



Special DELIVERY

NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2022



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Spring is a time of beauty that brings a promise of hope and renewal. At Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, we look forward to the coming months. On June 18th we will host the Dining to Deliver Gala at Round Hill Country Club to help us meet the demand for meals and supportive services for the vulnerable seniors we serve. This event will be a chance to celebrate our staff and volunteers who delivered meals in trying times, our donors who made it possible, and our clients, whose smiling faces confirmed our commitment to keeping them healthy, safe, and living with dignity.

Over the past two years it seems everyone has all taken two steps forward and one step back, but we are cautiously optimistic that the worst days are behind us. The pandemic, unfortunately, has had a lasting effect on elders in our community. Isolation was a constant in their lives, and many struggled with depression and anxiety. The increased number of seniors who need home delivered meals demonstrated just how severe food insecurity is for older adults. Additionally, being isolated at home made once-active seniors less mobile and contributed to more falls. We have found creative ways to help elders receive extra nutrition, fall prevention services, care management, friendly calls, and online and outdoor exercise classes.

This addition of Special Delivery will highlight programs that continue to assist our seniors. It also highlights the people who helped us fulfill our mission – people like you who we depend on every day, because our elders depend on us!

Caitlin Sly
Executive Director

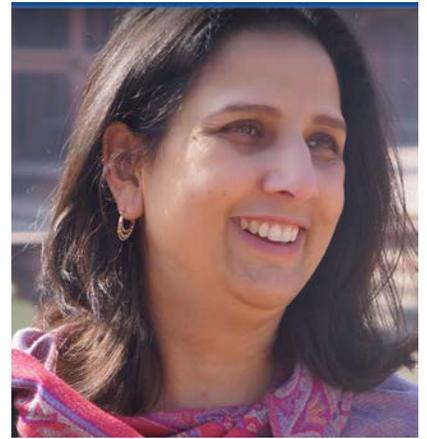
POONAM KHIYARA JOINS LEADERSHIP TEAM

Poonam Khiyara has been promoted to Nutrition Services Division Manager, with the retirement of Nancy Ranieri. Poonam has the skillset needed to lead this important team having previously served as Nutrition Services Assistant Division Manager.

In addition to her knowledge, Poonam also brings passion and commitment to her new role. “The pandemic has created a tremendous need to do more for our seniors, as they have become more isolated and susceptible to physical and mental hardships,” says Poonam. “I’m committed to ensuring seniors are not forgotten and we can deliver the meals and connections to volunteers they need.”

Poonam started her nonprofit career in 2016 when she decided to volunteer with the Meals on Wheels in the tri-valley. She soon accepted a position as Program Coordinator, and in 2018 she joined Meals on Wheels Diablo Region as Data Coordinator in Nutrition Services.

Before working in the nonprofit sector, Poonam was an Interactive Media Manager serving clients in the consumer and technology industries.



HOW THIS GOLDEN GIRL WAS HELPED

When she was young, Jeanette was an athlete who figure skated in ice shows, but over the years, getting around became difficult, and cooking was a challenge. Jeanette knew she needed help but didn’t know where to turn. One day she was watching the television show Golden Girls and one of the “girls” was delivering meals on wheels. A lightbulb went off and Jeanette realized this was exactly the help she needed. “I had no idea about the wonders of meals on wheels,” says Jeanette. “I was so thankful when Meals on Wheels Diablo Region delivered that first meal and every meal after.”

At 81 years old, Jeanette is outgoing and vivacious, so it was no surprise that she bonded with the volunteers who delivered her meals. She couldn’t believe that someone outside her family was thinking about her. “The volunteers were so kind. They were all perfect people, always asking how I was doing. They even gave me an earthquake bag, which I truly appreciated.”

Sadly, Jeanette had a bad fall getting out of her daughter’s car, and she couldn’t remain in her own home. She moved to a residential community that provides her meals, but she missed the friendship of the volunteers, so she reached out



to MOW Diablo Region to be matched with a Friendly Caller. On Tuesday, she has a phone call with Mary and on Thursday she talks to Sally, both Friendly Caller volunteers. “We talk our ears off. Having my Friendly Callers makes all the difference to me. I can’t imagine what my life would be if I hadn’t had the meals and then the Friendly Callers. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region filled a huge void in my life.”

This story is in memory of Jeanette who passed away on March 5th.



NO LAUGHING MATTER

People often joke about the commercial, “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up” but for seniors, falls are no laughing matter. They are the leading cause of death due to injuries in older adults and most falls can be prevented. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is the only meals on wheels in the county with a Fall Prevention Program.

Working to make the home safer, the Fall Prevention Program provides Occupational Therapists who conduct a fall-risk assessment in the home. Based on their recommendations, our licensed contractors go into the home and make safety modifications, such as grab bars and shower chairs. All this is done free of charge.

According to Michele Alba, Fall Prevention Program Manager, other steps to prevent falls can be more difficult. “One of the

biggest obstacles to preventing falls is changing behavior. When people experience balance problems, they become fearful of having a fall and end up limiting their activity, which results in poorer mobility and increased isolation. The fear itself becomes a major contributing factor to falls.”

The Fall Prevention Program offers an 8-week class called, “A Matter of Balance,” led by volunteer coaches, trained in the course curriculum by a Master Trainer. MOW Diablo Region is one of the few meals on wheels in the country to participate in this national evidence-based program. “A Matter of Balance” provides seniors with exercises and education on how the fear of falling contributes to fall risk behavior. Participants learn useful strategies to reduce risks while they are learning how to rethink their views on falls.

“What is unique about us is that some organizations give people information about available resources in the community, but we are the resource,” says Alba.

MOW Diablo Region has offered “A Matter of Balance” for eight years and has been proven to prevent falls by keeping seniors more active and healthier. It also eases the concerns of adult children who worry about their parent’s safety, like Seble who told us: “I am grateful for the support Meals on Wheels Diablo Region’s Fall Prevention Program provides. I don’t worry about my father falling anymore.”

DINING TO DELIVER

It’s time to change out of your sweatpants, put on your dancing shoes, and have some fun while you support seniors in need. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is hosting the Dining to Deliver Gala on Saturday evening, June 18th at the Round Hill Country Club in Alamo.

This Roaring Twenties-themed event will feature dinner, dancing to a big band, and silent and live auctions. Proceeds will help MOW Diablo Region continue to deliver healthy meals and supportive services to elders who are food insecure, isolated, and are experiencing safety and other challenges.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor or if you’d like to purchase tickets contact Shanti Peterson at speterson@mowdr.org or visit our website at mowdiablregion.org/upcoming-events.





MEALS on WHEELS
DIABLO REGION

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EXERCISE OUTSIDE YEAR ROUND

Spring is here and our Health and Wellness team has some tips on how to safely exercise outdoors.

- It is important to stretch or walk in place to prepare and restore your muscles before and after a workout.
- You should wear layers of loose clothing to trap warm air in cold weather that you can easily remove in hot weather as your body warms up.
- Be on the lookout for the warning signs of hypothermia and heat stroke.
- Drinking plenty of water is always important, but it is especially so while exercising outdoors.
- Steer clear of slippery pavement, uneven surfaces, and any possible traffic hazards.
- Consider others around you, and either exercise during the day or in well-lit areas at night.
- For added security, ask someone to join you when you exercise or join a group, like our Health and Wellness group classes. Learn more about them at mowdiabloregion.org/health-wellness-classes.

