

# MEALS ON WHEELS DIABLO REGION

## Evolution and Impact

### FIFTY YEARS OF EMPOWERING SENIORS—PROVIDING MORE THAN A MEAL

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region has been serving the needs of Contra Costa seniors for over 50 years. Starting in 1968 as a meal delivery service, the organization has evolved, adding programs to address the full range of seniors' most pressing life issues. In 1971, the Friendly Visitors program was established to help fight senior isolation. A year later, C.C. Cafés opened, providing lunches and companionship at six senior center locations. The Home Care Registry was created in 1975 to provide respite care and training for low-income older adults and their caregivers.

Over the next two decades, as the population continued to increase, these programs grew and became more established. In 1996, we created a Care Management team to address the special issues of low-income seniors. This vital safety net focused on mental health, nutrition, mobility, housing, and companionship—areas often overlooked by society. We launched the Fall Prevention program in 2008 as a county-wide coalition to address this frequently fatal epidemic.

### WHERE WE ARE TODAY— COORDINATED CARE

To create a holistic approach, we adopted a Coordinated Care model in 2014. This model provides for a seamless blend of services tailored to each individual. We assess the client's current situation and then provide links to a broad network of support services from nutrition to social interaction to fall prevention to respite care. We recently added Elder Abuse Prevention outreach and training services. This comprehensive, integrated, and personal approach has built our reputation in the County as the provider-of-choice to connect seniors with critical services like food, housing, and emergency care.

### A NEW NAME—OUR EXPANDED ROLE

Though our organization is 50 years old, it's not the same as it once was. We have expanded and created a new model to effectively meet the changing needs of the population. Meals on Wheels covers more ground now, both geographically and in terms of services. We chose a name that reflects this new identity and yet retains the powerful recognition that the Meals on Wheels brand provides. We also want to remain

closely aligned with the national senior advocacy movement. By keeping the Meals on Wheels name and speaking in one, unified voice, we amplify the effects.

We adopted the geographic descriptor "Diablo Region" to reflect our broader focus in the county. To further signal our transformation, we've adopted a new look, created a new web site, and developed new materials. Coordinated Care and coordinated efforts continue to be the common threads that bind us locally and nationally. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is more than a meal. And together, we can deliver.



### OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE— STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

As the aging population grows, Meals on Wheels Diablo Region will continue to create collaborative partnerships. Most of the challenges that seniors face—isolation, loneliness, falling, poor nutrition and lack of social supports—are, fundamentally, health issues. The financial and societal costs of not addressing the social determinants of health are enormous. Acknowledging the direct health impact of a safe living environment provides an opportunity for us to team up with healthcare providers, schools and universities, elected officials, and other community-based organizations. It also allows us to connect health outcomes to home-based services including home-delivered meals, fall prevention, and visits by our social workers. Understanding the effects those services have on seniors' physical and mental health will enable us to develop new services to address the changing needs of low-income, older adults living in Contra Costa County. Expanding services for the thousands of low-income older adults living in Far East Contra Costa County remains a key focus for us. Uncertain government priorities, the aging population, and the changing healthcare landscape require Meals on Wheels Diablo Region to remain strong, innovative, and collaborative. We will continue to collaborate and develop new and creative ways to further enable seniors to live independently and with dignity in their homes for as long as possible.

# OUR IMPACT—HOW MEALS ON WHEELS DIABLO REGION AFFECTS PEOPLE'S LIVES

## THE ISSUE

In the United States, 1 in 6 seniors struggles with hunger and close to 13% are living in or near poverty. The population of older adults is expected to double by 2030. This problem is mirrored in our community. Contra Costa County has more than 240,000 seniors (60 or older) comprising 21% of the population. Too many of our older adults are hungry, isolated, and struggling to stay independent and healthy.

In Contra Costa County:

- 81,080 are isolated, living alone
- 37,211 are threatened by hunger
- 29,037 are living in or near poverty

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region delivers the support that keeps seniors in their own homes, where they want to be.

83%

SAY MEALS ON WHEELS  
IMPROVES THEIR HEALTH.

87%

SAY IT MAKES THEM FEEL  
MORE SAFE AND SECURE.

92%

SAY IT ENABLES THEM TO REMAIN  
LIVING AT HOME.

Seniors remaining in their own homes, out of hospitals and nursing homes, saves millions in Medicare and Medicaid costs.

- Meals on Wheels Diablo Region decreases the rate of falls among seniors, which cost our county \$100 million each year.
- Meals on Wheels Diablo Region can provide meals for 1 year for a senior for about the same cost as 1 day in a hospital.
- Investing in the preventive care that Meals on Wheels Diablo Region provides is a win-win for our seniors, our families, and our community.



My favorite thing about volunteering is feeling needed—like I have some reason to exist... I don't know who gets more out of it—me or the person I'm visiting.

**GRACE**, a volunteer with the Friendly Visitors program, connects with her new friend every week, sharing stories, gardening tips, and catching up on the news.

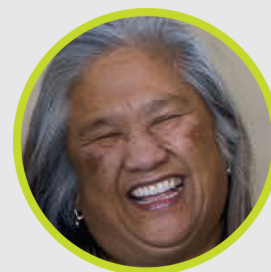
Success includes the 1,500 volunteers working together to deliver services. And for many, the simple act of volunteering a few hours a week keeps them healthy and active.



This is like a whole new life for me. All of this—the things I have gotten—I never knew they were possible. You guys (MOWDR) are heroes to me!

**ARTHUR**, a Coordinated Care Management client and veteran.

Veterans like Arthur are among the hundreds of clients who benefit from the Coordinated Care model, including strategic partnerships with outside organizations. Coordinated Care Management allows us to seamlessly assess and refer clients to multiple services, leading to stability and improved health.



I am relieved each day when his low sodium meal is delivered. I don't know what I would do without Meals on Wheels.

**ANITA**, a Meals on Wheels client, referring to her husband Fernando who suffered a stroke resulting in paralysis and 40% loss of his brain capacity.

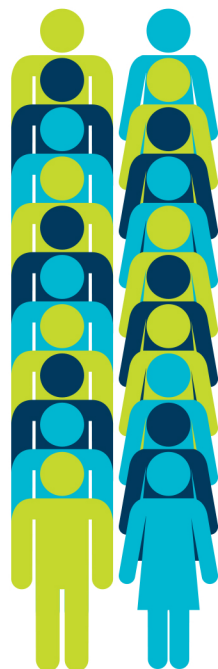
Along with hot meals served to over 950 people each weekday both at home and in Café settings, each client is met with a smile and a “wellness” check to make sure both their physical and mental health needs are being met. Often, the volunteer at the door is the only person clients speak with during the day.



## HOW WE CHANGE THE LIVES OF SENIORS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Every day Meals on Wheels Diablo Region provides the support that allows Contra Costa County's most vulnerable older adults to remain healthy and independent. Close to 10,000 people a year call us looking for help. For all of our clients, our trained staff makes a holistic assessment of their life needs and connects them with a network of support services; these range from nutrition to social interaction to fall prevention to health and wellness activities.

We partner with public and private agencies to provide solutions that keep the best interests of our senior population at heart. We enjoy close ties to key community organizations such as John Muir/Mt. Diablo Community Health Fund, the Contra Costa County Area Agency on Aging (AAA), and the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation. Working with these organizations, we leverage funding to serve seniors who have the most need and fewest resources.



6,000

SENIORS BENEFIT FROM ONE OR MORE OF OUR SERVICES



11,440

FRIENDLY VISITOR VISITS PER YEAR



I've been grateful for many things in my life and meeting Kelly is at the top of the list. The Friendly Visitors program has been a life saver for me.

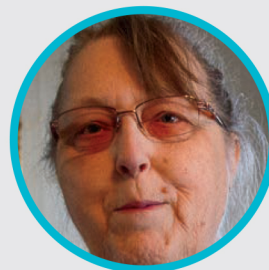
**ANNE**, a Friendly Visitors client, suffers from macular degeneration and had to learn how to live with limited eye sight. Kelly, blind from birth, befriended Anne and taught her how to live a full life, including "riding the rails" on BART and how to use an iPad.

Socialization saves lives as it greatly reduces the risk of depression, a key predictor of early death among the older population. Developing friendships not only improves the life of the nearly 300 clients we serve but it also gives the volunteers, often seniors themselves, a reason to get up, dressed, and out of the house. Everyone wins!



I am extremely grateful for the Care Management team and everything they have done for me.

**CHUCK**, a Care Management Team client, is a former astronomer and builder of telescopes at the Chabot Space and Science Center and Formula One race cars. At 75, Chuck found himself with major health issues and not enough resources. He was at a loss and needed a hand up. Chuck is an example of clients, who as age and illnesses take their toll, find themselves with few resources or options. Stepping in, we can help locate suitable housing, meals, exercise programs, fall prevention home modifications, minor home repairs, legal assistance, and other basic needs.



I am so grateful for your help. I no longer fall in my home and I am not afraid of falling when I walk outside.

**JEAN** is among the hundreds of clients who began falling due to multiple health challenges.

Improving strength, balance, mobility, and making a few home improvements allows hundreds of at-risk seniors to remain safely in their homes. The personalized strength-building exercise regimen reduces falls, the risk of falls, and the fear of falling. The result is clients live longer, happier, and safer lives.

# ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OLDER ADULTS IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY



## **MEALS on WHEELS** **DIABLO REGION**

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