



Special DELIVERY

NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2021



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The holiday season is upon us. This year we will be with family and friends we couldn't share the holiday with last year. But many of the seniors we serve will be alone once again because of the pandemic.

The holidays demonstrate the challenges our vulnerable seniors face. It is an especially sad time for those who have outlived their spouse, siblings, friends, and sometimes even their children. Both their health and independence have declined, and their world is confined to a few rooms in their home. They look forward to the meals we deliver and the interactions they have with our volunteers, as well as our Friendly Visitors, Callers and Helpers. For some, they rely on our Care Management team to help them with depression and, sadly, sometimes even elder abuse.

In this edition of Special Delivery, you'll meet a couple who were volunteers and are now clients. You'll learn how MOW Diablo Region is the only meals on wheels organization in the region who has an elder abuse specialist on staff, and you'll meet a volunteer who gives back in so many ways to ensure we are able to continue our important work.

We wish all of you a joyous holiday season and a happy and healthy New Year. Your support allows us to continue to deliver meals and services that keep the seniors in our community healthy and at home with dignity. Thank you for making that possible!

Caitlin Sly
Executive Director

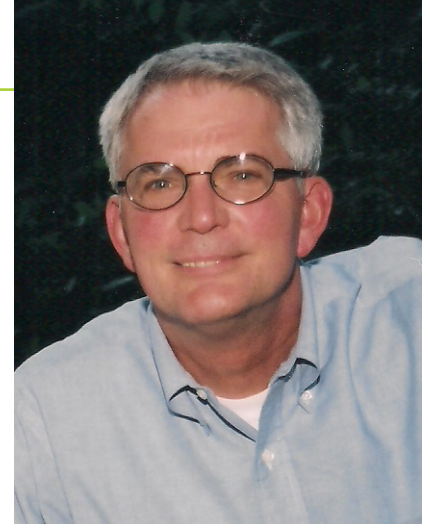
LESSON LEARNED

When Mark Powers retired in 2013, he was looking for a way to give back. Delivering for Meals on Wheels Diablo Region was not on his radar, but that changed when his mother Rita moved from the East Coast to live with him and his partner.

Rita started attending events at the senior center and Mark noticed how much she and her new friends really benefited from the socialization. “My mother loved going to the senior center and she always said the best part of it was lunch,” explains Mark.

Mark got involved with elder issues, even serving on the San Ramon Senior Advisory Committee. He also did research on MOW Diablo Region and could tell it was the right fit for him. Soon Mark had his own delivery route. “My mother instilled in us that we needed to do something good, help our neighbors,” says Mark. “Many seniors really need the delivered meal, and just that connection with them when I deliver means so much to them and helps prevent isolation. Delivering makes me feel like I’m doing something good.”

Mark also understood how seniors are often overlooked. In fact, only 2% of philanthropic dollars in the United States go to fund senior-serving organizations. In addition to volunteering, he decided he needed to make an even bigger impact and became a donor to MOW Diablo Region. “I know every dollar counts and when I deliver a meal, it’s rewarding to know that my donation helped feed a senior who needs the food and truly appreciates it,” says Mark. “I know this is something I should be doing, and I know my mother would agree!”



VOLUNTEERS BECOME CLIENTS

The heart of a volunteer is never measured in size but by the depth of commitment. Ernestine and Ken McColm are no strangers to a lifelong commitment, exemplified by their community service and their more than two-decade marriage.

After meeting at work and then marrying, the McColms settled in Crockett and shared a passion and desire to serve. In 2013, they started volunteering at the Crockett Community Center, where they would help serve meals for Meals on Wheels Diablo Region’s Café. “It’s a great way to connect with others and to strengthen your community,” says Ken. They enjoyed their experience and the new friends they made, and even stayed after serving lunch for a friendly game of cards.

The couple continued volunteering in Crockett for three years, and then were asked to volunteer at the Rodeo Café. They pitched in immediately and played a vital role in keeping the café running smoothly. “Ken would set up the tables, and I would help get the food ready to serve. Then we would serve the food together,” says Ernestine. “Doing good work alongside your loved one makes it even more rewarding.”



Today, at the age of 80 and 93, Ernestine and Ken still frequent the Rodeo Café, but now as café diners. After years of serving others, the McColms now get to sit back and have others serve them. “It feels odd sometimes. I feel like I need to be up helping,” says Ernestine.

They’ve been attending to the Rodeo Café for five years and, according to Ken, “The food and good friends is what keeps us coming back!”



PREVENTING ABUSE

We don't often think of the elderly as being victims of abuse, but studies show five million seniors experience some form of abuse every year. The abuse can be physical, emotional, financial, sexual, and/or exploitation. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is one of the few meals on wheels in the country that has an Elder Abuse Prevention Specialist on staff who works directly with clients and their families.

The program was started in 2017 to address an unmet need "We noticed that there weren't enough services in the county that responded to elder abuse," says Nick Weber, MOW Diablo Region's Elder Abuse Prevention Specialist.

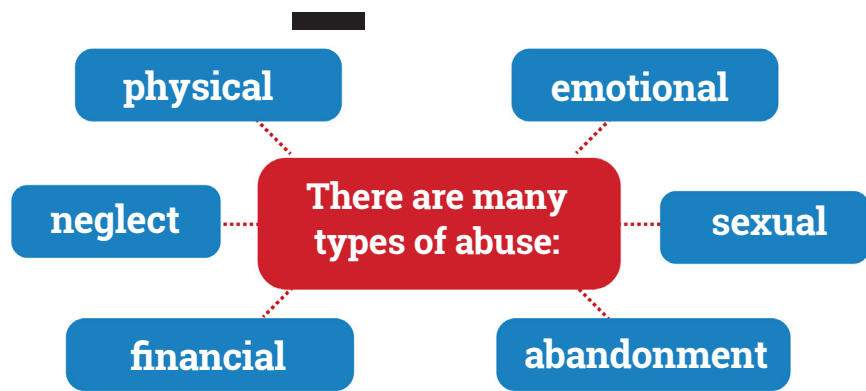
MOW Diablo Region collaborates with seven other community partners to coordinate services for elder abuse victims. "This joint effort allows multiple agencies, including Adult Protective Services, Contra Costa Senior Legal Services, the Family Justice Center, and others, to provide case management for vulnerable seniors," says Caitlin Sly, Executive Director of Meals on Wheels Diablo Region.

During the pandemic, MOW Diablo Region was concerned that many older adults were sheltering-in-place with relatives and in potentially abusive situations. The Elder Abuse Prevention Program is designed to help mitigate "stressors" that can lead to abuse. One recent case involved a client whose children were inflicting both emotional and financial abuse. The client needed medical care for herself and her husband, whose

health had deteriorated. "We found that there was built-up frustration in the family over money with the increased care of both the mother and father," says Weber. "The elderly couple were basically living in the red in terms of finances. It became clear they were sinking financially and needed assistance."

Weber formed a care plan to help the couple get back on track. He was able to cut their PG&E bill by 40% since the family qualified for services. He rescheduled the wife's doctor's appointments that she missed because she prioritized her husband's health over her own. The care plan also helped organize better transportation options and assisted with an application for senior housing. These steps helped the client and her husband, but also minimized the "stressors" the entire family was experiencing.

"Many seniors are homebound so they are hidden from sight," explains Executive Director, Sly. "At Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, we provide more than a meal to ensure that seniors remain healthy and safe and can stay at home with dignity. That is why the Elder Abuse Prevention Program is so important to all seniors living in our community."





MEALS ON WHEELS
DIABLO REGION

1300 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

MANY WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



During this season of giving, there are many ways to make sure that MOW Diablo Region can continue to deliver meals and services to seniors in our community. Here are some ways you can help:

- **Make a tribute or memorial gift.** We'll notify the recipient or family of your thoughtfulness.
- **Give through your Donor Advised Fund.** It's never been easier!
- **IRA Rollover.** If you're 70 ½ or older you can make a gift directly from your IRA and reduce your taxable income.
- **Give a gift of stock.** Contact Shanti Peterson at speterson@mowdr.org for transfer instructions.
- **Legacy Giving.** Naming us in your will helps our elders for years to come.
- **Vehicle donation.** It's easy to donate a car, truck, boat, RV, or ATV.
- **Matching gifts.** See if your employer matches your charitable donation – so many do, and it doubles your gift!