

INTERFAITH VOLUNTEER
CARE GIVERS of GREATER NEW HAVEN
WINTER 2020



WELCOME

Jane Ferrall, Executive Director

My Dear Friends,

Much as I'm tempted to try and write some grand summing-up letter for 2020, I'm afraid that words will continue to be insufficient to express what this year has brought and meant to all of us. All I can really do is reiterate that at IVCG, it has truly been our privilege to serve our community during this darkest of years. Service has provided us with a reason to get up in the morning and to keep going, and as difficult and stressful as that has been, we are also humbled and grateful.

I am primarily humbled by the generosity of spirit displayed by so many of our clients, volunteers and friends. Despite daunting conditions, volunteers old and new stepped up to support us in serving seniors in their own communities. The friendship, care and service provided by our volunteers has been exemplary. I am also impressed on a daily basis by our clients' fortitude in dealing with unprecedented conditions. The vast majority of our clients have resolved to remain cheery if not philosophical in meeting current challenges, truly proving that age does, in many cases, confer wisdom.

Interfaith Volunteers, as most of you know, has remained open during the entire course of the pandemic. I think that we will always be proud of that fact. Some, if not most, of our regular volunteers have had to transition, temporarily, to non-personal activities; while we appreciate so greatly those who have remained connected to us and our mission, we are also gratified that many new friends have joined us. In particular, we are pleased to welcome new drivers

Suleiman Barakat, Austin D'Addario, and Cochi Shavit, as well as new grocery shopping and delivery volunteers Joanne Jan, Reena Judd, Kelly Li, Faith Lundt, Vin Mascola, Jennifer Tucker, and Burt Westermeier.

Although it's hard in the face of so much loss, it's also helpful to think about some of the positive changes that came in 2020. For me personally, because my husband is no longer commuting daily to Manhattan, I've been able to relocate to Hamden and now have a 5 minute commute (by bike!). It feels as if more and more people in Greater New Haven are becoming aware of IVCG and what we do, and especially of the value that we bring to our community. And although none of us would ever feel "grateful" for the past year, the pandemic has certainly brought a renewed focus on the needs and concerns of seniors, and has motivated many to provide protection and care. I don't know what my 2021 letter to you will say but hopefully the word "normal" will feature prominently. Until then, be safe and be well.

TABLE of CONTENTS

Winter 2020

2	IS A VACCINE IN YOUR FUTURE?
3	THANKSGIVING MEAL DELIVERY RECAP; NEW GROCERY BAG DELIVERY PROGRAM
4	A THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS
5	TRIBUTES; OFF TO GRANDMA'S HOUSE I GO BY MARY COMFORT

IS A VACCINE IN YOUR FUTURE?

Operating as we do where seniors, healthcare, and transportation come together, the question of how IVCG will support the national vaccination effort is much on our minds. We are acutely aware that, for almost all our clients, life has no hope of returning to normal unless or until vaccination against the COVID-19 virus becomes widespread if not universal.

With that understanding, we are pledged to doing everything within our power to support our clients in obtaining their vaccinations as quickly as possible. Most of our clients will fall into Connecticut's Phase "1b," which covers people with serious health conditions (the "high risk" category) and all people over the age of 65 or perhaps 75. As most are aware, complete vaccination will require two doses spaced "a few" weeks apart. From what we can tell at present, the State of Connecticut anticipates that at least some vaccinations will be administered via drive-throughs, similar to the way some COVID testing has been done. At present, it appears that the very earliest our clients might expect to be vaccinated will be mid-January, although this may be delayed by supply shortages and other logistical hiccups.

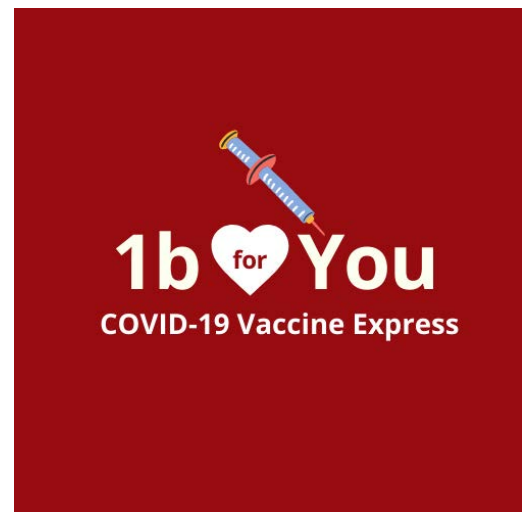
In thinking about how we might help, several issues immediately present themselves. First, we don't know how clients will sign up or register to obtain the vaccine. If vaccine appointment scheduling is organized electronically or via a cell phone app, how will that work for the approximately 65% of our clients who have no internet access or smart phones? How will our clients pick the best location for them and make sure they get both doses in a timely manner? How will our clients travel to and from the vaccination site? Will IVCG provide rides? Will we be able to continue our "regular" medical transport program during an all-out vaccination effort?

Depending on the answers to the above questions, it might make the most sense for IVCG to provide not only physical transportation, but a "virtual volunteer" to help with the registration process. Fortunately, as we saw from the friendly calling program earlier in 2020, there is no shortage of people willing to step up and help from home. Of course, any such volunteers will be background checked, screened, and trained so that we can ensure we are providing competent, trustworthy help.

We cannot know at present what this all means, specifically, in terms of the details and the exact way in which we'll implement this program. We pledge to communicate with everyone just as soon as things become clear and we are able to organize and deploy our resources as effectively as possible.

Special note to volunteers: even if you aren't a regular driver with IVCG, I think you'll want to step up to be part of this effort. Or if you know anybody looking for the chance to make a difference – if now isn't the time, when will it be?

Making sure our seniors can be vaccinated against COVID-19 is truly a historic opportunity for IVCG, perhaps the greatest in our 36 years of community service. When the time comes, we will be there for you, and that's a promise!



3 | CONNECTIONS

WE ARE THANKFUL!

A THANKSGIVING MEAL DELIVERY RECAP

As most of our regular readers know, for decades, Interfaith has coordinated a meal delivery program that has covered almost the whole of New Haven County. This program started when we learned that Meals on Wheels did not deliver on Thanksgiving Day, and IVCG (together with our food partners) decided to step up and make sure homebound seniors and the disabled received a home-delivered meal on this traditional family day. Under the leadership of Kate Walton, the program expanded to many multiples of its original size of 75 dinners, reaching an eventual 1500+ meals delivered in 2019.

This year, we worried that health and volunteer concerns would doom the program. Incredibly, Yale Hospitality came forward and volunteered to produce tasty meals for delivery when we were not able to use the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen facilities as we had in previous years. Because timing and resources were short, we decided to

NEW GROCERY BAG DELIVERY PROGRAM

The COVID-19 pandemic has been extraordinarily challenging to direct service providers such as IVCG, but one bright spot has been our new grocery delivery program. Every Saturday morning, Interfaith volunteers appear at St. Paul & St. James Church in Wooster Square to pick up bags of groceries that they then personally deliver. One of the nicest aspects of the program is working with the great folks at Loaves & Fishes, another small New Haven non-profit that does a lot with a little.

Each person receives two grocery bags, which contain so much more than canned goods. On a typical Saturday, one bag has fresh vegetables, including root vegetables, leafy greens, squash, brussel sprouts, and onions; fresh fruit, such as apples, pears, bananas; bakery breads from Chabaso; eggs; half & half or milk; and cheese sticks. The other bag has an assortment of soup, canned fruit, rice, juice, tuna or canned chicken and, if available, frozen meats such as poultry, hamburger, or steak. This is all thanks to the ingenuity of Loaves & Fishes in sourcing food from

deliver only to folks who live in the City of New Haven and were referred to us by the Department of Elderly Services. Even as it was, we received close to 500 names. Thankfully, our call for driver volunteers was so successful that we had to turn prospective volunteers away! Almost 40 people stepped up to deliver meals – again, a remarkable development in such an extraordinary year.

When Thanksgiving finally arrived, the morning dawned with torrential, pounding rain. What else would 2020 bring? But with cheery and positive attitudes, we dispatched all the meals in record time from a tent outside DESK's downtown kitchen on Temple Street.

Our traditional partner, the New Haven Athletic Club, supplied not only additional food and drivers, but also brought supplemental meals to the "dine-in" guests who came for lunch. Altogether it was a much more successful and upbeat operation than I had envisioned. And, best of all, we will be back next year, working out of DESK's brand-new location on State Street!

a variety of providers, including area markets, restaurants, and pantries.

But wait, there's more! We've recently started working with The Connecticut Diaper Bank to deliver free adult continence products together with the groceries to clients who request them. It's been wonderful to combine our efforts with local non-profits and, in doing so, reach new clients in need.

Grocery Bag is conducted under the auspices of the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, and is income-limited. Every week, AOA provides us with a list of grocery recipients, so if you'd like to see if you qualify, please call AOA at 203-785-8533 and leave a message for Tom Davis, who is in charge of the program.

We will be delivering with Grocery Bag at least through August of 2021 and hope this successful program can continue for years to come. We thank our terrific volunteers and are happy to serve our community in this new way.

4 | CONNECTIONS

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

While the pandemic has brought more media focus and funding to senior issues, its exigencies have increased our costs as well. Many town and other senior ride services have not yet returned to full operation, and while we appreciate the trust and confidence they display by referring clients to us, the past year has brought us more new clients with greater needs at a time when we are less equipped to serve them. Since so many of our regular volunteers are continuing to shelter in place, we have had to hire additional part-time staff in order to maintain even a basic level of ridership; our "PPE" costs have increased dramatically; and we are providing more reimbursements for gas than in previous years in order to encourage younger drivers to step up.

This is why we are so genuinely appreciative of all of the donations, great and small, that our clients, volunteers, and friends have sent our way. As you know, IVCG is a true, grass-roots, bare-bones operation. When you donate to IVCG, you can be confident that we make the absolute most of every single penny. We don't pay for fancy marketing or external consulting; instead, we devote everything to providing as much service as we can to as many seniors as we can. And while financial donations are wonderful, we also acknowledge all the prayers, good wishes and intentions that you send our way. Even a friendly word or a sincere "thank you, God bless you" goes a long way.

Thank you to the following friends who have donated in the fourth quarter of 2020:

Carmela Argentino
Jody Basilicato
Paula Biondello
Vilma Capozzi
Marie Carangelo
Virginia Chamblin
Edwina Collins-Vaughn
Rafaela Coppola
Diane R. Corrone
Richard Davies
Joan Delmonico
Jane Faitella
Frances Farrell
Louise FitzSimons
Patricia Franco
Mabel French
Helen Graham
Misty Guzman
Robert E. Handschumacher
Kathy Highman
Sandra Hilton
Rhea Hirshman
Mildred Hopkins
Sylvia Horowitz
Rose Ann Iassogna

Fran Ifkovic
Fannie Jackson
Alva Jeffreys
Irene Jenkins
Elizabeth Johnson
Ernestine Johnson
Christine L. Jonientz
Mary Louise Keegan
Beverly Kidder
Joan Kroll
Maureen C. Landry
Theresa J. Langley
Lorraine LaTerza
Carol B. LeSuer
Augusta Mantia
Roseann Maresca
Laverne McKenzie
Clara Mei
Carol F. Mitchell
Marie Natalino
Sharon O'Neill
Paula Panzarella
Delores Paul
Madeleine Paul
Rebecca Pender

Robert Petersen
Marie Picarello
Catherine Piper
Fred Quartiano
Gary Rappaport
Jaclyn Rosetti
Anna Rubino
Lorraine Salerno
Paula Samuel
Gregory M. Seaman
Kevin Sellner
Nicholas Sepesko
Joseph E. Shapiro
Elaine Silverman
Gordon Smith
Rosemary Spring
Peter D. Stolzman
Sally Stopka
Gloria Jean Testa
Sheila Thomas
Linda M. Towbin
Shirley Vitale
Patricia Wallace
Carolyn Young

Community Partners

Dunbar United Church

Immanuel Missionary Baptist Church

The Spring Glen Church

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

TRIBUTES

Giving is a wonderful way to honor the memory or the contributions of a special person in your life. We would like to recognize the following donors who gave this quarter in memory or in honor of a loved one:

Eileen Keefe, *in memory of James Fitzgerald*

John O'Donovan, *in memory of James Fitzgerald*

Karla Perlman, *in honor of Art and Ann Yost*

Mary Jane Waddington, *in memory of our beloved volunteer Jane Caldwell*

Regency Meadows of North Haven, *in memory of our beloved volunteer Jane Caldwell*

OFF TO GRANDMA'S HOUSE I GO:

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF GROWING UP IN NEW HAVEN

By Mary Comfort

When I was a young kid, we lived in the Hill Section of New Haven. Our neighbors were nice; just about everyone knew everyone else. My friends loved to gather at our house. We'd set up a stand and sell Kool Aid and lemonade. Then we'd gather on the big porch and go through my box of comic books, trading them back and forth.

Our church was Sacred Heart on Columbus Avenue, and after services I'd go to what was then called Six Corners. Sometimes I'd stop and buy a comic book or two at Vinny's, then cross the street and go to the Six Corner Bakery and buy one dozen hard rolls. They smelled so fresh! I'd stop home and drop off six rolls to my parents and then walk over to grandma's and give her the other six. Then grandma and grandpa would sit down and we'd have tea and our buttered roll.

I always looked forward to going with grandma to downtown New Haven to pay bills. It was always an adventure, stopping along the way for grandma to chat with the folks she met. I especially loved it when I got a treat; she'd get me a freshly popped bag of popcorn or a small bag of candy that was scooped up, weighed, and put in a little bag. After the bills were paid, sometimes we'd stop at Pegnataro's Market for an item or two and then head home. Grandma and grandpa took turns taking me to Clark Dairy, next to the A & P.

Grandma would always take the time to read to me, and we would talk about the story she'd just read. It seemed like grandma was forever wrapping a package and tying it with string. She'd bring it to the post office and mail it to the relatives over in Ireland. Sometimes it was a few dresses, sometimes a coat, or different things.

I remember many times I'd be sitting on the porch, and people would stop at the fence and talk to grandma. There was a lovely lady who lived diagonally across from her who had a big beautiful garden and always brought things like cucumbers, tomatoes, and lettuce to grandma. For a special treat, she'd bring jars of her homemade grape jelly.

I never knew what would happen when I visited grandma and grandpa. They were my angels, but if I acted up, grandma would say, in her Irish brogue, "ya little divil!" Grandma always took the time to explain to me what I had done wrong, so I could understand and do better the next time.

My grandparents were such a special part of my childhood and I was lucky to have them in my life.

Would you like to write a recollection of your earlier years and see it published here? We love our guest writers! Call or email Jane at jferrall@carenewhaven.org with questions or submissions.

INTERFAITH VOLUNTEER CARE GIVERS

of GREATER NEW HAVEN

30 Gillies Rd

Hamden CT 06517-2113

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

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

For your New Year's resolution...

Give the Gift of a Lift...

In your community!

Volunteer with Interfaith in 2021