



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

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

*Delivering at a time of crisis*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAITLIN SLY



When I accepted the position of Executive Director at Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, I knew I was joining a mission-driven organization with a history of excellence. I also knew that, as with any job, I would face challenges. I knew we would have to grow to meet the increasing needs of an

aging population. We had systems we wanted to improve, gaps in services that we wanted to fulfill, and we needed to increase our volunteer capacity. We knew we needed to do all these things and more in order to accomplish our goals.

A month after I started with these ambitious goals, Covid-19 hit. Thanks to the creativity of an amazing staff, we changed our programs and developed new systems of meal delivery to accommodate a 40% increase in clients. We found new ways to provide our wraparound services. New programs, that we hoped to start in a deliberate way, had to be rolled out quickly. We were able to do this with the support of individual and foundation donors whose generosity helped cover the unforeseen costs of personal protective equipment, hiring new staff, and funding new programs. The community stepped in as well, with

donations of needed items for our seniors and a willingness to sign up to volunteer.

Prior to joining this organization, I had observed MOW Diablo Region's work as an outsider and was always impressed. Since becoming the Executive Director, I see that we have an incredible staff dedicated to our clients and our mission. No matter the challenge or the crisis, they never step away from meeting the needs. I've also seen an army of volunteers who are committed to making sure clients receive meal deliveries, a friendly wave, a caring phone call, and a needed laugh. I've also had the good fortune of having the support of a committed Board of Directors. Many of them are new to the organization as well, but they have worked hard to lead us through these uncertain times.

We have been through so much since March. This Annual Report provides a snapshot of fiscal year 2019-2020 and what we accomplished pre-Covid-19 and since. I hope when you read it, you will feel as positive as I do about Meals on Wheels Diablo Region and the people who give their time every day to make sure seniors in our community can live independently with dignity as long as possible.

## OUR MISSION

We enhance the lives of older adults who have a full range of needs by providing coordinated care, enabling them to live independently and with dignity for as long as possible.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melissa Wedel, CHAIRPERSON

Timothy Argenti, VICE CHAIRPERSON

Kerry Inserra, SECRETARY

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Sharon Quesada Jenkins

Britt Strottman

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## KEEPING YOUNG BY KEEPING ACTIVE

Shirley's daughter smiled when she told her she wasn't going to let Shirley "get old" and her first step was showing Shirley how to navigate Zoom. At 77, Shirley agrees, she doesn't plan to "get old" either. She has always been an active person. She had an exciting job that allowed her to travel around the country and the world, and when she wasn't working, she was taking yoga and water aerobics classes. In 2014, she enrolled in MOW Diablo Region's Tai Chi classes offered at the San Pablo Senior Center. "I felt the difference in my body when I took the classes and it really helped with balance," says Shirley.

Shirley is one of over 500 seniors who have been part of MOW Diablo Region's exercise programs in the past year. "We focus on the whole person," says Cynthia Black, MOW Diablo Region Health & Wellness Division Manager. "The exercise classes help keep seniors active and healthy."

In March, classes were suspended, but Shirley is taking a MOW Diablo Region Bingocize® class now being offered over Zoom. And since Shirley's daughter taught her how to use the technology, she is exercising again thanks to MOW Diablo Region.

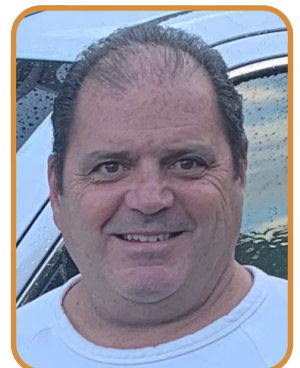


## CARRYING ON TRADITION

Dean Langston learned years ago that helping others runs in the family. He worked with his late father, and on Fridays, Dean tried to leave work early. One Friday, he learned his father had also been leaving work early every week as well, but he was leaving to deliver meals for Meals on Wheels Diablo Region. Dean didn't know his father was volunteering, but when his father passed away, he decided to honor his father by continuing the tradition.

For the past eight years, Dean has delivered meals and provided a human connection to many seniors. "The human interaction I provide as a volunteer is as important as the meals," he says. "I had one 80-year-old client who lost his wife. Every week, he cried in my arms. He gradually got better, and I think he just needed a hug and a shoulder to cry on to get him through."

Dean is also a longtime financial donor to MOW Diablo Region, giving both personally and encouraging a real estate marketing association he is a member of to support the agency. "I see firsthand how important the services are on so many levels," says Dean. "The need keeps growing and the services can only continue through the generosity of people in the community. That's why I support MOW Diablo Region. They provide such vital services to the elderly."



# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region has a long history of collaborating with community partners. The Covid-19 pandemic required us to create new partnerships to meet the needs of our clients, including the seniors sheltering-in-place who turned to us for meals and services.

## CITY OF CONCORD AND MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The City of Concord recognized that many of its elderly citizens would not be able to get access to food and groceries, prescriptions, or needed items. They created Concord Neighbor Express and turned to MOW Diablo Region to design the routes, recruit volunteers, and coordinate the logistics to deliver meals to Concord seniors. MOW Diablo Region partnered with Mt. Diablo Unified School District who prepared healthy, nutritious meals for Concord seniors. The City also partnered with MOW Diablo Region to develop a friendly helper program to run errands, pick up prescriptions, and grocery shop for older adults that were sheltering at home for their safety. “We were amazed at how quickly the partnership with the City of Concord and Mt. Diablo Unified School District came together,” says Caitlin Sly, Executive Director. “It was inspiring to see a city step up to meet the needs of their citizens during this difficult time.”



## COUNTY CONNECTION

In order to protect the health of both our clients and volunteers, we began delivering a week's worth of frozen meals in April to the seniors we serve rather than a hot meal every day. The size of the frozen meals delivered each week created a challenge for us because they didn't fit in our volunteers' cars. We found a solution by reaching out to the Contra Costa County Transportation Authority's County Connection bus service. Buses that were sitting idle began transporting volunteers and coolers filled with meals. Sixteen bus drivers volunteered, and as the months went on, they became an integral part of the team, recognizing clients on the route and stepping outside the bus at every stop to wave to them. “I feel good that I am able to help these elderly people,” said bus driver, Gonzalo Garcia. “We can't forget about them.”

## THE GROCERY BAG PROGRAM

Food insecurity is a serious problem for seniors in the best of times. It contributes to hunger, bad nutrition, and poor health. Because the problem became more pronounced with Covid-19, MOW Diablo Region partnered with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano to develop the Grocery Bag Program. Funded through a grant from the Crescent Porter Hale Foundation, this pilot program delivers healthy groceries and fresh produce twice a month to homebound seniors who can still prepare a meal but are unable to travel to the Food Bank. The program is being offered in Oakley, Brentwood, Martinez, and Concord.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

MOW Diablo Region understands the challenges we face serving vulnerable seniors, but fiscal year 2019-2020 truly tested us. Thanks to a dedicated staff and volunteers, we were able to meet every crisis. We found creative ways to provide services differently and we addressed service gaps by designing and implementing new programs.



## HOME DELIVERED MEALS & CAFÉS

When the power went out in the fall of 2019, the staff and volunteers (many who had lost power in their own homes) stepped forward to ensure that every client received a delivered meal and had batteries and other essentials so they could have a nutritious meal and remain safe at home.

When Covid-19 hit, our nutrition services staff faced unforeseen challenges. We saw a 40% increase in clients needing delivered meals, which required added routes, new partnerships, and revamped delivery methods. The cafés transitioned to providing meals for pick-up and delivery depending on the client's needs. Additionally, we recognized that one meal a day was not enough for many of our clients, so we created the Breakfast Bag Program, which delivered 1,325 nutritious breakfasts to clients in Brentwood.



## CARE MANAGEMENT

Care Management helps seniors with a number of issues such as depression, eviction, and elder abuse. Before March, services were provided to 638 seniors, but from March through June, Care Management saw an increase of approximately 70 more clients per month. Increasing numbers of seniors were experiencing greater anxiety because of isolation, transportation problems, and lost jobs. In that time, staff also had two suicide interventions. For the first two weeks of shelter-in-place, our hours of service were extended to 8:00 PM to meet the increased demand. Additionally, through a grant from United Way Bay Area, we purchased fans to help clients during the heatwave, as well as air purifiers. Tablets were also purchased to help clients stay connected to family, friends, and medical providers which helped reduce isolation, benefiting 136 clients.



## FALL PREVENTION

The Fall Prevention Program helps seniors lower their fall risk through education, evidence-based exercise, and home safety modifications to prevent falls in the home. In February, 24 seniors had completed A Matter of Balance classes, but in March, all other scheduled classes for Spring 2020 had to be cancelled. Our home safety modifications services were suspended between March and early June, while staff began developing new tools and protocols for safely assessing and serving clients in their homes. Staff continued to complete client surveys, phone intakes, and follow-ups with all referrals, and the new protocols were instituted allowing the program to resume full operation on June 20th.



## FRIENDLY VISITOR/FRIENDLY CALLER

From July 2019 through March 2020, over 200 clients received weekly visits from Friendly Visitors totaling 7,671 visits, and Friendly Callers made 3,513 calls. After March, Friendly Visitors transitioned to making calls which resulted in a total of 7,884 calls for the fiscal year. Seniors in Concord also received the help of Friendly Helpers who ran errands for them through a pilot program called Concord Neighbor Express.



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Prior to March, MOW Diablo Region provided an array of exercise classes and nutrition education. We had 501 seniors taking part in Bingocize®, Tai Chi, and Low Impact exercise classes. In March, all classes were suspended, but we continued to find ways to keep our seniors engaged by producing two YouTube videos on exercise and relaxation techniques.

# FINANCIALS

## REVENUE

**36%**  
Government

**2%**  
Investment + Other



**26%**  
Foundations +  
Corporations

**36%**  
Individuals

**\$3,402,787**  
Revenue

**\$2,856,830**  
Expenses

**\$545,957**  
Increase in Net Assets

**\$3,402,787**  
Total Operating Revenue

# PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

**93¢**  
of every dollar goes to  
providing services

**40%**  
increase in meals delivered  
due to Covid-19

**416,771**  
meals delivered

**7,671**  
Friendly Visits

**7,884**  
Friendly Calls

**124**  
homes modified



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

1300 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

*We'd also like to thank our individual donors for their generous support!*

## CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION DONORS

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[Able Auto Charity Donation Corporation](#)

Accident Fund Insurance Company of America

[Ace Home Health & Hospice](#)

Albertson's Foundation

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AssetMark

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Comfort Keepers

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Concord United Methodist Church

[Contra Costa County Information & Assistance](#)

Crescent Porter Hale Foundation

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East Bay Community Foundation

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May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust

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The Connection

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Touchpoint Foundation

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Walmart

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WestAmerica Bank