

MOSAIC

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INTERFAITH MINISTRIES FOR GREATER HOUSTON

FALL 2022

IM

INTERFAITH
MINISTRIES
FOR GREATER HOUSTON

2022 TAPESTRY GALA TO HONOR LONG-TIME SUPPORTERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS

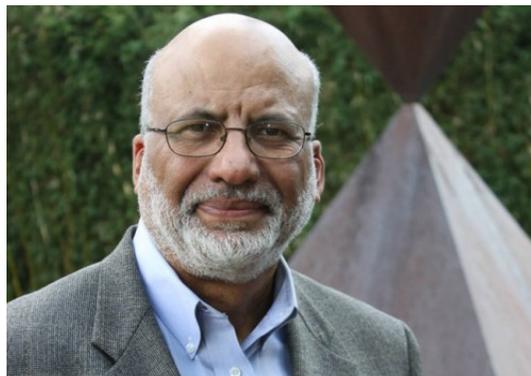
Gala chairs Dr. Kathy C. Flanagan and Mayor Sylvester Turner, and Mrs. Paula Sutton and Mr. Bill Gross, are planning an elegant and festive event that includes an inspirational program, dinner, dancing to the sounds of the Ernest Walker Band, and more! Our Tapestry Honoree is community leader and lifetime IM Board member, Mr. Laurence J. “Larry” Payne. The Spirit of Respect Award will be bestowed on Dr. Stephen Klineberg. We will honor two Community Champions- Houston Methodist and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Houston Area. Shell is our Presenting Sponsor.

Tables and tickets are available at img.org/gala-2022.



2022

Tapestry Gala



Laurence J. “Larry” Payne

HERE TO SERVE – TAPESTRY AWARD HONOREE LARRY PAYNE

Fifty years ago, Laurence J. “Larry” Payne walked into the office of the then Houston Metropolitan Ministries on Montrose Boulevard and said: “How can I help? I am here to serve.” The rest is history.

Larry was a senior at the nearby University of St. Thomas and that week was their Community Service Week. Larry has had a heart for community service ever since. He has served Interfaith Ministries for five decades as a volunteer, board member, board chair, and now a senior advisory board member. We have chosen to honor Larry as the 2022 Tapestry Award recipient for his passionate, dedicated and committed work as a servant leader.

Larry Payne represents the core of who we are at Interfaith Ministries. He has a heart for service. His first words to us, 50 years ago, were “I am here to serve.” And, today, he is still serving.... not only IM, but a diverse array of worthy

causes throughout Greater Houston. From public service as Chair of Mayor Turner’s Task Force on Policing Reform to appointments at the city, state and congressional levels, Larry has been and continues to be an advocate for justice, equity and a better community for all. In the private sector, Larry has served a number of nonprofits in leadership roles, including Habitat for Humanity, the American Leadership Forum, The Institute for Spirituality and Health, The Greater Houston Women’s Foundation, Children at Risk, the University of St Thomas, Catholic Charities, and more. He puts his deep Catholic faith into action through service by living up to Pope Francis’ words: “We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love... We need to include the excluded and preach peace.”

Thank you, Larry, for having a heart for service. IM is here to serve.



Martin B. Cominsky

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Friends,

Interfaith Ministries is now starting its busiest time of the year. Fall brings the start of school for our refugee children, the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays when our homebound seniors need a little extra cheer, a return to in-person interfaith programming, volunteers eager to get connected through Volunteer Houston, and our first full AmeriCorps SERVE HOUSTON cohort!

We face the challenges brought by COVID, inflation, and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and Ukraine. IM has continued to serve throughout this time, meeting our Meals on Wheels seniors' needs for food and fellowship at a time when they were more isolated than ever. Our work continues to grow in this area, even as higher food and gas costs have posed a challenge. Refugee Services pivoted to welcome an unprecedented number of new refugees, many of whom are Afghans who had been working with American troops. Our work of bringing together diverse groups is more relevant than ever in these divisive days. As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, individuals and companies are eager to volunteer in person and we can make that connection. And our first AmeriCorps SERVE HOUSTON group gives me hope for the future as we influence tomorrow's leaders.

When I first arrived at IM over 7 years ago, the organization was already strong and well regarded. The annual budget was around \$15 million and we owned two Midtown buildings. This fiscal year, our budget is over \$50 million, we own three Midtown buildings and a fourth in La Marque (with no debt), and we have a cash reserve to help us in difficult times. This amazing growth would not have been possible without the support of friends like you and our hardworking staff, who turn my visions and your investments into reality.

This year's budget represents extraordinary growth, primarily in our refugee work. The Afghan crisis has necessitated that we rise to meet the need, and our Refugee Services department has doubled in size. With federal support, we are also welcoming a record number of Cubans fleeing their homeland, in addition to refugees from around the world. We have been involved in refugee work for over 30 years, in partnership with the U.S. State Department and Episcopal Migration Ministries. The families we meet are strong and resilient. Over 90% are working and self-sufficient within a year of their arrival in Houston. Sometimes, former refugee clients visit us years later, wanting to pay it forward, and they become volunteers or donors.

I am humbled and honored to lead this organization during a period of rapid and transformational growth. We continue to test the boundaries of what we can offer homebound seniors, through our Connecting Seniors to Care program that uses the Alexa Echo Show in the home to address social isolation and connect seniors to caregivers. We continue to welcome newcomers from around the world. We continue to bridge divides. We continue to train and deploy volunteers throughout our great city. And we are now training the next generation, through SERVE HOUSTON, to continue that legacy.

Thank you for being on this amazing journey with us!

Martin B. Cominsky
President & CEO

REFUGEE SERVICES



Afghan children enjoy playing games at the carnival.

WELCOMING AFGHAN ALLIES

On September 17, IM hosted an Afghan Family Festival which was a great success! With over 230 attendees, the festival was a fun-filled day with crafts, activities, food, and giveaways. The families were thrilled to spend time together with each other. Thank you to H-E-B, The Halal Guys, the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center of Houston, and Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher for making this event possible!

HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR REFUGEES

Interfaith Ministries For Greater Houston

REFUGEE SERVICES

HOLIDAY DRIVE

OCTOBER 15
—
DECEMBER 1

HELP US SPREAD THE HOLIDAY JOY BY SUPPORTING REFUGEE FAMILIES IN NEED THIS SEASON!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO GET STARTED!

LEARN HOW TO SIGN UP ↑

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BIKES FOR TYKES



When Channel 2's Bill Spencer first called IM to do a news story about Afghan refugees, we did not know we were about to make a new friend! Bill sprang into action when he saw that so many of the Afghan children needed bikes, right in time for the new school year. He leveraged his connections with Walmart to get over 100 bikes donated, which were then assembled by volunteers at the Channel 2 studios in southwest Houston. The bikes were then distributed to the children. The project received generous media coverage and made some new neighbors very happy!

MEALS ON WHEELS

THANKSGIVING FOR SENIORS

In just a few weeks, most of us will sit down with family or friends to enjoy an abundant Thanksgiving meal. The holiday is a time of plenty, of fellowship, and warm memories made. For many homebound seniors served by Meals on Wheels, however, Thanksgiving is no different than any other day. While some of our seniors will have visitors, many are all alone. Already living on fixed incomes, many seniors cannot afford a traditional Thanksgiving feast. High food prices have made that turkey and pecan pie even more expensive this year. Thanks to community support, our Meals on Wheels program ensures that all our seniors have a full Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings, and a friendly phone call from a volunteer. To become a project sponsor or volunteer to call seniors, visit img.org/events/thanksgiving2022.



jiffylube

KEEP OUR WHEELS – AND YOURS! – TURNING

As part of their Drive To Do More commitment to support charities and volunteers nationwide, Jiffy Lube is collaborating with Meals on Wheels to raise funds and awareness that will help our seniors stay nourished. We're excited to invite Jiffy Lube customers to join the effort. From October 15 to October 31, customers who receive oil changes, tire rotations or other vehicle maintenance will be able to donate \$3 to Meals on Wheels at check-out. Funds raised in our local community will be used to support our efforts here at IM's Meals on Wheels for Greater Houston and Galveston County.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the partnership and find a Jiffy Lube location.



Meals on Wheels recipient Christopher

MEALS ON WHEELS SPOTLIGHT- MEET CHRISTOPHER

Christopher carries many titles in life, including friend, minister, grandfather, and professional truck driver. Raised in Fifth Ward, he holds his childhood memories dearly to his heart, and embraces the times he used to play basketball and football with his friends. Nowadays, you can find Christopher ministering to different people in his community. “I always wanted to be a minister”, he says. “After answering my calling, the best advice I can give is to remain courageous and take all opportunities that your Savior provides!” Having faith is what guided Christopher to Meals on Wheels. “After I was diagnosed with diabetes, I had to be careful with what I ate. Meals on Wheels gives me nutrition with variety,” he elaborates. Many people in Christopher’s retirement community benefit from Meals on Wheels. “We are retired, so we are always on a budget. The program helps the seniors out, especially since medication and care has gotten so expensive. Us older people are going broke.” Although he struggles, Christopher always allots time to give back. He is a firm believer the giving he does will always come back around. His Meals on Wheels driver don’t only bring meals, but also friendship. “The people are nice and on time! They are always friendly and do what they can even when the weather doesn’t agree,” Christopher says. Meals on Wheels provides comfort and companionship to people like Christopher; members of the Houston community that need it the most.

ANIMEALS

Animeals on wheels



Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston



Thank you to the Animal Kinship Ministry of Unity Church, which supported Animeals with its monthly kibble donation and an invitation for us to host an info table at their Pet Blessing event on October 8. This pup enjoyed biscuits and a blessing!

ANIMEALS NEEDS DRIVERS!

For many homebound seniors, their dog or cat may be their only companion. Sadly, for seniors living on fixed incomes, the cost of pet food and veterinary care can be too much. Especially with today's inflation, it is getting more and more expensive to care for a pet.

Thanks to Animeals, seniors on our Meals on Wheels program may also register their pets to receive free pet food and vet care. Volunteers are key to this effort! We need volunteer drivers to deliver the pet food to seniors' homes. To sign up, please visit:

volunteerhou.org/need/detail/?need_id=712043



Save the Date

Wags & Whiskers brunch

2023 WAGS & WHISKERS

Please save the date of Saturday, February 25, 2023 for our annual Wags & Whiskers luncheon. The event will return to Hotel Zaza and feature a silent auction, lunch and the popular pet fashion show.

Our honoree is Jim Sikorski, a long-time donor who has hosted an annual fundraiser each year to support Meals on Wheels/Animeals, as well as Legacy Community Health.

VIC SAMUELS CENTER FOR VOLUNTEERISM & CIVIC SERVICE

The mission of the Vic Samuels Center for Volunteerism and Civic Service is to establish a positive and lasting impact on the Greater Houston community through organized service and leadership. It includes:

- **Volunteer Houston:** Volunteer Houston actively connects volunteers with nonprofits in need, increasing impact and benefiting the community at large. Volunteer Houston is a proud affiliate of Points of Light, offering an array of opportunities and connections that make volunteerism simple and assist area non-profits in meeting community needs.
- **SERVE HOUSTON:** IM's newest program, SERVE HOUSTON, is a diverse service corps of natural leaders, working to strengthen the health and well-being of underserved communities. Now in its first year as an AmeriCorps program, it will place teams in partner nonprofits to focus on Getting Things Done.

SERVE HOUSTON BEGINS NEW YEAR AS AN AMERICORPS PROGRAM



The first full AmeriCorps cohort at their swearing in ceremony.

We welcomed our first AmeriCorps SERVE HOUSTON Members to their 2022-2023 service term. IM President and CEO Martin Cominsky led our new AmeriCorps SERVE HOUSTON Members in their pledge during the Swearing In Ceremony held on Saturday, Oct 1 at the Bank of America Building in Downtown Houston. We appreciate Bank of America for their support.

Thank you to the One Star Foundation for their funding of this program. Team sponsorships are available. For more information, contact Maria Magee at mmagee@imgh.org.

NEW HOME, LEADERSHIP FOR VIC SAMUELS CENTER



The Marshall building is expected to open by the end of the year.

By the end of the year, the Samuels Center will have a new home! A building next to our W.T. and Louise J. Moran building that houses Meals on Wheels is being renovated to house our volunteer initiatives and our Animeals warehouse. Signage has just been installed and the interior is now being completed. The building is named for Linda and Fred G. Marshall. The Marshalls are long-time donors to IM, who have a special passion for Animeals and for volunteerism. After Linda passed away, Fred wanted to honor her in a special way and the building is a fitting legacy.

A new position of Vice President of Volunteerism and Civic Engagement has been created to oversee the Center. We are pleased to welcome Andréa Shiloh to this role and to our Executive Leadership Team. Andréa brings decades of experience in both the corporate and nonprofit sectors, and a passion for community service.



Andréa Shiloh

INTERFAITH RELATIONS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED RELIGION AUTHOR, REPORTER HEADLINED GERSHENSON LECTURE



Local faith leaders engaged in dialogue at the Gershenson Lecture.

On the evening of Tuesday, September 20, IM presented Bob Smietana as keynote speaker at its fourth annual Gershenson Lecture held at Chapelwood United Methodist Church. This event featured a fascinating conversation with Smietana and local faith leaders whose real-life stories and observations shed light on how faith communities are coping with the promise and peril of a changing religious landscape.

Smietana is a nationally recognized religion reporter with the Religion News Service, the author of the recently released book “Reorganized Religion,” and a curious journalist with over twenty years of experience reporting on the intersection of faith, values and everyday life. He joined the participating Houston faith leaders in a live discussion about how faith has survived and thrived in Houston during tumultuous times. He also shared his knowledge of polling data and observations of how faith communities old and new are coping with change.

Local panelists represented Houston’s rich religious diversity and included: Shariq Ghani, Executive Director of the Minaret Foundation; Rabbi Scott Hausman-Weiss of Congregation Shma Koleinu; Rev. Laura Mayo of Covenant Baptist Church; Pastor Joseph Rios of the Generaciones Worship Community at Chapelwood United Methodist Church; and Rev. Dr. Mia Knight Wright of Fountain of Praise Church.

Focused on topics of religion, peace and ethics, IM’s annual Gershenson Lecture is named in honor of Elliot Gershenson, the organization’s President Emeritus.

iLEAD FOR YOUTH



IM is actively recruiting 8th-grade students along with a parent or guardian to participate in the 2023 iLead Youth Engagement Program. iLead is a fun, new program designed to inspire, educate and connect 8th-grade students and a parent or guardian in a unique monthly program that will include great speakers, wonderful dialogue, fun and meaningful service projects to support the Houston community, and opportunities to meet other students and parents representing Houston’s diverse community. For more information contact Gayla Wilson at gwilson@imgh.org or Gevetta Phillips at gphillips@imgh.org. The application deadline is December 2, 2022.



Archbishop Emeritus
Joseph A. Fiorenza.

REMEMBERING ARCHBISHOP FIORENZA

IM, along with our community, mourns the loss of Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza. He’s been a friend to all. He had an unwavering commitment to diversity and respect for neighbor. The Archbishop was a faithful leader in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and was admired by people of diverse faith backgrounds. He was a great man who fought for civil rights over the decades. We have honored him and his friends Rev. William Lawson and the late Rabbi Samuel Karff - together known as the Three Amigos - on the Brigitte and Bashar Kalai Plaza of Respect at our Midtown campus. We invite you to learn more about Archbishop Fiorenza by visiting the Plaza.

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FALL 2022 MOSAIC

INTERFAITH MINISTRIES

FOR GREATER HOUSTON

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Greater Houston



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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