



NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2022

Changing lives, one meal at a time.

Winter Preparations: Bracing for the Chill

With the colder months upon us, older adults face increased risks to their health—not only slipping and falling on wet or icy ground but also overlooked threats of cold-related illnesses, including hypothermia.

With less body fat, slower metabolisms, and poor circulation, older adults can lose body heat much faster than when they were young. Every year, approximately half of all Americans who pass away due to hypothermia are over the age of 65.

Meals on Wheels People encourages checking in on your older loved ones and neighbors this winter. Keep in mind these tips to ensure safe, warm homes for aging adults:

Crank that Thermostat:

Many don't realize that older adults may even become hypothermic while indoors, which is why thermostats **should not** ever be set under 65 degrees for adults over the age of 75. If central heating is unreliable, place space heaters in frequented areas, but be sure to unplug them when they're not in use. Also, ensure cords are tucked out of the way, as they can be a major culprit for falls.

Hydrate:

Most people don't feel as thirsty when it's cold outside, which puts older adults at a greater risk for dehydration. While well-hydrated adults experience fewer falls, reduced risk of bladder cancer, and less constipation, those who don't drink enough water may suffer from slower wound healing, kidney failure, confusion, and urinary tract infections. Make sure your older neighbors and loved ones have access to and are keeping up with their H₂O intake.

Layers, Layers—and More Layers:

Even when staying in the house, older adults should be dressing in extra layers. This can look like throwing a blanket over their legs while sitting in place; wearing socks, slippers, and a hat or cap; and layering up with long underwear under pajamas before going to sleep.

Safety First:

The winter months come with safety hazards—not only in the form of improperly used, or placed, space heaters but also in terms of ice and snow outside doorways. Make sure that curtains are raised with enough clearance above radiators and other heat sources to avoid fire risks. Offer to shovel an older neighbor's porch,

de-ice their walkway, or place traction gripping on stairways.

These colder months serve as a timely reminder of the vulnerabilities aging adults face throughout the year with unexpected weather patterns, community illnesses, and more. Meals on Wheels People works diligently to plan for the unexpected and ensure our clients have a support system and access to critical resources in the event of any emergency—big or small.

We depend on volunteers to support social outreach programs to more than 7,000 clients. Consider volunteering your time to help support homebound older adults in our communities who are experiencing food insecurity and social isolation. You can sign up to make calls through our Wellness Checks and Friendly Chats programs, volunteer with our grant-funded Safe Home for Seniors Program—which provides services to keep older adults or individuals with disabilities living safely in their homes—and much more.

Learn more and get involved by visiting mowp.org/volunteer, or reach our volunteer coordinator at volunteer.coordinator@mowp.org.

From the CEO

Aging can be isolating. As we get older and begin to lose the friends and peers that made up our social circle, a sense of burden often falls on others in our lives, like children and caregivers, to keep us socially fulfilled. For many older adults, that isolation is intensified when living alone, especially through a pandemic. Reducing social isolation among older adults is a cause I feel passionate about, which contributed to our organization's efforts to create the Friendly Chats program over a year ago. However, creating the program was just a first step in fighting the isolation our older neighbors and loved ones face each day.

"I discover fascinating and fun information that not only entertains but teaches and inspires me."

That's why I feel personally compelled to do my part. Each week, I join hundreds of other volunteers—some are even current and past clients—and I make five or six calls to older adults in our program. Through a friendly chat, I learn and gain so much joy in getting to know so many wise, funny, and smart individuals. Sometimes the calls are just about the weather or how their pet is doing, but other times, I discover fascinating and fun information that not only entertains but teaches and inspires me. I once spoke to a woman in her 80's who was getting ready for Christmas. She was in the process of deciding which Santas she wanted to use to decorate her house that year. She shared about her large plastic molds, and small glass figurines, and everything in between. Her biggest concern that day was that she didn't think she could or would use all of the Santas because it was too much for her to manage—but picking the right ones to display was just as challenging. Through her whimsy description of her top choices, which ones were definite no's, and the few

she couldn't quite decide on, I learned that her choices were just as tough as she had described, as it turned out she had over 8,000 of them collected and stored in her garage! Let me just say that again—8,000 Santas of all colors, sizes, materials. I had to agree with her that – while very festive – 8,000 Santas would definitely qualify as "too much." By the time our conversation was finished, we had laughed so hard we cried, but she was able to whittle down some of her choices.

Not all calls are joyous and fun. Other times they can turn up serious issues that need immediate attention. I recently spoke to a gentleman who had no heat in his home other than two small space heaters that were barely able to heat up his bedroom. He was freezing, frustrated, and unsure where to get help, not for a lack of trying. I spoke to him for quite a while, gathering as much information as possible to provide any and all support possible to ensure he was staying warm and safe. When I got off the phone I called our program coordinator and explained the situation.



Through a follow-up call, we got him signed up for weatherization services, connected him to energy assistance, and enrolled him in our new Safe Home for Seniors Program, a new program providing light home repair and maintenance services to those we serve. I hate to think what might



have happened if we hadn't had that "friendly chat." This gentleman is now in a much better position to weather the next storm and make it through the winter safely.

My experience isn't unique. We have several hundred volunteers making Friendly Chats calls each week that is laughing, crying, learning, gaining, and helping some of our most vulnerable neighbors, friends, and family members. I often wonder what it would be like to feel so alone. As I age, I appreciate the hard work and dedication our team has to ensure our older community members are not forgotten, that they can live in their homes with dignity by giving them just a little support, healthy meals, and some friendly conversation. I encourage everyone I know to help us fight the social isolation of our older generations. I encourage you to help us fight too.

Be a friendly voice and change a life—it might just be your own.

— Suzanne Washington

Staying Connected Through Technology

As technology continues to be an integral part of how we communicate, its ever-changing form and function (e.g., updates, applications, and new gadgets) can be a barrier for many older adults and families, some living within the poverty line. These marginalized groups regularly lack access to technology and education on how to use the powerful tools at our disposal.

When the pandemic first began, many of the older adults and families we serve were pushed to rapidly adopt new tech applications and gadgets just to stay connected with family, friends, school teachers, healthcare providers, and others. However, with new technology comes many questions—some as simple as learning how to turn on a smartphone. We often heard from clients, “My phone is broken,” or “I don’t understand how to access these telehealth appointments.” In reality, phones weren’t broken, they primarily needed to be powered on and adequately charged. As Zoom became a fundamental connector between families, friends, doctors, patients, and

others, it also created many barriers to those who may not have a computer, internet access, or the necessary support to learn how to use it.



As the pandemic heads into its third year, we are doubling down on our mission to break down barriers to human connections and fight the social

isolation many homebound older adults and families living within the poverty line face each day. Through our Technical Support programming, we are providing opportunities for our clients that need technical support for smartphones, tablets, and other devices that will help them stay connected and live independently.

Looking further ahead, as we plan greater expansion, we hope to add even more support across the Portland metro area, as well as create opportunities for high school and college age students to volunteer their skills and teach the older generation, creating intergenerational connections along the way.

Stay tuned as we have more exciting news about our programs and services coming in 2022.

Learn more and get involved by visiting mowp.org/volunteer, or donate today at mowp.org/donate.



STRIDE^{for} SENIORS[®] 5 YEARS

Join us for our fifth-annual Stride for Seniors walkathon event at the Portland International Raceway on Saturday, April 16, 2022.

Walk with a friend, or a team, to help us reach and exceed our goal of raising \$450K to alleviate food insecurity and social isolation among older adults in our community. We can't wait to stride with you!

Learn more and register at strideforseniors.org.

PDXPOP!

Looking for a special treat to share with your sweetie this Valentine's Day? PDXPOP! is the perfect gift—whether it be a bag, tin, or box. Bring your favorite flavor along for a walk in the park or a cozy movie night at home. Not celebrating with a love-or-like interest? No problem! Grab a bag or two and enjoy with a friend, or treat yourself!

Use code VAL22 when you check out for 20% off site-wide.

Order online from January 10 through February 10 to get 20% off and guarantee delivery by Valentine's Day. Enjoy a sweet treat for a good cause and a portion of proceeds will help provide nutritious meals to older adults in your community.

Catherine Bitz: Celebrating a Lifetime of Service



After a 30-year career as an elementary school teacher and nearly 25 years working for Providence Medical Center, Catherine embarked on a new chapter: retirement. Unlike most, however, Catherine didn't view her newfound free time as a time to slow down. Rather, her time had to be put to good use. Every job Catherine had throughout her life had revolved around serving others—and that wouldn't stop now.

Living in Southeast Portland, Catherine spent time volunteering with the Loyola Retreat House, a local church group, for several years before it closed down. On one bright, sunny afternoon, she recalls finding herself with “nothing to do,” so she decided to walk four blocks from her home to the former Meals on Wheels People (MOWP) office.

“I walked right in and asked if they could use any help—and the rest is history,” said Catherine.

That was the beginning of Catherine's 25-year journey as a Meals on Wheels People volunteer—a chapter that came to a close only recently, in October 2021, a few short months after Catherine's 98th birthday. Catherine began volunteering in the development office. She knew

how to type, at the time, and learned other computer skills along the way. “I started volunteering three days a week, and everyone in the office was eager to teach me new skills at my own pace,” said Catherine.

Catherine raised her hand to help with a wide range of tasks—from donor letters to direct mailings and everything in between.

It didn't take long before Catherine knew everyone around the office. Her tenure started extending beyond many Meals on Wheels People staff members, and some say she knew a few tricks of the trade better than those in the office each day. More than two decades into Catherine's time with Meals on Wheels People, the pandemic hit and disrupted her normal in-person volunteer schedule. With the office closed and staff members working from home, Catherine remained determined to help in any way she could.

“I walked right in and asked if they could use any help—and the rest is history”

“I asked if they could get mailing materials and stamps to my home, so I could continue working from there—and they did,” said Catherine. “It meant so much to me that I could continue making a difference from home, and that Meals on Wheels People worked hard to support me.”

At 98 years old, Catherine has resigned from her volunteer position due to an eyesight problem that limits her ability to write and print.

“As a school teacher, I was always so proud of my handwriting, and I still love to write,” said Catherine. “As much as I'd love to continue volunteering, I've reached a point where it's necessary to step back.” Catherine embodies a true giving spirit—someone who has committed their life to better the lives and opportunities of others around her.



Here at Meals on Wheels People, we thank Catherine for her 25 years of service with our organization and her lifelong commitment to our community.

To anyone who is considering volunteering, Catherine shares a few words of wisdom:

“Never worry about not fitting in. At Meals on Wheels People, there is always someone right there beside you to offer support all along the way. You'll always have help, you'll always have support, and you'll always be appreciated. I never had a single bad day at Meals on Wheels People.”

To learn how you can volunteer, visit mowp.org/volunteer.

Thank you!

Gratitude for the Season of Giving

As we close the books on another calendar year, we want to take a moment to pause and reflect. The holiday season is a busy time of year at Meals on Wheels People, as it marks an annual period when many of our clients need our support and services most. With the holiday months, however, comes the season of giving,

which brings an inspiring warmth and sense of renewal and hope within our community.

To all those who supported our organization through the holidays—whether through dollars or donations of time—we extend our sincerest gratitude. Thank you for making a

difference in the lives of older adults in our community. Your support enables us to continue providing nutritious meals, critical social support, and more to our aging neighbors.

And we extend a special thank you to our partners for their continued support of our programs.

PEACOCK LANE

Marking the 89th anniversary of the legendary light displays on Portland's historic Peacock Lane, NBC Universal's streaming service, Peacock, made a special appearance and charitable donation to Meals on Wheels People.



THE
HEATHERINGTON
FOUNDATION

HEATHERINGTON FOUNDATION

Thanks to our friends at the Heatherington Foundation for matching all end-of-year charitable gifts 1:1 up to \$250,000.

Make a donation today
at give.mowp.org.





Looking forward to
2022



FOLLOW US!



mealswheelsppi



mealswheelsppi



mealsonwheelspeople



mealsonwheelspeople



mealsonwheelspeople

Donate a meal:
mowp.org