

2006



Newsletter

WINTER 2021

Every senior
who requests
a meal will
receive one

➤ Donate or sign up to volunteer: mowp.org

Community Rallies to Ensure Seniors are Fed

Despite challenges of the pandemic, Meals on Wheels People's Donate Dinner exceeded expectations thanks to unwavering support this holiday season

By Ben McBee

Among the things that we tend to take for granted, putting groceries on the conveyor belt and knowing we will soon have food in our bellies is probably high on the list. It's a mundane task, but for many seniors who are unable to leave the house, it's something that remains out of reach, to heartbreaking effect. But every year since 2003, during the week leading up to Thanksgiving, shoppers at New Seasons Market and other retailers could always add one last important item to their haul while checking out — a meal donation to seniors in need, through the Donate Dinner campaign.

The success of the fundraiser has depended greatly on the participation

of compassionate volunteers: people like Osha Roller, who works as a mortgage loan officer, but has long held a personal interest in fighting childhood hunger. Five years ago, a neighbor invited her and her daughter Lily to help out Meals on Wheels People. "It was really just a natural fit to extend that and bring my daughter into it to see the impact that can be made," she says. "It's putting some of the lessons I try to teach her into action. Getting to spend that quality time together, we have a lot of fun doing it. She looks forward to it and was really disappointed that we weren't able to do it this year."

With the Covid-19 pandemic raging into the winter months, the outlook for this year's Donate Dinner was

somewhat gloomy. The fundraiser would be without the usual 1,500 or so volunteers, who otherwise would be front and center as shoppers entered the stores, smiling and handing out fliers to boost community engagement in such an important cause. Without those reinforcements, New Seasons employees knew they faced an uphill battle.

Safety protocols limited the number of people allowed in the stores. With staff members wearing masks, it became more difficult to have impactful conversations at the register, and many of the customers shifted to shopping online, meaning less opportunity to interact in person. "We had real concerns about doing

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What Inspires Me to Volunteer for Meals on Wheels People

Meals on Wheels People recently followed some volunteer drivers on their routes and this is what they had to say about why they choose to deliver meals to homebound seniors.



Peggy Kerl, Cherry Blossom Center:

I volunteer because there is a need and I can. I believe we should all do our small bit to give back to our city and the world, whether that be a few dollars or a few hours. I have been blessed and believe in Meals on Wheels People and their mission of changing lives, one meal at a time.



Nancy Westphall, Belmont Center:

Jo and I started volunteering about 10 years ago at the Belmont Center because we were both retired and wanted to contribute to the needs of the community. It's so awesome to see how very grateful each of our people are when they see us once a week and appreciate the meals they get. They bring us so much joy and we both are very thankful that we are doing a small part to help those in need.



Nengi Diriyai, Board Member:

Growing up, my grandparents always had people in their home. Cooking was always a fun experience, but the highlight was giving to those who came through our home, knowing that we were making a difference in their lives. Now I live far away and they are too old to continue, but there are others around them who make sure they have all they need, whether food, medicine or company. Volunteering for Meals on Wheels People is my way of staying connected to them, the values I was raised with as well as teaching my children, you do not need a million dollars to make a difference. You can make a difference one life at a time, just like they taught me.



Carrie Wheadon, MLK Center:

Meals on Wheels is the first regular volunteering I've ever done. I hope someday I'm one of those volunteers you hear about who's been delivering meals for decades. I grew up really close to my Italian grandmother who instilled in me

the importance of food and feeding people, as Italian grandmothers do. When she passed away, my grandfather received Meals on Wheels until he passed, which led me to think of Meals on Wheels first when I was looking for something positive and meaningful to do. The experience has been rewarding for so many reasons. I work from home and this is my opportunity to feel like I'm contributing to the community I live in. I've met amazing, resilient people who I get to chat with every week. I've had the same route for three-and-a-half years and in that time I've made some wonderful connections. I'm so grateful that I get to do this important work.

We always have openings for both Meals on Wheels drivers and Friendly Chats volunteers. Register at mowp.org/volunteer.

Stride for Seniors Event Set for April 24

Mark your calendars now for our 4th annual Stride for Seniors on Saturday, April 24. While we will not be gathering at Portland International Raceway, this year's event will provide a variety of opportunities to get involved including car caravans, socially distant regional events, or a "choose your own adventure" option. We'll have launch kits available, along with the sale of paper sneakers, incentives and more! Watch for emails coming soon with details!

Fill the Plane and Fill the Soul Bring in Food, Gifts

Homebound seniors received some unexpected treats in December thanks to a couple of unique events. Weston Kia, in partnership with KOIN 6, sponsored Fill the Soul from Oct. 1 through Dec. 31. KOIN viewers were encouraged to visit Weston Kia to Fill the Soul with food in October and November and with gifts in December. The largesse was then distributed to older adults served by our Ambleside Center in Gresham. Inspired by Weston Kia, Corey Rust of Envi Adventures in Troutdale hosted a Fill the Plane event on Dec. 5. People were encouraged to visit his plane in Troutdale in the morning to drop off gifts for seniors and then the plane flew to Pearson Airfield in Vancouver where Clark County residents helped fill the plane. Gifts were distributed to seniors in late December.



Meals 4 Kids Program Gets Electric Vehicles, Installs Charging Stations

Thanks to a grant from the PGE Driving Change Fund, Meals on Wheels People was able to purchase two electric vehicles to use for its Meals 4 Kids program. The grant also provided funding to install three electric vehicle charging stations at the Central Office. The Meals 4 Kids program, funded by the Portland Children's Levy, provides meals to low-income children and their families within the City of Portland. During our last fiscal year, the Meals 4 Kids program provided more than 205,000 meals to 1,563 children and their

caregivers. We recently received this note from a family who receives meals from the program: *We get food for our kids from you. I would like to say thank you very much for your help! We also would like to stop getting food because my husband has returned to work and we have the opportunity to purchase a sufficient amount of food for the children and ourselves. Perhaps someone will need it more. Your food is delicious and healthy. We are very grateful for your help, as it was very necessary and timely. May God bless you!*



From the CEO

As we enter a new year, hopefully a much better year, and celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, I am filled with hope. Hope for the vaccine to begin saving lives, hope for equity and justice for people of color, hope for our restaurants and small businesses to get back to work, hope for new jobs, for schools to get back to normal and hope for seniors and families to have what they need to thrive.

As we honor and celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this month, let us be reminded of his wisdom when he said:

"Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

There are many words of Dr. King that give me hope, but I especially love this one. It reminds me that we can all make a difference and help make positive changes in our community.

As always, I am grateful for all of our supporters. They embody the spirit of this quote and give of themselves to create a better world for all.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to the CEO.



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New Seasons Market Nyberg River staff

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such a big fundraiser in our stores in the middle of a pandemic, when there is a lot of hardship for everyone,” says New Seasons’ Philanthropy Coordinator Jennifer Gregorich. “But we had a couple customers reach out in advance of the fundraiser, asking if we were actually doing it. That was a great sign for us.”

Nevertheless, a bit of creativity was needed to save what’s become a cherished tradition. The event, previously referred to as “Five Days of Kindness” in their stores, grew to “Eight Days of Kindness” to balance the fact that people are shopping less frequently. On their website’s holiday hub, they included direct links to Meals on Wheels People’s site, as well as a chance to donate during online checkout. “One last thing we were able to do is make Meals on Wheels People our Gift It recipient, so people could donate their Neighbor Rewards dollars that they earn through shopping, to them,” says Gregorich. “We had to make it easier for customers to donate and hope

that staff would rise to the occasion, which they really, truly did.”

At the Nyberg Rivers location in Tualatin, the team’s extra effort encouraged shoppers to donate by rounding up their purchase total to the nearest dollar at the register. Oftentimes, this led to additional giving — two, five or even ten dollars more. Together with her coworkers, Cece Harris, a Front End Lead at the store, was dedicated to cultivating an environment of excitement and heart, cheering and ringing a bell for every customer who donated, no matter the amount.

It was an emotional experience for all involved. “This was towards the end of the eighth day with maybe an hour left. I got onto the intercom and made an announcement that we were hoping to reach \$16,000, and we had like \$80 to go,” she explains. “Well, I was overcome with gratitude and started crying. One customer came up and said, ‘I don’t want her crying anymore, so I’m going to give \$100.’” Their constant positivity and dedication was championship caliber in every sense of the word — Harris and company ended up raising the most out of any store.

Though Meals on Wheels People’s goal for the entire campaign was realistically lowered, it quickly became clear, you can count on people to make a difference and uplift their neighbors if you provide a way. Another shopper at a different New Seasons donated two months worth of meals after chatting with the cashier and hearing more about the organization’s mission.

They couldn’t be present physically, but the impact of volunteers was still felt extensively; they utilized their virtual networks, spreading awareness with friends and family, and asking them to pass it along to their own connections.

Amid so much unpredictability, it’s nice to know some things haven’t changed. These new stories of good will and caring for one another will be added to familiar ones and kept alive for years to come. “Whenever we do Donate Dinner, it’s really cool to see people’s reactions to it,” explains Roller. “There are a lot of people who will stop and talk with you and they kind of light up and share a story about how Meals on Wheels People has impacted their lives. It’s just really important to a lot of people on a very personal level.”



Osha Roller and daughter Lily

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