

Growing Together

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026

A New Way to Nourish Groceries on the Go

This spring, we're growing something new together.

At Meals on Wheels San Diego County, we've always believed that supporting seniors goes beyond delivering meals. It's about making sure they have what they need to feel safe, nourished, and independent at home. That belief continues to grow through a new partnership with the San Diego Food Bank and the launch of our "Groceries on the Go" program.

At its heart, "Groceries on the Go" answers a simple but urgent question: What happens between meal deliveries?

Our volunteers deliver up to two nutritious meals (lunch or dinner) per day, Monday through Saturday (with Sunday meals delivered on Saturday). Yet many clients still face empty cupboards. Limited mobility, rising food costs, and fixed incomes force some seniors to stretch meals, skip food before taking medication, or request fewer meals despite subsidies.

"Groceries on the Go" was developed to close that gap.

Grocery items are intentionally selected to supplement breakfast and between-meal needs. By including breakfast-friendly staples such as bread, peanut butter, oatmeal, granola bars, fruit, and eggs, the program ensures seniors have food in their stomachs before taking medications, and throughout the day.

Together, we are aligning supply and access to ensure that food not only exists in warehouses but is delivered right to the door of seniors who cannot shop for themselves.



Meals on Wheels client Leroy with his "Groceries on the Go" bag filled with shelf-stable groceries.



Marisol Quesada, South County Service Center Director, shopping for the "Groceries on the Go" program.

Client Spotlight

At nearly 99 years old, Erika has built a life shaped by resilience, curiosity, and movement.

Born in Germany, she grew up surrounded by the forests she still remembers vividly today. In her home now, paintings of the Black Forest hang on the walls, quiet reminders of the place where she once walked, skied, and sledged as a child. Nearby, stacks of science magazines and health articles reflect another lifelong habit, a deep commitment to learning and understanding how to care for her body.

That mindset has stayed with her.

Erika came to the United States in 1950, just a few years after the war had ended, leaving behind a country with a difficult history she never supported. She arrived with a desire to build something new and positive. Over time, she did just that, eventually becoming a chemist and spending years working in laboratories and translating scientific patents. Her curiosity never left her. Even now, she continues to read, learn, and stay engaged with the world around her.



Meals on Wheels and "Groceries on the Go" Client, Erika, 99

These days, Erika lives on her own and continues to move through her days with intention. She walks every morning and evening, adapting as needed with her walker but never giving up her routine.

When she first began receiving deliveries from Meals on Wheels, one volunteer stood out. Erika noticed the volunteer's last name right away. It sounded German. That small detail opened the door to something deeper.

"We would talk about where our families came from," Erika smiled. "It reminded me of home."

In those brief moments at the door, Erika shared stories of her hometown, the forest, the seasons, and the life she had lived before coming to America. What began as a meal delivery became a familiar presence, something to look forward to: friendship.

With meals arriving throughout the week, a familiar face checking in at the door, and a few extra groceries through the "Groceries on the Go Program", Meals on Wheels helps Erika keep her routine and move through her days in a way that still feels like her own.

Volunteer Spotlight

Growing Through Connection



For Tracy Mullen, volunteering with Meals on Wheels has never been just about delivering food. For nearly five years, it has been a steady commitment built on connection, consistency, and the belief that every visit matters. It's part of her routine now, something she protects on her calendar.

Over time, she has gotten to know clients across North County, heard their stories, and seen firsthand how much a familiar face can mean.



Tracy and Cathy, Meals on Wheels volunteers and neighbors

“It’s not just about the food,” Tracy said. “It’s the personal contact. That’s valuable for seniors, but also for their family members. There’s comfort in knowing someone is checking in.”

That perspective is personal. Years ago, Tracy’s grandmother received Meals on Wheels. While the meals were important, what stood out most was the reassurance that someone was stopping by.

After a recent move, she met her neighbor, Cathy Bradshaw. At some point, Meals on Wheels came up in conversation. Cathy was already familiar with the organization—her mother-in-law had volunteered for years.

So, Tracy made a simple offer: come along on a route. Cathy joined her a couple of times to see what it was like, and that was all it took.

“I always thought it would be a good thing to do,” Cathy said. “When I went on a route with Tracy, I got to see what it was really like. After that, I signed up!”

Three years later, Cathy is still volunteering. She now delivers the same route as Tracy, just on different days, and has built her own relationships along the way.

Together, their story reflects something special about Meals on Wheels San Diego County. Volunteering doesn’t just support clients—it can ripple outward, inspiring neighbors, friends, and family members to get involved too.

For Tracy, that’s what keeps her coming back, while for Cathy, it’s a simple way to give back.

Sometimes all it takes is one invitation to change someone's day. Sometimes, it changes more than that.

To learn more about how to become a volunteer, visit our website: www.meals-on-wheels.org/volunteer



Dear Meals on Wheels Friends and Family,

Thank you for “Growing Together” with us! Over the last year, many of the seniors we serve have shared concerns about the changing landscape—government funding, inflation, and resource scarcity. These concerns are real. And as we continue to innovate and expand our efforts, we are more resolved than ever to meet them head-on with you.

Our volunteer pool continues to grow—a strong sign that our community stands with us, just as it has every day since 1960. Together, our volunteers and supporters believe that serving our golden demographic is not charity, but an obligation and an honor. Together, we are shaping a more uplifting vision of aging—one defined by connection, dignity, and joy, with more smiles, friendships, and meaningful bonds forming every day across our County.

We launched our new Groceries on the Go initiative in partnership with the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank, now serving nearly 25% of our clients with supplemental food that enhances their sense of security and provides critical nourishment beyond our prepared meals. This is just one of many partnerships we are building.

Our senior population is growing faster than any one organization can keep pace. “Growing Together” is the only path forward. If you haven’t already, I invite you to tour our Kitchen and Senior Innovation Hub and see firsthand how collaboration, shared resources, and collective strengths are helping us turn the Silver Tsunami into a Silver Soiree.

Our heartfelt gratitude for all that you do to support our clients and the seniors in your life.



Brent Wakefield

Brent Wakefield | PRESIDENT & CEO

You're Invited!

Relive the thrill of the punch bowl, the awkward slow dances, and the glittering glory of prom night. This night is full of laughs, memories, and opportunities to support seniors who deserve the VIP treatment every day. Get ready to primp, pose, and party like it’s 1999...or whenever your prom glory days were!



**FOR MORE INFORMATION
& TICKETS**

MEALS ON WHEELS
SAN DIEGO COUNTY

SENIOR PROM

Forever Young Gala

HONORING:
The Navarra Family
and
Jerome's
FURNITURE & MATTRESSES®

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2026
Kona Kai Resort

Champions Week

In March, we celebrated Champions Week as part of Meals on Wheels America's nationwide March for Meals campaign—a week dedicated to raising awareness, building community support, and addressing the growing challenges of senior hunger and isolation.

Throughout the week, elected officials, community leaders, and volunteers stepped into the role of a Meals on Wheels delivery volunteer, bringing nutritious meals and meaningful connection directly to older adults across San Diego County. By experiencing these visits firsthand, participants gained insight into the impact of our work and the importance of sustaining services that help seniors live with dignity and independence.

This year, we were proud to be joined by community champions including Congressman Scott Peters, Assemblywoman Darshana Patel, Mayor Todd Gloria, Mayor John McCann, and the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, among others. Together, they shared meals, conversations, and special moments—like celebrating a client's 100th birthday—reminding us that every visit matters.

We also hosted our Champions Week Salon at the McKinney Family Administration Building, bringing local leaders and partners together to highlight the critical role of senior nutrition, connection, and care.

At its core, Champions Week is about more than delivering meals. It's about raising awareness, inspiring action, and strengthening the network of support that ensures older adults in our community feel seen, valued, and connected.

We're grateful to everyone who joined us, showing that when a community comes together, incredible things are possible.



Brent Wakefield and Congressman Scott Peters



San Diego Sheriff's Department



Brent Wakefield, Volunteer Leslie Harpenau, & Mayor Todd Gloria



Congratulations!

Congratulations to our 2026 Champion Volunteer Award nominees: Ron Blackwood and Patti Slack, Katie, Robert Petrin, and Ron Morell. We're grateful for all of our volunteers and the care they bring to our community every day.

News Around Town

EAST COUNTY



It's turning heads all across East County! We're talking about our big, beautiful, and colorful new truck. It's tricked out with the Meals on Wheels logo, phone number, and website. The Ford truck is a very generous gift from the Shiley Foundation, and staffers are proudly driving it to deliver meals to clients, to drop sites, and community events. It's a valuable and visible "rolling billboard," exposing the Meals on Wheels brand to everyone everywhere. But it has become much more. We've started taking this rugged 4-wheel-drive vehicle far into East County's backcountry mountains. This lets us deliver meals to some of San Diego's most isolated and vulnerable seniors. The hybrid engine will also save on gas costs, while we serve smaller communities as far away as Campo, Boulevard, and Tecate. It's the latest way we are expanding our services to seniors who need them the most!

NORTH COUNTY



We are thrilled to share that Meals on Wheels San Diego County has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Borrego Valley Endowment Fund! This support will help us serve more seniors and disabled veterans in Borrego Springs. We are so grateful to have this partnership with the Borrego Springs Youth and Senior Center.

A heartfelt thank you to the Borrego Valley Endowment Fund for believing in our mission, and to our incredible team and partners who make this work possible.

Excited for what's ahead!

METRO

We're so excited to honor Sue McNabb at the NCPV Volunteer Awards Celebration!

Sue McNabb has been a dedicated volunteer with Meals on Wheels since 1995. For over 30 years, she has committed one day each week to covering a delivery route—showing up with her warm smile and uplifting personality to make a difference in the lives of those she serves. She is incredibly reliable and rarely misses a shift.

Sue has also remained flexible and adaptable, embracing the many changes at Meals on Wheels throughout her years of service.

Thank you, Sue, for your outstanding dedication and the lasting impact you've made in our community!



SOUTH COUNTY

We're excited to share that our expanded space helps us better serve our community and launch new initiatives like "Groceries on the Go."

In June 2026, we'll partner with Helen Woodward Animal Center for our annual outreach day, offering free veterinary services for our clients' pets.

As warmer months approach, we're launching a Fan Drive to help seniors stay cool and safe. We're also hosting a Clothing Drive in partnership with Sharia's Closet, collecting new or gently used men's and women's clothing and shoes.

Together, we bring comfort, support, and a little extra kindness to those we serve.

Donations of fans and clothing can be dropped off at the South County Service Center (619.420.2782).



How Can I Help?



Many supporters ask how they can get more involved with Meals on Wheels San Diego County to help keep our wheels rolling—especially during the summer months, when donations typically drop off.

Here are just a few ideas...

Join Our Monthly Giving Circle

Donors who give monthly often find it easier to budget while making a lasting impact. This steady support helps ensure we can deliver meals each and every day—and even small gifts add up to provide reliable care for the seniors who depend on us.

Join Today!



SCAN ME

To learn more, visit

www.meals-on-wheels.org/ways-to-give/giving-circles
or scan the QR code

Become a Volunteer

Become a volunteer and help ensure seniors receive nutritious meals and vital human connection. Volunteers play a key role in reducing isolation and supporting independent living. Whether you have a few hours a week or just one day a month, your time makes a real difference.

Kindness Needed!



SCAN ME

To learn more, visit

www.meals-on-wheels.org/volunteer
or scan the QR code

Create Your Own Fundraiser

Did you know that with Facebook Fundraisers, Meals on Wheels can't track where donations come from? By using our website's peer-to-peer fundraising tool, you can create a personal page, set goals, share on social media, and easily track your progress and supporters.

Learn More!



SCAN ME

To learn more, visit

www.meals-on-wheels.org/ways-to-give/create-your-own-fundraiser
or scan the QR code

Legacy Circle

The Legacy Circle recognizes those who include Meals on Wheels San Diego County in their estate plans. These gifts help ensure no senior is left hungry or isolated, providing meals and friendly visits for generations to come. Members receive special recognition and invitations to President's Council events.

Leave A Legacy!



SCAN ME

To learn more, visit

www.meals-on-wheels.org/ways-to-give/giving-circles
or scan the QR code