

# MAKING AN IMPACT



FY2023  
Annual Report  
July 2022-June 2023



# Leadership Letter

Dear Friends,

The 2023 fiscal year, which ended on June 30, 2023, was another year of growth for Interfaith Ministries. The organization's annual operating budget now exceeds \$55 million – doubling in size in only a few short years.

Most of this growth has been in our **Refugee Services** program, which expanded to resettle thousands of Afghans after the fall of Kabul. Our work with the Afghans continues, as well as those from around the world fleeing war, violence and persecution in their home countries. We are proud that over 80% of those we serve are self-sufficient within six to twelve months of arrival in our country. Refugees, many of whom have experienced unspeakable trauma, are resilient and determined to succeed. Within Refugee Services, our Women's Empowerment Groups have expanded to include Arabic, Pashto, and Spanish-speaking women. And we have started a Men's Group for Afghans, many of whom worked with U.S. troops. Refugee youth benefit from our Art Program, which allows them to process their experiences in a therapeutic and creative way.

**Meals on Wheels** has grown to meet the needs of homebound seniors throughout the Greater Houston area. We have seen the most significant growth in Galveston County and purchased a building in La Marque to streamline our operations in that region. Over 8,000 unduplicated seniors received meals and more this year. Those with pets benefited from our **Animeals** program, which has grown to serve over 1,300 dogs and cats. Meals on Wheels addresses food insecurity and social isolation among this vulnerable population. Our **Care on Command** project uses Alexa technology in seniors' homes to provide curated content to address social isolation, spiritual care, physical fitness, mental stimulation and more.

**Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships (IRCP)** continues its work of bringing together diverse groups for dialogue, collaboration and service. Its House of Worship tours educate Houstonians about our city's diverse faith traditions, while our Vital Conversations series offers programming related to social justice. Our IMpower women's group hosts dynamic speakers and programming, while Impulse engages young leaders in our work and iLEAD offers an intensive engagement program for junior high students and their parents. IRCP connects faith and community leaders for good.

Through the **Vic Samuels Center for Volunteerism and Civic Service**, Volunteer Houston connects thousands of volunteers with community needs and SERVE HOUSTON prepares the next generation of leaders through an AmeriCorps service-learning model. Volunteer Houston hosted a citywide mural project for Juneteenth and managed large-scale corporate volunteer projects, in addition to helping individual volunteers connect with nonprofits in need. SERVE HOUSTON's third cohort completed their term of service, benefiting IM and its partner nonprofits.

As we adjust to a post-pandemic environment, IM continues to evolve to meet community needs. We stay true to our foundation of "the strength of shared beliefs" – feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, building bridges of respect and understanding, harnessing the power of volunteerism to make a difference, and getting things done! We could not carry out this work without your support. Thank you for making us stronger!



Martin B.  
Cominsky



Randall  
Evans

*Martin B. Cominsky*  
**Martin B. Cominsky**  
President & CEO

*Randall E. Evans*  
**Randall Evans**  
Chair, Board of Directors



## MISSION

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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

## VISION

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Interfaith Ministries 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.



## VALUES

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### 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.

# IM Tapestry Gala 2022

Presenting Sponsor



On November 12th, 2022, at the Hilton Americas-Houston, Gala chairs, Dr. Kathy C. Flanagan, Mayor Sylvester Turner, Mrs. Paula Sutton and Mr. Bill Gross, hosted an elegant and festive event that included an inspirational program, dinner, dancing to the sounds of the Ernest Walker Band, and more! Our Tapestry Honoree was community leader and lifetime IM Board member, Mr. Laurence J. “Larry” Payne. The Spirit of Respect Award was bestowed on Dr. Stephen Klineberg. The two Community Champions- Houston Methodist and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Houston Area were also honored. Shell USA, Inc. was our Presenting Sponsor.

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 had a heart for community service ever since. He served Interfaith Ministries for five decades as a volunteer, board member, board chair, and a senior advisory board member. We chose to honor Larry as the 2022 Tapestry Award recipient for his passionate, dedicated and committed work as a servant leader to mend to the community at large.

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 an advocate for justice, equity and a better community for all. 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 put 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.”



## Tapestry Honoree

Mr. Laurence J. “Larry” Payne



Gala Chairs, Mrs. Paula Sutton  
& Dr. Kathy C. Flanagan



## Spirit of Respect Honoree

Dr. Stephen Klineberg



Elder Corey Cuvelier  
Church of Latter-Day  
Saints

## Community Champions

Houston Methodist

The Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-Day Saints, Houston Area

## Gala Chairs

Dr. Kathy C. Flanagan &  
Mayor Sylvester Turner

Mrs. Paula Sutton & Mr. Bill Gross



Ms. Ryane Jackson  
Houston Methodist

# Meals on Wheels & Animeals

## Meet Peter



## CARE ON COMMAND

Care on Command benefits homebound seniors aged 60 and over, adults with disabilities, and veterans who have difficulty performing one or more activities of daily living.

The program delivers content tailored to meet the specific care needs of each client through a video and voice-assisted AI companion device and allow them to connect with others outside the home including caregivers, family, social groups, and friends.

Content will address physical wellness such as exercise/movement recommendations, pain management, medication reminders, falls reduction information, spiritual engagement with their congregations of choice, and more. It will address mental wellness through games and other interactive media to improve cognitive function and mental acuity. Not only will the device push tailored content to meet the specific needs of participants, but it will also allow them to respond and connect with others outside the home. It provides an easy connection to caregivers, family, social groups, and friends – opportunities for social interaction, spiritual wellness, and life balance.



Meet Peter Gray, a resilient man who has weathered the storms of life with a determined spirit. Originally hailing from a small town with just a single red light, Peter's journey took him through the vast expanse of the oil, gas, and chemical refineries, from the heart of Louisiana to the shores of Texas City in Galveston County.

Life was never easy for Peter, but he faced each challenge head-on. He worked tirelessly in the refineries, operating heavy equipment and contributing to the energy industry that powers our lives. A man of action, he traveled across the country and even found himself working in the picturesque Virgin Islands. Yet, it was his unwavering work ethic that brought him to Texas City in 1973, where he decided to put down roots and make a home.

But life took an unexpected turn for Peter when he got sick with cancer. The illness threw him off his path, forcing him to undergo two surgeries and the removal of his left kidney. The vigor that once fueled his work in refineries was now channeled into his fight against the disease. As the storms of illness raged, Peter's aspirations had to be put on hold.

Enter Meals on Wheels, a ray of hope in the midst of Peter's challenging journey. For the past six months, Meals on Wheels has been an essential part of Peter's life. As he gradually regains his strength, the nutritious meals delivered to his doorstep have become a lifeline, providing sustenance and comfort during his recovery.

Peter's gratitude for Meals on Wheels shines brightly. He appreciates every meal, every delivery, and every moment of support. The simple act of receiving a meal has brought not just nourishment, but also a sense of connection to the community around him. Peter's days, once filled with the bustle of refinery work, are now filled with the joy of receiving a warm meal and a friendly visitor at his door.

Though his journey took a detour, Peter's spirit remains unbroken. He looks forward to each new day with a positive outlook, embracing the possibility of returning to work and finding his place once again. Through his trials and triumphs, Peter Gray's story is a testament to resilience, community, and the profound impact of Meals on Wheels. As the aroma of his favorite meals fills his home, Peter's heart is warmed not just by the food, but by the compassion that reaches him, one meal at a time.

# Meals on Wheels & Animeals

## THE IMPACT



**1,917,581**  
meals delivered



Delivering across  
four counties:  
Harris, Galveston,  
Montgomery, Liberty



Over  
**8,000**  
unduplicated seniors served  
over the course of the year



**97.6%**  
said the program helps them  
stay healthy and independent



100% received  
shelf-stable  
emergency  
food packs

## Animeals



**782** pets served



**126,000+**  
pounds of dog and cat  
food delivered



**63**  
pets received preventative  
veterinary services and  
vaccines

# Refugee Services

## Meet Abdul



Abdul was a successful Urologist in Afghanistan, thriving and looking forward to growing his new family and his practice. Unfortunately, Alizad has never known his country to be without war. Since his childhood, Afghanistan has been at the center of war creating a dangerous environment for those willing to fight back. In 2021, he made an impossible choice to flee in search of safety and risk it all for a better life.

Upon arriving in the United States, Abdul was faced with the difficulty of finding a job without the luxury of transferring his medical degree. He began working with Interfaith Ministries helping refugees through the difficult experience he had just overcome, opting to apply to graduate school to focus on public health. Abdul earned his diploma in 2023 and he is utilizing his professional background and his personal experience to serve others. He is grateful for the opportunities he has found in Houston and despite missing his country of origin, he calls Houston home.

# Refugee Services

## THE IMPACT



## Community Outreach Programs



Youth  
art



Empowerment  
groups



Bicycle  
lessons

	Afghan		Iraqi
	Azerbaijani		Italian
	Bhutanese		Mali
	Burmese		Nicaragua
	Burundian		Nigerian
	Chilean		Pakistani
	Colombian		Salvadorian
	Congolesse		Somali
	Cuban		Spain
	Djiboutian		Sudanese
	Ecuadorian		Syrian
	Eritrean		Turkish
	Guatemalan		Ukrainian
	Haitian		Uruguay
	Honduras		Venezuelan
	Iranian		Vietnamese

# Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships

## Meet Shannon and Owen



Shannon and Owen, a dynamic mother-son duo, embarked on a transformative journey through the iLead Youth Engagement Program. Drawn to the program by the promise of community involvement and cultural exploration, Owen's eagerness to make a difference started with a simple email invitation.

For Owen, the most pivotal lesson from iLead was the profound impact of community service. Through hands-on experiences like volunteering at the local food bank, he discovered the tangible difference that collective efforts can make. He recognized the significance of his role in alleviating food insecurity, fostering a newfound appreciation for his ability to effect change.

Shannon resonated with Owen's sentiments, especially after witnessing the program's holistic approach. iLead didn't just focus on actions; it provided context by discussing the root causes of issues like food insecurity. Engaging with a diverse panel of cultural leaders allowed Owen to realize that despite surface differences, humanity's common threads bind us together. It was a revelation that left him viewing the world with more compassionate eyes, recognizing the shared experiences that unite us all.

Owen's aspirations expanded as he contemplated future avenues for volunteerism. No longer just a passive participant, he now actively seeks opportunities to serve his community, setting his sights on a summer dedicated to giving back. This change was reflective of iLead's core mission - to nurture young leaders who proactively engage with their surroundings.

In sum, Shannon and Owen Lowry's iLead journey illuminated the significance of community involvement, shattered misconceptions about diversity, and strengthened their mother-son bond. iLead's ripple effect is poised to extend beyond its timeframe, shaping Owen into a compassionate and engaged leader well into the future.

## We are grateful to our 2023 iLead Presenting Sponsor, CITGO



# Interfaith Relations and Community Partnerships

## THE IMPACT



Reached **5,716** people

<b>130</b>	The Annual Gershenson Lecture	<b>200</b>	House of Worship Tours
<b>225</b>	The Art of Perception	<b>160</b>	COVID Briefing Calls
<b>130</b>	An Evening with Bishop Paul Gorgon Chandler	<b>30</b>	IMpulse Programs for women
<b>60</b>	Active Shooter Response Training	<b>30</b>	IMpower Programs for young leaders
<b>60</b>	Black History Month and Juneteenth Tours	<b>50</b>	Hate Crimes and Bias Incidents Reporting Initiative
<b>1,700</b>	Houston Women of Faith Videos	<b>25</b>	iLead Youth Engagement Program
<b>160</b>	Sacred Times in Abrahamic Traditions	<b>100</b>	Sallie Alcorn Fall Awareness Program
<b>150</b>	A Vigil for Earthquake Victims in Turkey and Syria	<b>25</b>	Mass Fatality Spiritual Care Network

Our Front Door Initiative included meetings with the following faith communities:

- Houston Rabbinic Association
- Archdiocese of Galveston – Houston
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of America – Gulf Coast Synod
- Ibn Sina Foundation

Our Public Affairs Committee met with approximately 25 elected officials as part of our regular outreach and Texas Legislative Session outreach.

# Vic Samuels Center for Volunteerism and Service

## SERVE HOUSTON

### Meet Damarius



Damarius' journey with the SERVE HOUSTON AmeriCorps program has made a lasting impact on him and the community he served. As a history major at Sam Houston State University, Damarius sought a way to contribute meaningfully to his community beyond traditional paths. His involvement with SERVE HOUSTON became the perfect avenue to showcase his skills and create change.

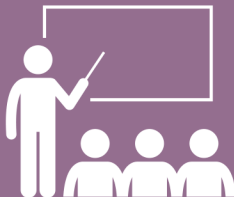
Stationed at the Tejano Center's La Tiendita, a food pantry for the Gulf Gate area, Damarius's service made a difference in the lives of those in need. A chance encounter with a homeless individual during his commute led to a conversation that ultimately directed the person to the food pantry the next day, demonstrating the positive ripple effect of simple interactions.

Driven by a desire to expand beyond the classroom, Damarius saw AmeriCorps as a platform to embody the spirit of service, from supporting fellow Texans to helping neighbors in need. Through this program, he learned to address concerns constructively and discovered the value of patience in driving meaningful transformations.

As he contemplates post-graduation plans, Damarius acknowledges SERVE HOUSTON's role in helping him explore potential options, allowing him to uncover his true calling. His story exemplifies transformation, resilience, and the power of service. Damarius's involvement with SERVE HOUSTON guided him toward self-discovery and demonstrated the significance of patience, persistence, and a compassionate heart in driving meaningful change.

# THE IMPACT

SERVE  
HOUSTON



Estimated  
**19,881**  
people impacted

Served 16 total agencies



# Vic Samuels Center for Volunteerism and Service

## Volunteer Houston



### Meet Maggie

Maggie Schroeder's remarkable journey as a volunteer showcases a steadfast commitment to enriching lives and communities. With an extensive corporate finance career of 30 years, Maggie was fortunate to have avenues for volunteering through her employers, engaging in initiatives like United Way Day of Caring. However, her true passion for giving back blossomed after retiring early to spend more time with her children, immersing herself in volunteering at their schools. Over the years, this passion evolved and found a central hub in the Volunteer Houston portal.

Driven by her love for animals, Maggie actively volunteers for Best Friends Animal Society, managing paperwork for the Spay Neuter program. Beyond animals, her involvement with Volunteer Houston has been instrumental in broadening her

volunteering horizons. Through the portal, she discovered diverse opportunities like the 9/11 Day of Service, Volunteer Houston Together, pre-event work for significant volunteering efforts, and contributing at the Boys and Girls Club for a STEM kit initiative benefiting children.

Maggie's journey embodies the true essence of giving back, representing not just a desire but a genuine need to make a positive impact. Her tireless dedication and engagement with various causes, facilitated by Volunteer Houston, exemplify the power of compassionate volunteering to foster empathy and understanding within society. Maggie Schroeder stands as a beacon of altruism, emphasizing that small acts, when united, can indeed make a significant difference in the world.

11

# THE IMPACT

Volunteer  
Houston



# 13,958

volunteer hours served

across over 

# 70

  
agencies

## FY23 BOARD OFFICERS

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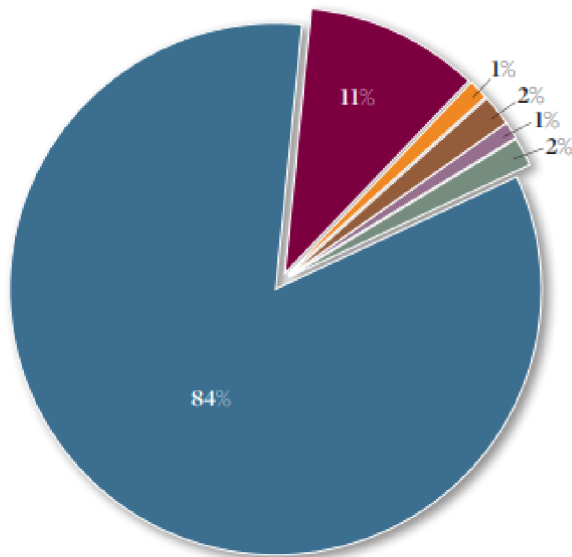
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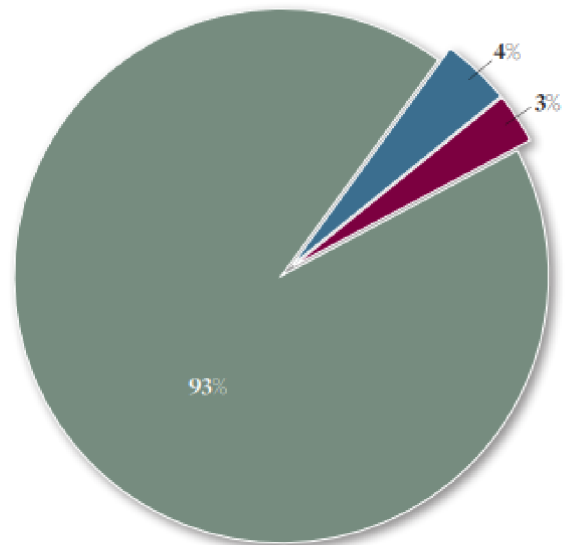
Elliot Gershenson

# FY23 FINANCIALS



## Revenue

Contract Income.....	41,412,828	United Way.....	928,567
Contributions.....	5,234,627	Program Fees.....	529,260
Special Events.....	607,564	Other.....	866,023



## Expenses

Programs.....	46,521,286
Management & General.....	2,083,216
Fundraising.....	1,530,714

# LEAD DONORS FY23

Gifts of \$5,000 or higher  
July 2022 - June 2023



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# Public Funders



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](http://TVC.Texas.gov).



# LEARN MORE ABOUT IM

## QR Codes



Website



Video





POINTS  
OF LIGHT



AmeriCorps



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](http://TVC.Texas.gov).



United Way of Greater Houston

