



**Helping  
is my  
thing**



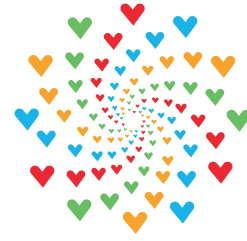
**Our  
new  
home**



**New  
Board  
member**

# CONNECTIONS

Winter 2024



**INTERFAITH  
VOLUNTEER  
CARE GIVERS  
OF GREATER  
NEW HAVEN**



*We're 40 years old! In this issue of we share stories of dedicated volunteers and some of what they do to enhance mobility and food security for New Haven County seniors.*

# Resilient

## 40 years strong. Looking forward

2024 is a banner year for Interfaith Volunteers and I'm excited about our progress.

We're 40 years strong.

Anniversary celebrations will include a special gala event in December where we'll come together to honor four decades of love, care, sharing and service.

IVCG was founded in 1984— initially as Downtown Cooperative Ministries— after the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation selected New Haven for one of its first “Faith In Action” programs.



*Cultivating Connections (and Santa) at a Christmas concert outing.*

In the years since we've added programs but never lacked passion nor departed from our founding principles.

Last summer IVCG's Board met to draft a new mission statement.

We hope these words heighten awareness of what we do:

**We are neighbors who help neighbors live lives of connection and care, with seniors at the heart.**

Here's how our work is being done:

**We share experiences, rides, food, and other services – primarily with seniors – that cultivate connection, support wellness, and relieve loneliness and isolation.**

And after hours of careful thought and lively discussions we came up with this vision statement:

**Our community is where all generations are involved with and benefit from a thriving senior population.**

In this issue of Connections, we share stories of dedicated volunteers and some of what they do to enhance mobility and food security for New Haven County seniors.

In recent months we've organized a series of community events and set up an interactive Facebook page, CT Garden Collaborative is in its second year of Cultivating Connections.

Artist-in-residence Kristin Eno is working together with a cohort of seniors to co-create expressive oral histories.

We continue to support the vital work of Mae's Closet as it assures access of high quality durable medical equipment.

And, oh yes, we just moved. IVCG is proud to be part of Whitneyville Cultural Commons at our new address: 1253 Whitney Ave, Hamden CT 06517.

Packing up boxes proved to be a special challenge for Dan.

After illness and holiday commitments strictly limited volunteer participation, his family jumped in and helped out packing boxes and doing a lot of hard work.



*Executive Director Dan and family members hard at work on moving day.*

What everyone is doing at this mighty little nonprofit is amazing.

We look forward to another good year of neighbors helping neighbors.

*Richard Davies,*  
Connections Editor.



*Dan and Whitneyville Cultural Commons Director Diana Theriault.*

# Nourishing

## Thanksgiving For All success

What a remarkable morning it was. Scores of IVCG volunteers delivered more fresh meals direct to people's homes on Thanksgiving Day than during any previous year in the past.

By any measure November's Thanksgiving For All was a success.

Families throughout New Haven County received more than 1260 fresh, cooked meals.

IVCG organized the deliveries, coordinating schedules for dozens of volunteer drivers.

Food preparation was coordinated by DESK—Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, who have partnered with us on this event for more than thirty years.



Dan interviewed on Thanksgiving morning by WTNH TV.

Yale Hospitality packed and boxed meals, collected more than 250 frozen turkeys, and provided a refrigerated trailer where meals were stored.

The Hopkins School brought together dozens of students and parents for a day of preparing and baking delicious pies.

Thanksgiving For All received local media coverage and we posted updates on our Facebook Page— Interfaith Volunteers In New Haven County.

Local TV news reporters Olivia Schueller from WFSB Channel 3 and Tim Harfmann at WTNH News 8 were on hand to tell their viewers about Thanksgiving For All.

**“I would be sitting here alone.”**

81-year-old Dorothy Davis received a hot fresh meal delivered by IVCG volunteers Matt and Tara Brierley.

“If I didn't have this today, I would be sitting here alone,” Dorothy told WTNH.

She said her children and grandchildren are grown and do not live in the area, so this Thanksgiving was different.

Each recipient received a container packed with turkey and all the fixings, plus a pie and a handmade card written by local students.

After weeks of careful planning the day proved to be a great outpouring of care and sharing.

We're grateful to the hundreds of extraordinary volunteers, many of whom worked long hours in the days leading up to Thanksgiving to ensure this community effort was a success.

The community came together to serve those most in need.



Volunteer drivers Sarah Mach, her husband Dan and kids.

We would also like to give a special thanks to First Congregational Church of West Haven, Knights of St. Patrick, The New Haven Chapter of the Links Incorporated, Temple Emanuel of Greater New Haven, Hopkins School, Chabaso Bakery, and Christopher Martin's. They all played a major role in Thanksgiving For All.

# Support

## “It’s my thing”



*Sherrie Shivley gets rides and volunteers.*

For volunteer Sherrie Shivley, IVCG is true to its mission of neighbors helping neighbors.

Two years ago, Sherrie reached out to Interfaith’s Transportation Plus to obtain help with getting to her kidney dialysis appointments on Wednesdays and Fridays each week.

But the story doesn’t end there. Sherrie has worked hard to help IVCG. “Volunteering is my thing,” she says.

“I want to help people with the knowledge and experience that I have.” The beauty of this arrangement is that she can work from home.

IVCG’s updated technology now allows for more tasks to be completed by volunteers online as they make or answer calls from anywhere anytime.

For years Sherrie was a paid employee and volunteer instructor at the Red Cross.

Her deep experience in customer service and case work included volunteering with Blue Star Mothers of America, a nonprofit that provides support for active duty service personnel and Veterans organizations.

In the fall of 2022 and again in November, she reached out and called people who were on the list for IVCG Thanksgiving meal deliveries.

Updating this information is an essential part of providing efficient service.

“I enjoy contacting people,” she says, and look forward to more opportunities to provide support to the community.

“I’m open to learning and helping. Whatever is needed. I’ve told everybody I know about Interfaith.”

## “I’m paying it forward”

In recent months, Paul Cuozzo has been a vital volunteer and we need more like him to step up to the plate.

After a successful career at Sikorsky Aircraft, Paul knew that he wanted to help others. “I have everything a person could want and I enjoy giving back,” he told Connections.

“I’m paying it forward. Somewhere down the road maybe I’ll need help.”

Working quietly and often in the “backroom”, Paul is a volunteer driver for Transportation Plus medical transportation, keeps an eye on the ride schedule, and has joined Interfaith’s rapid response team.



*Paul Cuozzo, volunteer driver and rapid response team member.*

They jump in and provide last-minute rides when other drivers aren’t available.

“A key feature of this work is that it’s strictly on your schedule. This would suit many retirees,” he said.

Paul also works on IVCG’s data entry system and works on updating our records.

“He’s incredible,” says Director Dan Camenga.

“His ideas during our brainstorming sessions together have been very helpful.”

# On Board

## Welcome Usha

Usha Pillai is our newest Board member and brings her passion and expertise in organizational strategy, business development, and management experience to our leadership team.

She has an acute awareness of the need to provide connection for many elderly people who are “left behind” and struggling to cope with technology or navigate the complex health care system in our much more electronic world.



*Usha Pillai is our newest Board member.*

“The concept of helping people to come together and find support as they age truly resonated with me,” she says.

Before joining the IVCG Board Usha attended several online sessions as listener.

“The diversity of thinking in those meetings was really exciting.”

Usha wants to help Interfaith Volunteers give more people over 60 a place to create and share with one another.

She is interested in strengthening community ties and “getting the younger generation to be part of it. They have a lot to give to each other.”

## Excited to help

Mike Lostritto joined the Board in September as a member of the finance committee. He’s a CPA with over ten years experience and runs his own tax practice.



*Michael Lostritto brings tax expertise to the Board.*

Michael says he’s “excited to help” IVCG in the years ahead. He sees the extraordinary need for care and support of our elderly neighbors and is “delighted to give back” to the community through our organization.

## A big thank you



*We thanked all our volunteers in October.*

## Reaching Out

Interfaith Volunteers has a new partner with Diapers For Dignity, our program that offers free adult incontinence products to registered recipients.

People who sign up to receive them can now pick up their monthly supplies at East Street Arts workshop and gifts showroom, 597 East Street, New Haven.

They’re open 9 am- 6 pm Monday-Friday and from 11 am- 4 pm on weekends.

Learn more: Call us at 475-257-6538 or visit our website [carenewhaven.org](http://carenewhaven.org).



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1253 Whitney Ave,  
HAMDEN CT  
06517

NONPROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE PAID  
NEW HAVEN CT  
PERMIT NO. 124

*Or current resident.*

**“You have not lived until you have  
done something for someone  
who can never repay you.”**

*John Bunyan*

You may have thought about volunteering but feel that you cannot offer any skills that would help. Give Dan a call and you'll be surprised how you can do something for someone who can never repay you.

**Phone: 475-257-6538 today**

**Email: [administration@carenewhaven.org](mailto:administration@carenewhaven.org)**

**Website: [carenewhaven.org](http://carenewhaven.org)**



**YEARS  
OF LOVE  
CARE &  
RIDES**