

# MOSAIC

A PUBLICATION OF  
INTERFAITH MINISTRIES FOR GREATER HOUSTON

FALL 2020

# IM

INTERFAITH  
MINISTRIES  
FOR GREATER HOUSTON

## IM'S MEALS ON WHEELS THANKSGIVING



Interfaith Ministries' Meals on Wheels Thanksgiving is seeking volunteers for Thanksgiving morning - Thursday, November 26, 2020 - to help feed and comfort homebound seniors in a five-county area of Greater Houston. This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, what is usually an annual community-wide event hosted on Thanksgiving morning with more than 2,000 volunteers onsite, will now be virtual.

"The need for senior meals and comfort has continued to grow during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Martin B. Cominsky, President and CEO of Interfaith Ministries. "Seniors are more isolated now than ever before and we are doing all we can to fill the growing need for senior nutrition in our community. We are asking the community to join us."

The goal is to raise \$55,000 to provide meals to more than 5,000 seniors in need this Thanksgiving and beyond.

### THERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED THIS THANKSGIVING, AND ALL OF THEM CAN BE DONE VIRTUALLY OR IN A SOCIALLY DISTANCED MANNER.

1

**Join the Friendly Neighbor Call Team** – to deliver some holiday joy to homebound seniors with a personal phone call on Thanksgiving morning.

2

**Join the Secret Santa Gift Bag Team** – Adopt a senior or two and provide them with holiday gift bags full of necessities.

3

**Join the Gobble Gobble Gang for Animeals** – The beloved pets of homebound seniors are not forgotten this year. Dry kibble is needed to feed the 1,300 pets of homebound seniors.

4

**Join the Friendsgiving Team** – Peer to Peer Fundraising is one of the most powerful ways for the community to get involved. Start a Friendsgiving campaign with family and friends to help feed seniors this Thanksgiving.

5

**Donate** – For every \$5 gift, a senior can receive a meal for Thanksgiving and beyond. Donations of any amount are welcome.

For more details and to register or donate visit:  
[www.imgh.org/events/thanksgiving](http://www.imgh.org/events/thanksgiving)

Our Meals on Wheels program serves close to 5,000 seniors in the Greater Houston and Galveston areas, delivering nutritious meals and providing a friendly call or visit that helps support seniors living independently in their own homes. Along with providing nourishing food, Meals on Wheels feeds the spirits of seniors with a friendly hello and a check on their well-being.

"With help from the community, Meals on Wheels seniors will receive some holiday joy this season," said Cominsky. "We are grateful for the support of our sponsors and the community!"

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THE BOX

## FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

As we prepare for an unusual Thanksgiving this year, it can be difficult to adopt an “attitude of gratitude” in the midst of a global pandemic and political division. Yet, we can and we must.

Here at Interfaith Ministries, we are blessed to see people’s *better angels* on display during these trying times. Throughout the spring, summer, and now fall, Houstonians’s generosity has been amazing to witness. When times get tough, Houstonians keep giving! Thanks to your support, we have been able to maintain and even expand our services during these critical months.

As we get closer to a Thanksgiving that will be socially distanced for many, our thoughts are with the close to 5,000 homebound seniors we serve through Meals on Wheels. Social isolation is an issue these elders face every day. It has only worsened during COVID-19. Our drivers have continued to make meal deliveries and check-in calls to ensure our seniors have the nutrition and support they need. Our *Animeals* program ensures that their beloved pets receive food and vet care, as well.

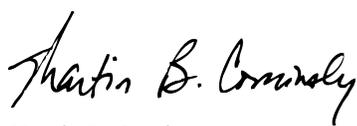
For safety reasons, we cannot host our usual large volunteer event on Thanksgiving Day, but we still need your support to make sure our seniors can enjoy a Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings. There are a number of ways to give and to volunteer virtually at [www.imgh.org/events/thanksgiving](http://www.imgh.org/events/thanksgiving). This fall and winter, we will make sure our seniors receive Thanksgiving dinners, holiday gift bags, greeting cards and calls.

Thanks to all who supported our October *For All Humanity* event benefiting Refugee Services. The virtual event raised more than \$88,000 and honored Rev. John Wurster of St. Philip Presbyterian Church. Funds help us resettle refugees from around the world, 90% of whom are self-sufficient within six months of their arrival in Houston.

Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships (IRCP) continues to keep faith leaders informed through weekly Zoom calls with up-to-the-minute information from city, county and Texas Medical Center officials about COVID-19 and other pressing issues. IRCP has continued its *Vital Conversations with our Community* social justice programing this fall, as well as virtual *Faith in our City* classes on different faith traditions and *Dinner Dialogues*. Our *IMpower* women’s group hosted an inspiring *Author Engagement Experience* and has a cooking demonstration planned early next year

Volunteer Houston continues to connect volunteers with community needs across the Greater Houston area, managing group projects as well. Even though the pandemic has made volunteering more challenging, there is still a great need and there are socially distanced and virtual opportunities available for volunteers.

As we head into the holiday season, all of us at Interfaith Ministries wish you and yours a happy, healthy and peaceful new year. Please know that all of us have “an attitude of gratitude” year round towards those who support our work!



**Martin B. Cominsky**  
President & CEO



Martin B. Cominsky

# MEALS ON WHEELS & ANIMEALS



## MEET CHESTER...A MEALS ON WHEELS CLIENT

Chester has been a Meals on Wheels client since 2017. He lives alone in Texas City and has been staying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic to safeguard his health. Chester looks forward to visits with Alice, his driver. He is grateful for the good food he receives. And when he needed a mask, our Meals on Wheels Galveston County program provided one for him. Chester is just one of thousands of seniors in our community who rely on Meals on Wheels for nutrition and support.

## HOLIDAY GIFT BAGS

Help us spread some much-needed holiday cheer to homebound seniors in a five-county area this holiday season. Holiday gift bags are a fun and easy way to bring joy to seniors. We are accepting financial gifts and also donated supplies to make the gift bags.

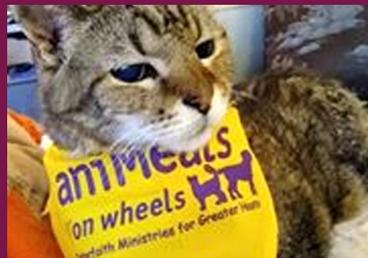
Gift items include:

- 1 Reusable Gift Bag
- 2 Toiletry Items
- 1 Warm & Cozy Item
- 1 Fun Item
- 1 Wellness Item

VISIT  
**IMGH.ORG/HOLIDAYS**  
FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO VOLUNTEER OR DONATE.

## ANIMEALS PETS

Meet the pets of IM's team members, as they model their Animeals bandanas! They are furry friends for the cause.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY MOW GALVESTON COUNTY

Happy 3rd birthday to our Meals on Wheels Galveston County program! We are honored to serve homebound seniors on the island and the mainland.



## TOTAL WINE & MORE

Thank you to Total Wine & More for making Interfaith Ministries the Houston beneficiary of their Points with a Purpose campaign! The campaign resulted in a donation of \$112,250. This is just one of the ways Total Wine is continuing its support of the communities they serve.

# FUNDING OUR MISSION – CELEBRATING OUR DONORS

## BRIDGEWAY HELPS IM BUILD BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING

Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston (IM) was recently honored to receive a financial gift from Bridgeway Capital Management in support of our Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships' *Dialogue Project*, community programming centered around bringing people of diverse backgrounds together for dialogue, collaboration and service, and IMpower, our women's initiative designed to unite diverse groups of women through coffee chats, service projects and community events as a way to empower women, the community and the next generation. We sat down with Bridgeway's President and CEO, Tammira Philippe, to learn more about their spirit of giving and their decision to donate to IM.



### **IM: Tell us about the culture of philanthropy at Bridgeway Capital Management?**

**Tammira:** At Bridgeway, we just see the world differently. Early on, our founder John Montgomery, had the idea we could build a different model for how businesses are run. The traditional business model is to make all this money and then give back later. Our philosophy is that it is more fun and impactful to do it along the way. The Bridgeway model is about relational investing, which is the idea that we can be a bridge between generating results for investors and returns for humanity at the same time. By giving away half of our earnings to support non-profits, both Bridgeway and our clients are doing something good for the world. At the same time, we're providing a valuable service to help clients reach their financial goals and have peace of mind. Our motivation is to be so successful that other people copy our model. Ultimately the winner is really the community.

### **IM: How does IM fit into that vision?**

**Tammira:** Being a part of 'bringing people together for dialogue, collaboration, and service' is just extraordinary to me. Especially in the diverse community of Houston that we are all a part of, there are always going to be things that we agree on, but we also need to be able to talk about the things we disagree on so that we can learn from each other. This year a big motivation for Bridgeway was to really do something to stand in solidarity with the community around racial justice, as well as reaching out and helping those who were impacted negatively by the pandemic. Interfaith Ministries is an organization that we trust to put those ideas into action.

### **IM: What hopes and dreams motivate your giving?**

**Tammira:** This is such an important question. I think about peace, I think about justice, and I think about compassion. I want people to be able to realize their dreams like I was given the opportunity to realize mine. That's my greatest wish for the future, to have an environment where that can happen for everyone.

### **IM: How does IM facilitate that for your company?**

**Tammira:** There is not any part of Interfaith Ministries that doesn't align with what Bridgeway is trying to stand for as a business and have an impact in our community. I like to see connections and there are a lot of connections between the work that Interfaith Ministries does and the work that we strive for as a company. We work a lot on dialogue internally as a company in trying to run a better business. And these are the same skills that are so important to address conflicts in our community to realize that dream of peace, justice, and compassion.

### **IM: Is there an experience or interaction you have had with IM that sticks out to you?**

**Tammira:** We were given the opportunity to help relaunch the Volunteer Houston program a few years back. We did a big service project where my Bridgeway family and my entire personal family participated. We got to serve together at a local school. We made improvements to their playground area and did some painting inside the school. We were there as a small community, but we were part of a bigger initiative to relaunch Volunteer Houston and serve a larger community. That sticks out to me because that's what I want my life to be about – serving in every way that I can in a community striving for a greater purpose.

### **IM: What would you say to others who are considering donating to IM?**

**Tammira:** When you're giving to a non-profit, you have to think hard about: "Can I trust this organization to really do what they say they're going to do?" At Bridgeway we are committed to being good stewards of capital. We have this concept of stewardship, and our definition is "having the passion and the discipline to care for an asset for the benefit of others." We want to know that when we make these gifts there is going to be the same level of stewardship by the organization. One of the reasons we feel confident in giving to Interfaith Ministries is that we have faith and trust in the stewardship of the organization.

And it can't go without saying that Houston is one of the most diverse cities in the world. If you're a Houstonian, Interfaith Ministries is what you want to be a part of, bringing our diverse community together for dialogue, collaboration, and service. Why not?

# LEAD DONORS

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# REFUGEE SERVICES

## VIRTUAL EVENT CELEBRATES REFUGEES

On Wednesday, **October 14, 2020**, over 300 friends of Interfaith Ministries gathered virtually for an exclusive, private virtual event to benefit the organization's Refugee Services program. **For All Humanity – An IM Celebration of New Americans** featured a virtual panel interview with successful Houstonians who emigrated from different countries, musical performances by community embedded musicians of the Houston Symphony, and a catered dinner by TRIO Community Meals delivered to patrons and their guests. The event raised more than \$88,000.

The event theme, "Finding Home a World Away", tied in with media sponsor **Houstonia** magazine's March 2020 issue highlighting some of Houston's own success stories featuring local refugees and immigrants. The uplifting and entertaining panel discussion was moderated by Houstonia Editor-in-Chief **Dianna Wray**. The program honored **Rev. Dr. John Wurster**, senior pastor of St. Philip Presbyterian Church as Interfaith Ministries' Refugee Services 2020 Humanitarian of the Year.

The panelists included: **Fady Armanious** – Creative Director at Tootsie's; **Samir Becic** – City of Houston Fitness Czar; **Alan Gonzales**- fashion designer and *Project Runway* designer; **Judge**



**Lina Hidalgo** – Harris County Judge; **Pitsami Norm**- CEO and Founder of P.S. Affairs; and **Gordon Quan**- nationally recognized immigration attorney. Thank you to the lead sponsors: **St. Philip Presbyterian Church, Houstonia Magazine, TRIO Community Meals, Brigitte and Bashar Kalai, and Susan and Dan Boggio/PBK.**

Refugees have been granted that status by the United Nations and are fleeing their home countries due to war or persecution. They go through a comprehensive vetting process involving multiple federal agencies. Interfaith Ministries provides a variety of support services designed to empower each refugee to quickly and successfully acculturate to American life. Over 90% of the refugees served are self-sufficient within six months of arrival in the United States.

Watch a recorded version of the program.



## AGUSTIN SOCORRO PLAYS THE NATIONAL ANTHEM DURING THE FOR ALL HUMANITY FINALE

Having first learned to play the guitar after the 6th grade when his father bought it for him, Cuban born Agustin Socorro has never stopped playing. He arrived in the United States in 2004 and joined the Refugee Services

team at Interfaith Ministries in 2006. As a seasoned member of the Refugee Services team, Agustin most enjoys teaching our newly arrived families how to start a new life in Houston.



November 21, 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of Family Volunteer Day. Family Volunteer Day is a global day of service organized by Points of Light that celebrates the power of families who work together to support their communities and neighborhoods. This year, the needs are greater than ever before.

Volunteer Houston, a local Points of Light affiliate, has opportunities posted on [volunteerhou.org](http://volunteerhou.org).



Subscribe to Volunteer Houston's new blog called Service Matters for people interested in volunteerism and to share reflections on the service experience.

Visit: [volunteerhouston.org/servicematters](http://volunteerhouston.org/servicematters)

# INTERFAITH RELATIONS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



## RABBI SAMUEL E. KARFF MEMORIAL FUND

IM continues to grieve the loss of our dear friend, Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, beloved Houston faith leader and Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Israel. We share our deepest condolences with his family and all who loved him.

Rabbi Karff's legacy is honored through a Pillar of Light on Interfaith Ministries' Brigitte and Bashar Plaza of Respect. He will be fondly remembered for his wisdom, gentle spirit, and commitment to being a voice for the marginalized.

At the request of the Karff Family, the Rabbi Samuel E. Karff Memorial Fund has been set up for donations made

in his memory. Interfaith Ministries will dedicate its annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service in loving memory of Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, one of our community's most beloved faith leaders, community servants and justice seekers. With the support of The Rabbi Samuel E. Karff Memorial Fund, Interfaith Ministries will unite youth in a day of service and learning to commemorate MLK's vision of peace, justice and respect for all. Learn more at

[imgh.org/donate/rabbi-samuel-e-karff-fund/](http://imgh.org/donate/rabbi-samuel-e-karff-fund/)



## IMPOWER WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

On September 30, we launched our 2020-2021 IMpower programming and membership recruitment with a fireside chat with Megan Phelps Roper, a former member of a hate group who now speaks across the country about her experiences as part of the group, why she left and the role empathy in dialogue played in her decision to leave. Special thanks to **Bridgeway Capital Management** as our event sponsor and the **Esther Friedman Family Foundation/Ann** and **J. Kent Friedman** as our author sponsor. Over 90 people attended this event, which raised approximately \$15,000 for IM. Megan has agreed to participate in a book chat on November 19 with IMpower members, those who attended the event and who have read Megan's book *Unfollow: Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church*. IMpower, co-chaired by **Nihala Zakaria** and **Swati Narayan**, offers diverse groups of women an opportunity to empower themselves, the community, and the next generation through coffee chats, community programs and service projects. For more information, visit [www.imgh.org/impower-womens-initiative](http://www.imgh.org/impower-womens-initiative).

A very special thank you to our sponsor!

## THE DIALOGUE PROJECT

We welcome Bridgeway Capital Management as the sponsor of our fall "Vital Conversations with our Community" series. The next Vital Conversation on December 1 will feature experts discussing "Education and Equity: Solutions, Opportunity, Growth." The discussion will be moderated by the Rev. Greg Han and will take place on 12/1 from Noon to 1:00 p.m. by Zoom and Facebook Live. Email **Jet Phillips** for information at [gphillips@imgh.org](mailto:gphillips@imgh.org).

As part of The Dialogue Project, The Rev. Greg Han recently taught a Faith in Our City session on Hinduism on October 13. He will teach a Faith in our City session on Judaism on December 15 at Noon to 1:00 p.m. Zoom information available upon registration.

## WEEKLY COVID CALLS

The Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships team continues to host weekly calls with the Greater Houston Partnership, including representatives from the City of Houston and Harris County, for faith leaders to hear from elected officials, emergency management officials and the medical community about COVID-19 and other topics. These calls started in March and are continuing through the fall, on a bi-weekly basis.

## SERVICE PROJECTS 2 GO FOR VOLUNTEER HOUSTON

Service Projects 2 Go are geared toward companies with limited resources, as a practical way to meet their Corporate Social Responsibility goals. Each Service Project 2 Go consists of any number of themed kits developed by Volunteer Houston in collaboration with hundreds of partner nonprofits serving the Greater Houston area. The kits are designed to meet the specific needs of each nonprofit – serving children, families, the elderly, animals, the homeless, and other vulnerable groups.

For more info, contact **Gayla** at [gwilson@imgh.org](mailto:gwilson@imgh.org) or visit [www.volunteerhouston.org/sp2g](http://www.volunteerhouston.org/sp2g).



*EnCap Investments volunteers assembled 250 COVID-19 safety kits in partnership with Emancipation Park Conservancy that were donated to Ruby L. Thompson Elementary on 9/11 Day.*

Volunteer Houston's 9/11 Days of Service involved 14 participating agencies, 16 volunteer opportunities, 109 volunteers, a total of 457 hours of volunteer time, and \$12,444 financial impact in our community. Way to go Houston community!

# IM

## FALL 2020 MOSAIC

**INTERFAITH  
MINISTRIES**  
FOR GREATER HOUSTON

3303 Main Street  
Houston, TX 77002  
713.533.4900

**Martin B. Cominsky**  
*President & CEO*  
*Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston*



United Way of Greater Houston



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