

# MOTION

SPRING 2023



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INTRODUCING

# MOTION

**MEET THE TEAM** behind the scenes



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# WHAT IS *MOTION*?

Welcome to the first issue of *Motion*. At Meals on Wheels People, we're not only reimagining our quarterly newsletter – we're reimagining aging.

Older adults have always been a vital source of strength and resilience: Benjamin Franklin was 70 when he signed the Declaration of Independence. Susan B. Anthony was past the age of 80 when she formed the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. Estella Mims Pyfrom started a mobile learning lab for underserved and under-resourced communities at 72. At age 87, Pablo Picasso produced 347 engravings in one year. At 90 years old, University of Minnesota professor Leonid Hurwicz won the Nobel Prize in economics. Harriette Thompson completed her 15th marathon at 91.

Yet over 80% of older Americans have been subjected to ageist stereotypes. Older adults are generally portrayed as sick, frail, and physically dependent on others. When we perpetuate the stereotype that older adults are helpless, it hurts us all, as individuals and communities: It can trigger stress, anxiety, and depression in older adults who internalize these negative messages. It can

stifle the economy by limiting the participation of older workers, despite their years of experience. And it can leave our aging neighbors alone, forgotten, and hungry.

It's time to celebrate older adults – not only because they're our loved ones, friends, mentors, essential workers, volunteers, and neighbors but also because they contribute their time and wisdom to make our communities stronger, more informed, and better connected. Older adults took care of us when we needed them. Now it's our turn to pay it forward. We believe that behind every one of our meals is a neighbor with a story to tell, and we want to provide the platform that helps them share their experiences, insights, and wisdom with the world. We believe in taking action to support one another, and we encourage our readers to renew their commitment to honoring our aging neighbors by giving them the care, support, and respect they deserve. We all benefit when older adults remain engaged, independent, and included.

This is what *Motion* is all about. *Motion* is a collection of stories about unstoppable older adults

and their achievements. You'll discover people who embody the idea that getting older is merely the beginning. You'll meet older adults who are volunteers, caregivers, age advocates, movement builders, and contributors to our society. And you can join the movement of people who are providing our older adults with the support and services they need to thrive.

Let's be inspired by the resilience, wisdom, and vitality of older adults and let their stories be a catalyst for change. Together, let's create a world where aging is celebrated and we are all empowered to live our best lives.



Suzanne Washington  
CEO, Meals on Wheels People



Suzanne Washington  
Chief Executive Officer

Help an older  
adult now!  
→





# The Marathon Man

*How Meals on Wheels People and a lifetime of fitness keeps the 100-year-old founder of the Portland Marathon going strong*



Bill Gorman has run marathons in Hawaii and Canada. But one of the most memorable was on Sauvie Island in 1972. He and his friend Ken Weidkamp had spent the past year planning the very first Portland Marathon. The morning of the race, Bill awoke to two inches of snow on the ground.

“Of course, this complicated things, but resourceful runners always leap to the fore,” he said.

At 100 years old -- “which makes me just about middle age,” he joked -- Bill knows a little something about being resourceful.

When he and Ken set out to find a course for the first marathon, they were initially turned down by Portland city officials. “Well, Ken and I decided that maybe there were other ways,” Bill recalled.

With scenic beauty and fairly flat roads, Sauvie Island was an ideal location. Over 170 people completed the first Portland Marathon in November 1972.

By Bill’s last year as race director in 1976, the marathon had grown to over 400 finishers, establishing the race as one of the top five in the country based on number of participants.

But Bill wasn’t done running. Co-founders of the Oregon Road Runners Club, he and Ken continued to organize runs, including a popular 17-mile run on the Wildwood Trail in Forest Park. By the time he hung up his laces in his sixties, he’d run 49 marathons.

“Running a marathon is challenging,” Bill said. “The big thing with running a marathon is you have to be properly prepared. No matter how prepared you are, usually the last few miles are a difficult situation. But you get used to it.”

What Bill has had a harder time getting used to is driving retirement. Although he’d never been in an accident – “and I fancied myself as a better-than-adequate driver,” he said – his children and doctor recommended he stop driving about five years ago.

“I have not adjusted to it yet,” said Bill, who was working out at 24 Hour Fitness three times a week at the time. “I still miss my car. I’m kind of stuck.”

The senior living community where he was living didn’t have a dining room, so a friend suggested Bill reach out to Meals on Wheels

People. Bill has been receiving meal deliveries since.

“If I didn’t have Meals on Wheels, it would be much more difficult,” said Bill, who insists on meeting the delivery driver at their car to collect his meals each week. “The only trouble I have is that new drivers sometimes don’t follow instructions, and they get out of their car and bring the meals to my door. And I don’t want that because it’s needless for them to go to that extra work. It cuts down on the number of people that they can service. And I’m very pleased to go down and to get the meals. It gives me a chance to get out.”

While Bill takes pride in starting one of the longest-running consecutive marathons in the U.S., his greatest sense of accomplishment comes from being an athlete: “I have no doubt that if it weren’t for my athletic endeavors and if it weren’t for running, I wouldn’t be here today.”

Bill was recognized at the sixth Stride for Seniors April 15 at the Portland International Raceway. Since its inception, Stride for Seniors has grown to become the largest walk addressing food insecurity and social isolation experienced by older adults in the nation. Right now, at least 1 out of every 10 seniors in Oregon may not know where their next meal is coming from, and many more are suffering from isolation. Through our network of programs, volunteers, and partners, Meals on Wheels People is there day



in and day out for older adults who might otherwise be alone, forgotten, or hungry. We're there for Katherine, whose hands created many masterpieces but can no longer open a can of soup. For Wanda, the one-time social butterfly who spends her days alone because she's unable to leave her home. For George, the former serviceman who's no longer strong enough to be on watch for his own safety. And for Bill, the Portland Marathon founder who retired from driving but not from life.

"Meals on Wheels has done a very beautiful job of making life a lot more enjoyable for many, many, many people," Bill said.

To honor Bill and ensure that other homebound seniors receive the nutrition, friendly chats, and social connections they need to thrive at home, donate today: [mowp.org](https://mowp.org)



**STRIDE for  
SENIORS®**

TheStandard

**That's a wrap!**

Thank you to everyone who came out to Portland International Raceway on April 15, 2023! Our sixth annual Stride for Seniors was a fun-filled success. We look forward to seeing everyone next year!





## Love in Motion

Someone once said volunteers are love in motion. No one exemplifies that more than our volunteers, whether they're preparing or delivering a meal, providing a friendly visit, or offering a safety check to older adults who may not have contact with another person all day. They work to make sure that the people who took care of us aren't left behind, forgotten, or hungry and instead are able to live out the independent lives they deserve and feel nourished through the kind of life-giving connections that help them thrive.

*April is National Volunteer Month, and we're celebrating some of the people who are standing up for those who might otherwise be left out, isolated, or alone. Fueled by empathy, interdependence, and the inherent worthiness of all, these volunteers make a meaningful difference in our community.*

## From Mailman to Meal Man

Dave McGann spent 44 years delivering mail out of the Kenton and St. Johns post offices. When he retired in 2005, he spent three weeks "sitting around watching the grass grow" before he went looking for another job. A fellow church member told Dave about Meals on Wheels People, and Dave thought he was uniquely qualified to deliver meals. "I know the whole area," he told the staffer at Charles Jordan Community Center. "Maybe I could help you out?"

Initially, Dave signed up to deliver one day a week. But he loved it so much, that soon, he was volunteering every day. "I'd go into someone's home and come away feeling better myself," Dave said. "I was helping them, but I was helping myself, too. It recharged my batteries."

Dave's favorite part is getting to know the people on his route. "Just like carrying mail, you get attached to these people," he said. "It's more than being customers. They're like family."

Giving back is important to Dave. Dave grew up in North Portland with four siblings. His parents divorced when he was in third grade, and they relied on the support of their neighbors. "We were poor kids, but we didn't

know it," Dave said. "Everybody helped each other."

Over Dave's 18 years with Meals on Wheels People, he's done more than just deliver meals. He'll never forget showing up at Mrs. Rose's house, knocking on the door, and hearing her scream. "I started banging on the windows," he recalled. "I got around to the back and heard Mrs. Rose yelling. She'd fallen in the tub and couldn't get up." Dave called 911, and firetrucks arrived minutes later. "She gave me a hug, and I was off on my way."

During the pandemic, Dave took a pause from meal delivery and started making wellness check-in calls with the Friendly Chats program. He enjoyed connecting with people, many of whom he knew from delivering meals. "I got carried away – but some of the people got carried away, too," he said with a laugh. "I apologized for talking too much, but I knew the ones who were sitting there by themselves. One old me, 'Ya know, Dave, if you didn't call me, no one would call me.' It's sad."

These days, Dave is back to driving routes twice a week. But the 81-year-old doesn't think about it as a job: "You're just helping people. It's important that we're doing this. We ought to take care of our neighbors."





## We Need Volunteers!

You can give back and change the life of an older adult in your community. We need volunteers to provide critical support to the older adults we serve.

As one client shared: “Weekly meal deliveries have been life-changing for my health. I also really love the time I get to

connect with Joan, my delivery volunteer. She always makes me feel so special when she takes the extra time to talk with me each week.”

Get involved as a meal delivery driver or volunteer from home through our Friendly Chats program. Become a part of

our volunteer family and help change a life, one meal and friendly connection at a time.

Visit [mowp.org/volunteer](https://mowp.org/volunteer) or reach our volunteer coordinator at [volunteer.coordinator@mowp.org](mailto:volunteer.coordinator@mowp.org)

## Pedaling with Purpose

Like many Portlanders, Bruce McCormmach biked to work for 45 years. So when the Bicycle Commuting Committee at Conway Freight chose Meals on Wheels People as its community outreach partner, he didn't think twice about delivering meals via bike instead of car. The committee donated two bicycle trailers to MOWP, and every other Wednesday during his lunch hour, Bruce would load up the trailer with meals, fruits, and other essentials and pedal his way through his downtown route. “Everybody was used to seeing me show up in my bike gear,” Bruce said.

Bruce wasn't always a biker. He started running, and even ran against acclaimed track star Steve Prefontaine in high school. But when his friend brought a 19-pound Peugeot from Europe, “I never ran another step,” Bruce

said. “I switched completely over to bicycles.” Every year for the past 27 years, he and some friends have taken weeklong treks across sections Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia (some of their travels are chronicled in the book *Small Towns & Open Roads*, by the local author and retired attorney Greg Mowe, available exclusively at Wallace Books). And for 17 years, Bruce and his daughter commuted to work together. “It was a lot of great daddy-daughter time,” he said.

When the pandemic changed how MOWP delivers meals, so did Bruce. “I couldn't get 50 meals on the bicycle anymore.” Now he delivers his route via car, and now that he's retired, he does so weekly.

“When you're retired, you're looking for things to do,” he

said. “It anchors my week. I've got something to look forward to. It's special to me. A lot of these people I've been seeing for almost a decade. You know these people. You understand their circumstances. You can tell if there are problems. You get attuned to that. That's important. That's part of the job. And part of the reward of doing the deliveries.”

Bruce knows how important the meals, social connection, and wellness and safety checks are to the people he delivers to. His dad received meals through Meals on Wheels People. “It was a big part of his day – having the volunteer stop by,” Bruce said. “Volunteering has been a chance for me to pay it back for everything they'd done for my dad those years when it got meals.”



## Stitching Together a Stronger Community

Darien Reece has been a supporter of Meals on Wheels People for a long time. But she didn't have time to volunteer until she retired from her role as senior materials researcher at Nike in 2019. She signed up to be a substitute driver in March 2020 and completed one route before the lockdown.

So that April, she started making Wellness Check calls -- structured safety calls to homebound older adults to check in on their welfare. They often talked about more than wellness, though. "They could make movies of their lives," Darien said. She's received

recipes, learned about the benefits of tea tree oil, and compared notes on trips to Arizona. "They seem to really appreciate having someone to chat to."

A few months later, Darien started volunteering with the Meals 4 Kids program, which delivers nutritious meals, milk, bread, and fresh fruit directly to the homes of children families in need in Portland and Gresham. Working alongside staff and other volunteers, she helps clean the cooler bags. "It's fun!" she said. "You talk to people. It's a little monotonous, but you have a sense of accomplishment:

They're dirty -- and then they're clean."

When she notices a hole, she takes the bag home and stitches it back together with brightly colored thread. "They're Franken-baggy," joked Darien, who grew up in a family of quilters and spent her career working with textiles.

Darien and her husband, Jeff, are now also drivers for Meals 4 Kids: "He's the driver, and I'm the door person," she said. "I love it. It's not just about the food. It's about the connection."

Follow us to stay up to date with events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

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**[mowp.org](https://mowp.org)**