FREE MEALS FOR SENIORS

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/lunch 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.
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
President & CEO
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.
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’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.

Evelyn’s daughter, Tonya Yurgensen-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.
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.

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.

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.

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, 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.

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.

**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.**

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**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.

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**OPERATION IMPACT**

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

FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY IN A PANDEMIC
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.

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.
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.