



# Special DELIVERY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2020



Dear Friends,

Since Covid-19, our newsletters have reported on everyday heroes who have helped us during these difficult months.

They are businesses who donated needed items for our staff and seniors, restaurants and bakeries who donated lunches and desserts to feed our very busy staff and volunteers. They are young people and neighbors in our community who understood the importance of caring for those who came before — our seniors. They made masks, helped with mailings and set up Facebook and GoFundMe fundraisers. Our donors and granting organizations were heroes, too. They helped us financially weather these uncharted waters.

To our vulnerable seniors the meals and the services we deliver are special, too. Our delivered meals prevent hunger and combined with our lifesaving services, we keep people safe and healthy at home with dignity. When we decided to give our monthly newsletter a new look and a name, we thought **Special Delivery** really summed up what we do and what the community helps us do — make special deliveries every day!

We hope you enjoy our September issue of Special Delivery. It is our way of highlighting all the heroes in our organization and in our community as well as vulnerable seniors who face challenges every day and appreciate the special deliveries of meals and services made possible thanks to all of you — our heroes!

Sincerely,

Caitlin Sly  
Executive Director

## MEALS ON WHEELS DIABLO REGION SURPRISES ISOLATED SENIORS WITH A VISIT FROM “TONY,” THE ARABIAN STALLION HORSE

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region partnered with Bright Future Farms of Walnut Creek to surprise isolated seniors with a special friendly visit — an Arabian Stallion horse named Tony.

Seniors who normally get meals delivered from MOW Diablo Region got to deliver a meal to Tony, letting him eat carrots and apples out of their hands. Tony’s visit also caught the attention of neighbors who came out in the street to pet and feed the horse. For seniors who have been mostly isolated since March, seeing the smiling faces of their neighbors, who made sure to socially distance, was an added treat! “It brought a bunch of joy to me and my neighbors,” said Letizia, a 94-year-old MOW Diablo Region client. “It really brought back so many memories of when my husband and I owned a horse barn.”

Carol DiMaggio of Bright Future Farms said, “We thought it would be fun to do something exotic for the seniors. So, we loaded up our pure breed Arabian



Stallion.” Bright Future Farms has been breeding Arabian horses in Walnut Creek for over 30 years. “We hope to do it again if the seniors enjoy it.”

Equine therapy offers benefits that can influence cognitive processes like memory and behavior. Research has shown that interaction with therapy animals can increase the positive communication between patient and caregiver. Such therapy has also proven to specifically help seniors who suffer from dementia.

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is thrilled to collaborate with Bright Future Farms, and we hope that we were able to brighten the spirits of isolated seniors who are vulnerable during this difficult time. For more information on how you can get involved or donate to Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, visit [www.mowdiablregion.org](http://www.mowdiablregion.org).

## BALANCING THE CHALLENGES OF CARING FOR AN AGING PARENT

### HOW ONE FAMILY DECIDED TO ASK FOR HELP

In January, Jen Holman and her brother Lorenzo Lujan received the call every child of an aging parent dreads. Their 74-year-old mother Karen had been rushed by ambulance to the hospital with breathing problems. Luckily, she spent only a week in the hospital, but Jen and Lorenzo had to make some decisions when they took her home. “After Mom was admitted, we decided she needed some help at home,” said Jen, who began preparing weekly meals. “I was stopping by multiple times a day to give her food and to check in on her.”

Lorenzo helped out, too, taking the night shift and sleeping over on a small cot inside her one-bedroom apartment. “We basically became full-time caregivers,” said Jen. “After my Mom retired, her health declined. It can be very sad to watch.” The added stress of providing full-time care was difficult for Jen and Lorenzo. Jen is a working mom who already has a lot on her plate — the extra responsibility of caring for her mother was more than she could bear. “The work/life balance, especially during COVID, can be very taxing.”

Jen and Lorenzo called Meals on Wheels Diablo Region. “I was connected to the awesome frontline workers. . . they sent someone to come do a fall prevention assessment at my mother’s home” says Jen. “It was wonderful! They added a ramp, railings, and even a shower chair.”

Next, they signed up for meal delivery. “The service has been amazing! It also helps with her social isolation getting to have some face-to-face time with the volunteers.”

Jen has also been impressed with the team at MOW Diablo Region calling to check up on her mother, as



part of the Friendly Callers program. This program has been especially important to clients during the pandemic. “They call her on the phone just to chat! It really helps keep her engaged and connected,” concludes Jen.

Jen and Lorenzo’s situation is not unique. According to Pew Research, there are 40.4 million unpaid caregivers of adults ages 65 and older in the United States. It takes a toll on adult children professionally, requiring them to spend work time making sure their elderly parent or parents are safe and healthy. It also impacts the adult children’s own families as they juggle the responsibilities of childcare and eldercare.

The services provided by MOW Diablo Region not only have a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable seniors, but they provide a needed support system to adult children. Jen and Lorenzo couldn’t be happier with their decision. “Calling Meals on Wheels Diablo Region was one of the best things we could have done. It really solved our problem! We don’t have to worry about our mom as much.”

## CHEVRON PEN PALS SEND WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Homebound seniors who already live in isolation have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. Many suffer from depression and loneliness. The simple act of mailing a letter with words of encouragement can make a world of difference in their lives. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is grateful for corporations like Chevron, whose employees volunteered to become pen pals to isolated seniors throughout the county. “It’s really important to spread



Chevron employee Paula Baldwin with twin daughters, Jessie and Sierra.

kindness during these trying times. We might not ever have an opportunity to bond like this again,” said Chevron employee Shirley Basch, one of a dozen employees who participated in the Chevron Pen Pal project. “I wrote to Jim, a 63-year-old who lives alone. It reminded me of my father who recently passed. I just want these seniors to know they aren’t alone.”

Other Chevron employees also were pleased to participate in the project, like Paula Baldwin who said, “I want to educate my daughters on how important it is to love and support our seniors.” Paula and twin daughters Jessie and Sierra wrote letters and colored pictures for their pen pals Lisa and Stephanie. Lisa, who is blind, had her caretaker write back to the Baldwin family. “She was so thankful for the letters and pictures. I think this pandemic and the current wildfires have been extremely hard on isolated seniors. We hope our letters assure them they are not alone during these difficult times.”

MOW Diablo Region wants to thank all the employees of Chevron who participated in the Pen Pal project. You brightened the day of so many of our vulnerable senior clients!



## BEATING THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

Over the past few weeks, we have not only experienced extremely hot summer temperatures, but poor air quality from wildfires. Both can take a toll on people's health, but especially our vulnerable senior neighbors, many who don't have air conditioning. Since starting the Fan Club, so many people in the community responded to donate portable fans that we distributed to our senior clients. United Way also came through with a generous donation of 24 air purifiers that helped seniors in the community breathe easier and cleaner! Donations for fans or air purifiers can be dropped off at 1300 Civic Dr in Walnut Creek any time between 9am and 4pm.

*Pictured: Lucy Sanchez and Charles Nettles are staying cool during the hot summer temperatures, thanks to donations of portable fans through our Fan Club.*



## NATIONAL FALL PREVENTION AWARENESS WEEK

Falls by the elderly are one of the leading causes of hospital and nursing home admissions, but falls can be prevented. September 21-25th is National Falls Prevention Awareness Week. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is the only MOW in the County that provides a fall prevention program. Our comprehensive program helps reduce preventable injuries that lead to loss of independence, significant healthcare costs, and deaths caused by falls. We focus on a combination of education and exercise, using programs endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Additionally, each year close to 200 seniors receive critical home safety improvements like grab bars, railings, shower chairs, and more.

Falls Prevention Awareness Week is a good time to learn more about MOW Diablo Region's Fall Prevention Program. Visit today at <https://www.mowdiableregion.org/fall-prevention>.

For additional tips on how to observe National Falls Prevention Awareness Week visit the National Council of Aging website at [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org).



*Hug Yourself!*

**YOU  
DESERVE  
IT!!**

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

We would like to say THANK YOU to all of you who generously donated to Meals on Wheels Diablo Region through the Travis Credit Union's Foundation's Community Funding Initiative. If you haven't donated yet, there's still time! **If you make a donation by September 30th to MOW Diablo Region through the Travis Credit Union Foundation's funding initiative, your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$20,000!**

Checks made out to TCUF can be sent to **P.O. Box 1086, Vacaville, CA 9587-9998**. Please remember to write Meals on Wheels Diablo Region in the memo! You can also **DONATE ONLINE** at <https://tcufund.org/ways-to-give/>.

Since the pandemic started, we have seen more than a 40% increase in clients needing delivered meals. Our Care Management team continues to reach out to isolated seniors, as more are dealing with depression and food insecurity during these unstable times.

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is a **non-county, independent nonprofit and the only Meals on Wheels that delivers both meals and services in the entire county!** Remember: *Diablo Region Delivers Reliably!!*