MOSAIC

A PUBLICATION OF
INTERFAITH MINISTRIES FOR GREATER HOUSTON
SUMMER 2021

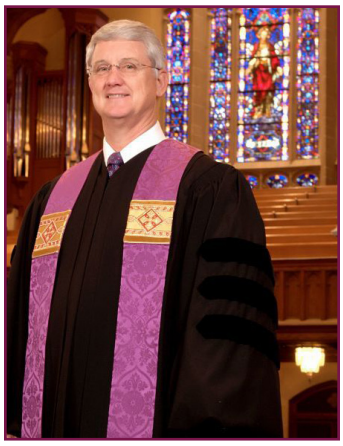
INTERFAITH MINISTRIES FOR GREATER HOUSTON

2021 Tapestry Gala

The date of the 2021 Tapestry Gala is approaching! The Gala will take place on **Wednesday, October 27** at the **Hilton Americas- Houston**.

In 2009, Interfaith Ministries established the Tapestry Award which recognizes community leaders who have shown remarkable dignity and leadership through tangible work for the betterment of Houston and the world. **Paula Sutton** is our 2021 Tapestry Award honoree for her tremendous leadership and impact on Interfaith Ministries for more than 18 years as a Board Chair, Past Board Chair and Development Committee Chair. In its second year since inception, the Spirit of Respect Award honoree is **Rev. Dr. Jim Bankston**. Rev. Bankston is the former Sr. Pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church and has been an advocate for social justice and respect for all in the Greater Houston area. We are also honored to present **Sysco** with our Corporate Champion Award for their significant and continued support to our Meals on Wheels and Volunteer programs for over 37 years.

Paula Sutton



Rev. Dr. Jim Bankston

Board Chair **Jay Harberg** and his wife **Karen** welcome IM supporters to the 2021 Tapestry Gala, along with event chairs are **Philamena and Arthur Baird, Dr. Kathy Flanagan, Dr. Sushma** and **Devinder Mahajan**, and **Anuradha** and **Dr. Kohur Subramanian**. Come spend an elegant evening together with our community celebrating our honorees!

Sysco

Thanks to the generous support of presenting sponsor, **Shell Oil Company**, and community support, this long awaited in-person event will be an evening for all to remember. Please plan to join us. Tables and sponsorships are available. For questions, please contact **Brandi Ledet** at **713-533-4925** or **bledet@imgh.org**. **Visit imgh.org/gala** to make reservations.

FREE MEALS FOR SENIORS

MEALS on WHEELS
GREATER HOUSTON
&
GALVESTON COUNTY

Do you know a senior that could benefit from receiving nutritious, home-delivered meals from Meals on Wheels, **absolutely FREE?** We are currently expanding to serve more seniors in Greater Houston and Galveston County. To help a senior you know receive free meal delivery, you can learn more and help a senior enroll at **imgh.org/mow** or call **713-533-4978**.

SERVE HOUSTON IN ACTION

Thanks to funding from **The OneStar Foundation** and **The Hearst Foundations**, Interfaith Ministries is in the pilot year of Serve Houston - with a cohort of 16 bright, talented college students. Each participant devotes 20 hours per week to service projects, with lead ambassadors managing teams and serving additional hours. Learn more in this edition and visit **www.imgh.org/servehouston**.

Martin B. Cominsky

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

STEPPING OUT TO SERVE

Interfaith Ministries is approaching a very busy fall season, just like Houston and the rest of the country.

Our **Meals on Wheels** program continues to make daily deliveries to homebound seniors, disabled adults and veterans in the Greater Houston and Galveston area. **Refugee Services** prepares to welcome increased numbers of new arrivals as Afghans who helped the US during the war seek refugee status. **Interfaith programming** continues with the Dialogue Workshops, the Vital Conversations summer series, Faith Leaders Calls and other programming. **Volunteer Houston** has seen interest in volunteering increase. And we are embarking on a whole new project to meet the growing needs in our community while developing the leaders of tomorrow through **Serve Houston**.

It may not be completely accurate to call Serve Houston a "new" project, as it is truly the revitalization of a very successful program I created earlier in my career. The program recruits college students and recent graduates to participate in a 6-month service-learning program that combines immersion in a nonprofit with learning and planning. These young "Service Ambassadors" work on teams to assist Interfaith Ministries in multiple areas.

I was inspired by this service model in 1993 when President Clinton created AmeriCorps, a service program for young adults. It seemed right that young people should give back through national service of some kind. When I learned that Houston did not have a program like this, it became my mission to start the Serve Houston Youth Corps. That first incarnation of the program focused on educational support. The Corps grew beyond my expectations, and I was honored when President George H.W. Bush presented it with the national Points of Light Award in 1998.

The youth corps faded away because of financial challenges, though I still run into graduates who have become great successes in business and the nonprofit community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the continuing need for national and local service. Students are looking for opportunities in an uncertain world and the city needs their youthful energy and thinking. During this time of crisis, I thought it was opportune to bring back Serve Houston - in a new form - to meet the needs of a new day.

It is so rewarding to see these enthusiastic young people ready to roll up their sleeves and pitch in! They can really make a difference, as can Serve Houston. It is my hope the program will grow year by year to produce many more graduates who make Interfaith Ministries programs stronger and make our city a better place to work and live.

Martin B. Cominsky

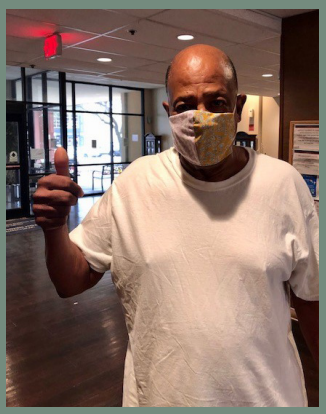
Martin B. Cominsky
President & CEO

*On July 19, Serve Houston enjoyed an evening out at the Astros game. Thanks to the **Astros Foundation**.*

SERVE HOUSTON AMBASSADORS

On June 18, Serve Houston ambassadors and program leaders were treated to a special presentation by Dr. Stephen Klineberg about his annual survey and book, "Prophetic City: Houston on the Cusp of a Changing America"

MEALS ON WHEELS & ANIMEALS



Meals on Wheels assures seniors they will be okay, because even during disasters we are not forgotten," Larry says, grateful not only for the food, but the compassion that Meals on Wheels has come to be known for.

LARRY HELPED OTHERS. NOW MEALS ON WHEELS HELPS LARRY.

Born and raised in Houston, Larry has a deep appreciation for his community. For many years, he worked in the Texas Medical Center as a nursing assistant, where he was able to aid people from all different backgrounds. "Giving back to those in need is essential to the community as a whole," he says. After retirement, Larry sees this philosophy expressed in the highest degree through participation with Meals on Wheels. Larry explains, "I like the volunteers that deliver my food. By sharing their day with elders, they are learning that one day they are going to get old, and may be vulnerable themselves. Through volunteering, younger people now have a chance to get involved and help others in many ways."

When asking if he is enjoying the program, Larry retells some of his favorite interactions with Meals on Wheels. "This program means a lot to the people that live in my retirement community, about 30 lives have been changed here". The most substantial impact Meals on Wheels has made on Larry would be hurricane season preparedness through Operation Impact. Providing shelf stable meals to seniors is a priority to clients living in the Texas Gulf Coast region, due to the extensive flooding from storms such as Hurricane Harvey.

WAGS & WHISKERS

NONSTOP SERVICE FROM HUNGRY TO FED!

Wheels were up as more than 200 philanthropic animal lovers took flight with the Interfaith Ministries crew to the 8th Annual Wags & Whiskers Brunch and Pet Fashion Show with Event Chair M.A. Shute as the Captain on Saturday, May 8, 2021. Casey Curry served as Emcee and welcomed guests on board Jet Set Pets Airlines, Flight 2021.

Co-Senior Captain Jay Harberg is ready to take flight for Animeals

From left: Senior Co-Captain Martin B. Cominsky; MA Shute with her three jet set dogs Lulu, Pookie and Beamer; Media Judges Winner Rachel Feiertag with cat Zim and dog Kuma; People's Choice Winner Ali Al Sudani, Chief Programs Officer for Interfaith Ministries, with his dog Coco.

The virtual "Jet Set Pets" themed event raised more than $70,000 for the Animeals program that provides free pet food and vet care to the dogs and cats of Meals on Wheels homebound seniors. Special thanks to our lead donor- Fred G. Marshall, in loving memory of his wife Linda.

Guadalupe, a Meals on Wheels client, and cat Robbie, on Animeals, are benefiting from the program.

THE CAT'S MEOW

Guadalupe has been a client of Meals on Wheels for one year. She began around the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. She is a long-time resident of Houston and a widow and mother of five adult children. She is also a grandmother and great-grandmother. Over the years to help provide for her family, she worked in janitorial services at Lakewood Church and Shell Oil. After surviving cancer in 1997, she started having a harder time getting around. She tends to stay closer to home now. She has always enjoyed cooking for her family and other people. She is grateful to receive meal deliveries now to her doorstep. The breakfast bags with juice and oatmeal are her favorite.

Guadalupe rescued a beautiful Siamese cat named Robbie 16 years ago from a friend who could no longer care for him. She loves her cat very much. He gives her a lot of companionship. After Guadalupe joined Meals on Wheels, Robbie was enrolled in the Animeals program and now receives preventative veterinary care, cat food, a flea and tick collar and other benefits to keep him healthy and happy.

FUNDING OUR MISSION

Rendering of renovated Fannin building

Rendering of the Galveston County Meals on Wheels Building in La Marque

GROWING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY...

Construction has started on our new Volunteer Resource Center on Fannin. This will help us expand Meals on Wheels and volunteerism. Special thanks to our lead donors: **Fred G. Marshall, in loving memory of his wife, Linda; the Robert L. Cook Charitable Fund; and the J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation, Inc.**

We have also purchased a building in La Marque that will house our Meals on Wheels Galveston County operations. Renovations will begin this fall. Thank you to our lead donor, **The Brown Foundation, Inc.**

PBK is donating the architectural services for both projects. We are so grateful to **PBK and its Founder and Executive Chairman Dan Boggio** for this gift!

A LIFELONG TEACHER LEAVES A LEGACY

Dr. Betty Barr

A native Houstonian, Betty Barr's story can best be defined by her passion for teaching and the generations of students she prepared for future success.

An only child, Betty was born in 1945 and grew up and lived her life in Lindale Park where she graduated from Jefferson Davis High School. She earned her B.S, M.S, and Ph.D. in Mathematics from the University of Houston and then joined the University in 1971 when a position for a linear algebra instructor opened up in the Department of Industrial Engineering. She never left until she retired in 2011!

When Betty joined the college as an Assistant Professor, times were a little different. As one of the first female faculty members, she not only was challenged to develop a professional pathway for herself, but also to mentor other women who decided to pursue engineering as a career. She recalled: "There were not even women's bathrooms in the engineering building!"

It was not long before she began instructing programming courses, migrating into the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, where she helped build and modify the undergraduate curriculum and served as the primary undergraduate advisor for 24 years. While guiding generations of Cougar engineers, she was promoted to Associate Professor and then Associate Chair. Betty was also involved over the years as the faculty advisor for the Society of Women Engineers and the Texas Epsilon Chapter of Tau Beta Pi. She even infamously designed mathematical problems for her peers to solve in the slide rule competition at the annual IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) Chili Cook Off!

Betty was the definition of a dedicated professor, often sacrificing her weekends and holidays to ensure that she had her papers corrected and students' grades recorded. She had this same dedication to her parents, especially her mother, Mildred, who survived her husband Archie by 27 years. Betty was very close to her mother and served as her caregiver for many years. She was even known to bring Mildred to the office so she could get those last papers graded while still spending time with her mother.

Betty's passion for teaching brought her great recognition over the years, including local and national awards. The culmination of her career and her wish to continue helping women in engineering was the creation of the Betty Barr Scholarship which is awarded annually to a female student in the UH Department of Engineering and Computer Engineering based on academics, financial need, as well as leadership qualities.

In addition to her professional and family obligations, Betty volunteered for her church and other worthy organizations, including Meals on Wheels. Upon her death in 2019, she left legacy gifts to a number of those charities, including Interfaith Ministries' Meals on Wheels program.

Betty's cousin, Evelyn Harrison Yurgensen, who was as close to her as a sister, wrote: "Meals on Wheels was in her heart and we are pleased that her legacy will continue the work of the organization. She and her mother, Mildred, were active participants in the program and delivered food for many years to those in need."

Evelyn's daughter, Tonya Yugernsen-Jacks, has fond memories of Betty: "She and her mother planned their trips around their Meals on Wheels deliveries at the holidays and we wouldn't start the festivities until they got to our house. I am so glad that her gift will be used for such an important program."

This dedicated teacher's final lesson was that of a life well lived and a legacy that lives on.

volunteerHOUSTON
A PROGRAM OF INTERFAITH MINISTRIES

Impact January - June 2021

VOLUNTEERS	AGENCIES	CORPORATE VOLUNTEER PROJECTS
• **5,461** *Local volunteer connections*	• **791** *Total agencies*	• **298** *Corporate volunteers*
• **6,321** *New volunteers registered*	• **880** *Agency Managers*	• **1,775** *Volunteer hours*
• **8,458** *Volunteer Hours logged*	• **91** *New agencies registered*	• **3,686** *kits assembled & distributed to* **21** *local nonprofits*
• **$241,391** *Local financial impact*	• **477** *Volunteer Opportunities posted*	
	• **31** *Star Agency Members*	

MAKING AN IMPACT IN 2021

Volunteer Houston continues to make a vital service impact by connecting individuals, groups and companies with nonprofit agencies to transform our community through volunteerism.

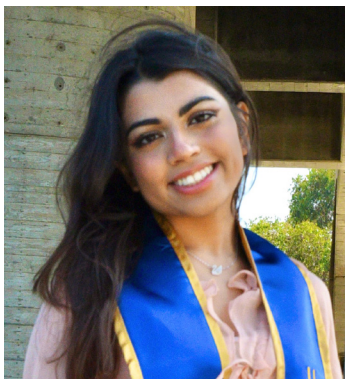
A GOOD READ

Books for Development – a Volunteer Houston Star Agency – is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that addresses the book famine that exists in many underdeveloped countries. Volunteers gather donated books, sort for quality and box for transport. These recycled books are distributed around the world. This organization is one of hundreds that partner with Volunteer Houston.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Volunteer Houston works with companies to create customized volunteer experiences around causes that align with organizational values while meeting the needs of the community. Projects can be developed around your company's desired focus area, timetable, and group size. Receive a turnkey experience and leave all the planning to Volunteer Houston.

For more information contact Gayla Wilson at **gayla@volunteerhouston.org** or **713-533-4909.**



VOLUNTEER HOUSTON EXPANDS OUTREACH WITH AMERICORPS VISTA MEMBER

Since January of this year, Aayet Ashary – AmeriCorps VISTA member, has been working on building a solid foundation for Volunteer Houston's outreach expansion into 12 counties surrounding Harris County. Through her efforts she has compiled more than 2,000 nonprofit and community contacts and is currently orchestrating interactive networking and outreach events that will grow our membership in the Gulf Coast region.

REFUGEE SERVICES

SINGLE MOM GETS A NEW CHANCE AND NEW CAR

Rawaa and Tehmina

Rawaa, a 42-year-old single mother of two teenagers and a refugee from Iraq, resettled in Houston in March 2020. Both her son and daughter attend high school now. Rawaa and her family were relieved to move into their new home. Throughout the resettlement process, the Refugee Services team at Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston has been by their side to assist them.

Rawaa and her children struggled with feelings of sadness and homesickness, as many refugees do. Refugees flee their beloved homelands due to war, persecution or violence. Through Interfaith Ministries, Rawaa received mental health support and assistance navigating the healthcare system to get the care she needed.

Interfaith Ministries Volunteer, Tehmina, led a fundraising drive to help Rawaa purchase a vehicle. Tehmina collected the donations, assisted Rawaa with the vehicle selection to best fit her needs, and guided her through the car registration process. Rawaa was able to start working full-time while also supporting the needs of her children.

Finding a job is the first step on the path to self-sufficiency. Over 90% of our refugees can support themselves within six months of arrival.

Rawaa has a Bachelor's in Biology from an Iraqi university. Through our Professional Recertification Program, we are having her degree evaluated in the U.S. Rawaa is only one of thousands of refugees we have helped over the past three decades.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY ON JUNE 20

Interfaith Ministries celebrated World Refugee Day with an event organized by **Plant It Forward** at Westbury Farm with the Houston Refugee Consortium and community partners. The goal of the event was to celebrate the resilience of refugees, raise awareness about the plight of refugees, share advocacy tools and discover ways to support refugees in Houston.

Raising awareness

INTERFAITH MINISTRIES FOR GREATER HOUSTON
OPERATION IMpact
PREPARING MEALS ON WHEELS SENIORS FOR STORM SEASON

OPERATION IMPACT

reliant an NRG company

ENERGY TRANSFER

Interfaith Ministries carried out its annual Operation IMpact providing close to 5,000 homebound seniors with a week's worth of shelf-stable food to use in case a storm disrupts their Meals on Wheels deliveries in advance of hurricane season. This year's Operation IMpact was made possible thanks to generous community support, in particular from our presenting sponsor **Reliant** and our Harris County sponsor **Energy Transfer**. The Harris County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security continues to be a strategic partner in providing emergency meals and information to homebound seniors each year.

INTERFAITH RELATIONS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

THE DIALOGUE PROJECT PROGRAMS ARE NOW OPEN FOR REGISTRATION

As part of The Dialogue Project, Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships announces **The Dialogue Workshops**. To help faith communities and their leaders navigate these trying times, Interfaith Ministries has partnered with the national, non-partisan organization **Braver Angels**. These programs provide skills for engagement in our polarized world, including "Depolarizing Within" on September 23, and "Families and Politics" on November 9.

To register visit: **imgh.org/events/dialogue-workshops.**
Contact **Rev. Kim Mabry** at:
kmabry@imgh.org or **713-533-4990**

VITAL CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships is hosting **Vital Conversations with Our Community**. Sponsored by **CITGO Petroleum**, these vital conversations are held from Noon to 1 p.m. and include an upcoming conversation with **Project Curate** on September 13 on civic engagement in our time of social change.

To register visit imgh.org/vital-conversations-with-our-community.

FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY IN A PANDEMIC

Seated: Pastor Mia Wright, Dr. Marc Boom, Imam Tauqeer H. Shah

Standing: Most Reverend Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Pastor Arturo "Artie" Cadar, Bishop Scott Jones, The Reverend Gregory Han, Rabbi David A. Lyon, Pastor Marcus Cosby

The Rev. Gregory Han, Director of Interfaith Relations and Education at IM and IM Board Member Rabbi David Lyon, joined other distinguished faith leaders in **Faith & Spirituality In A Pandemic** hosted by **Houston Methodist**, as they discussed supporting their congregations and community during the global pandemic and the role the faith community has played in building vaccine trust.

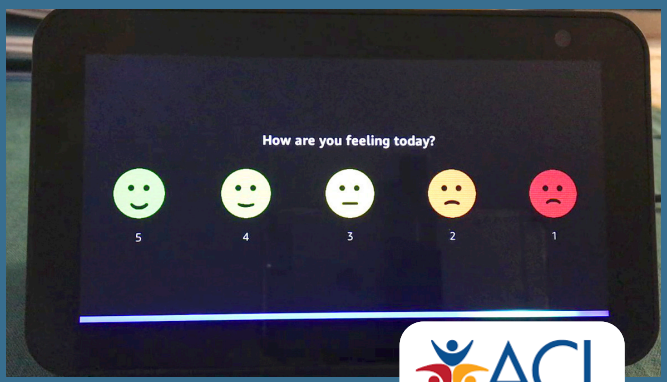
IMPOWERED VOICES: UNITY CONCERT

Our goal for the IMpowered Voices Unity Concert that aired on June 8 was for viewers to feel encouraged to keep going, to love their neighbor, to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, and to be a model of unity and harmony in the community! Thank you to the talented local artists who participated in the concert and **Melanie Lawson** for being the emcee.

WATCH THE UNITY CONCERT

CONNECTING SENIORS TO CARE

Meals on Wheels is in a pilot phase of a project to provide homebound seniors with Alexa devices in order to study how it affects their overall quality of life and social determinants of health. Research has determined the social interaction during the meal delivery provides meaningful health benefits as well as nutrition. Through the expanded use of technology and the internet, assistive device with artificial intelligence, such as the Alexa Echo Show, can significantly expand the opportunities for Meals on Wheels programs to promote both social and nutritional wellbeing. This project is funded by a federal grant from the **Administration for Community Living.**



IM SUMMER 2021 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

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HOUSTON ENDOWMENT

Area Agency on Aging

This program is supported by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission *Fund for Veterans' Assistance*. The *Fund for Veterans' Assistance* provides grants to organizations serving veterans and their families. For more information, visit TVC.Texas.gov.

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LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY

Interfaith Ministries could not carry out its work without community support! We are grateful to all our donors for their generosity.

Become an IMpact Society member:

www.imgh.org/donate/impact/

To find out how you can include Interfaith Ministries in your estate plans, contact **Jerry Haus at jhaus@imgh.org** or **713-533-4965.**

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