensler
- Anslow Bryant Construction, LTD
- Earth Stone Texas
Sylvia Gilbert built a good life in Houston, raising her family and working as a nurse for decades. Now in her golden years, she is able to enjoy living independently with her cat, Ms. Kitty, because she can count on the friendly visits, wellness checks and food delivered by Meals on Wheels and Animeals. In fact, she has been able to count on these services, for the past nine years! She describes her driver as, “Fantastic!”

And, of course, Ms. Kitty loves being a part of the Animeals program, too. Sylvia is grateful for the support she receives from Animeals to provide Ms. Kitty with monthly food deliveries and access to vet care.

Meet Sylvia And Ms. Kitty

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Pets to Vets Program

Through partnerships with the Houston Humane Society, Emancipet and the Texas Veterinary Medical Foundation, we provided preventative medical care for animals in need. Services include: spay/neuter, vaccines, flea and tick prevention, heartworm prevention, and microchipping. Volunteers, including Lyft drivers, transport pets to and from appointments.
Meals on Wheels client, Ms. Ethal Courrejolles of Houston, wrote a lovely poem to thank us for delivering Meals on Wheels to her.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Holiday is a time to celebrate. Each smile, delicious food, and seeing old friends makes it hard to wait.

Some of us have few friends or family with whom to share but that doesn’t mean we are alone, with no one to care.

Every day when I open my front door to see the smile on Brett’s face it warms my heart to receive this dish because I know it comes from a loving place.

Just as our Lord made miracles as he healed and fed hungry people long ago, Meals on Wheels continues to bring miracles of love by feeding our hearts.

Meet Ms. Bettie Boston

Meet Ms. Bettie Boston, a Meals on Wheels client who has been receiving hot meal delivery for two years. Ms. Boston, 81 years old and a mother of 10, lives independently in Texas City and is served from our Galveston County Meals on Wheels office. She has worked in the home health industry for many years taking care of the sick and dying.

When asked about Meals on Wheels Ms. Boston said, “Everyone at Meals on Wheels is very sweet and they are the best people you can come in contact with.”

Hospital to Home Program

Lead Sponsor: Robert L. Cook Charitable Fund

Meals on Wheels’ Hospital to Home program works with Aetna, Harris Health, Houston Methodist and Memorial Hermann to provide expedited nutritional care to recently discharged patients to reduce readmissions and improve outcomes for the most vulnerable in Harris, Montgomery and Galveston counties.

IMPACT

1,659,674 Meals served

4353 Thanksgiving meals served on Thanksgiving Day

6,447 Unduplicated seniors fed during the year, including on Thanksgiving Day

6133 Emergency packs of shelf-stable food and water delivered prior to Hurricane Season

4416 Winter meals delivered in case of icy roads

5326 assessments & re-assessments – an increase of 643 clients – up 14%

651 interventions

58% increase in number of clients served in Galveston County

5 counties served in total – Harris, Galveston, Montgomery, Liberty and Chambers

95.5% Seniors report MOW maintains or improves their health

93% Seniors report it helps them maintain their independence
Caryl Stern, CEO of UNICEF USA, was the guest speaker at our second annual Gershenson Lecture, held at St. Luke’s United Methodist Church on March 5. The evening also featured a special fireside chat with Caryl and Lisa Falkenberg, a Pulitzer Prize Journalist and now the Houston Chronicle’s Editor of Opinion.

The annual lecture is named for our President Emeritus, Elliot Gershenson.

INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships (IRCP) engages individuals, houses of worship, businesses, organizations and nonprofits in dialogue, collaboration and service to embrace the philosophy of “Respect Thy Neighbor”. We work with people of diverse faiths, as well as those with no faith tradition, to promote understanding and service in the Greater Houston area.

Supporting Our Neighbors

Interfaith Ministries held a press conference and prayer vigil on May 2 in response to the senseless act of violence against worshippers in Sri Lanka, and also encompassed a multifaith statement of support against all religious hatred, including other houses of worship targeted in: Poway, California; Christchurch, New Zealand; St. Landry Parish, Louisiana; Houston, Texas; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This is one of many bridge-building activities IRCP facilitates to bring diverse groups together.

Gershenson Lecture

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Volunteer Houston teamed up with the Houston Community Tool Bank to host a Volunteer Fair on Saturday, April 13 to connect local nonprofits with potential volunteers. This was their culminating event to celebrate the transformative impact of volunteer service during National Volunteer Week. Over thirty area nonprofits participated, offering potential volunteers an array of causes and projects to adopt including agencies such as Houston SPCA, Rebuilding Together Houston, Houston Food Bank and Interfaith Ministries’ Meals on Wheels. More than 200 people attended the family friendly event.

Making A Difference

Studies show that creating a culture of volunteerism in the work place can boost employee morale, overall workplace atmosphere and brand perception. The findings also show that employees may volunteer more if they have a better understanding of the impact their efforts make in the communities in which they live, work and play.
REFUGEE SERVICES

Meet Felix & Gentile

Felix and Gentile were forced to flee their homeland of Democratic Republic of the Congo due to war and instability. They lived in a refugee camp for many years. Just this year, they were approved to come to Houston as refugees with their two small children. Within a few weeks of arrival, both parents are working at a manufacturing plant and learning the culture and the language as quickly as possible.

Sinobar and her family were forced to flee Iraq in 2016 due to ISIS. They didn’t have much money and were not able to take their possessions. Sinobar and her husband and their three small children escaped with only the clothes on their backs. Now living in Houston, they have started the work of rebuilding their lives while on the path to become U.S. Citizens. Sinobar is a participant in our Women’s Empowerment Group, which brings refugee women together for socialization and life skills.

In FY19, our new refugees came from the following countries:

- Afghanistan
- Burma (Myanmar)
- Cameroon
- Colombia
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Cuba
- El Salvador
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Honduras
- Iran
- Iraq
- Pakistan
- Russia
- Somalia
- Syria
- Turkey
- Venezuela
- Vietnam
Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston celebrated 50 years of dialogue, collaboration and service at its annual Tapestry Gala on Tuesday, April 30, 2019 held at The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston. Interfaith Ministries hosted nearly 600 supporters who raised $650,000 for Meals on Wheels and Animeals, Refugee Services, Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships, and Volunteer Houston.

Gala emcee and KHOU Great Day Houston Host Deborah Duncan welcomed guests including Gala honorees Brigitte and Bashar Kalai; Spirit of Respect recipient Rabbi Roy Walter; Palladium Weaver sponsor Shell Oil Company; President Emeritus Elliot Gershenson and his wife Alyson Gershenson; and Gala co-chairs Shaista and Shahzad Bashir, Bimla and Swatantra Jain, Dr. Sushma and Devinder Mahajan, Lorraine and Ed Wulfe, and Nihala and Shaukat Zakaria to a special evening featuring music and memories spanning five decades while celebrating Interfaith Ministries’ past and future.
MEALS & MORE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Interfaith Ministries (IM) had a unique opportunity to acquire a property adjacent to our campus that provides much-needed storage, office, and training space. This will allow us to reconfigure existing space to maximize meal preparation space, increase our capacity to feed more seniors and offer more supplemental services. Once the property is renovated, we expect to recruit and use more volunteers and increase food storage, in order to serve more seniors.

The new property will include the Linda and Fred Marshall Volunteer Welcome Center. This is crucial to increasing the number of seniors served through Meals on Wheels and pets served through Animeals. The campus reconfiguration, will also allow us to increase the number of clients who receive breakfast in addition to lunch. The added storage will allow us to offer more variety to our lunch menu, to better serve seniors with special needs—such as diabetics. We will be able to store more emergency, non-perishable food to be used in the event of a hurricane or winter weather, and will allow us to store more pet food for Animeals. More freezer space will increase storage for frozen meals.

Our Hospital to Home program delivers meals on a short-term basis to recently discharged hospital patients. The daily meals, accompanied by a wellness check, decrease costly hospital re-admissions. We are proud to partner with Houston Methodist, Memorial Hermann, and Harris Health System in this endeavor. The new property will allow us to achieve better efficiency and capacity in this program to better serve patients and offer a wider variety of meals to meet their needs.

With this new space, a new Maternal Women’s Health program, through the Healthy Women Houston collaborative, will be able to reach at-risk mothers. These women will receive up to three meals per day once the program is fully operational. The new property will enable IM to store, assemble, and distribute even more maternal meals and supplies in the future—an task that would be impossible within our current limited space.

$10,000-24,999

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OUR MISSION

Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston (IM) brings people of diverse faith traditions together for dialogue, collaboration, and service, as a demonstration of our shared beliefs.

OUR VISION

IM envisions a community working and acting together in response to the needs of a Greater Houston to create a more respectful, connected, and caring society.

OUR VALUES

FOCUS:
We work hard to achieve IM’s mission, vision and strategic goals. We are motivated by the trust and expectations of our clients, partners and donors.

INTEGRITY:
We do what we say and we keep our promises. We strive for excellence and hold ourselves to the highest standards while taking responsibility for our actions.

RESPECT:
We value diversity of opinion, thought and beliefs. We treat everyone the way we want to be treated with kindness and dignity.

SERVICE:
We help others with a spirit of compassion. We put the needs of those we serve above our own.

TRANSPARENCY:
We are honest, open and truthful. We proactively and willingly share information with the community and each other.

www.imgh.org