

Fall Fosters *Connection*



Meet Rye-Ji. She is our star Operations Specialist at the Metro Service Center near Old Town. While her primary responsibilities include overseeing volunteer efforts at our Metro Office, lately she has been spending most of her time making deliveries. We are short-handed on volunteers so more staffers are picking up routes to ensure our seniors receive the hot meals and the warm smiles they have come to love from our program.

Brent Wakefield, President & CEO, and Amie Brown, CEO, joined Rye-Ji in one of the most challenging delivery areas—Downtown. What makes these routes challenging are the lack of parking options. With 25 client routes that take two and a half hours, spanning from Little Italy to Logan Heights, our staff and volunteers simply don't have time to park blocks away. They often are written parking tickets for using loading zones for 5 minutes to deliver meals. This has become burdensome and expensive for our volunteers so, most days, staff deliver meals and have to hope for the best...or pay the fines...

MOW is diligently working with the City to receive a special permit to park while delivering meals in the downtown area – especially because we are serving clients the City has

specifically contracted with us to serve. We still struggle with the decision to pay the fines or not meet our contractual obligations with our clients to deliver meals by 1 p.m.

However, there is a silver lining and that is the opportunity for our staff to get to know our clients on a more personal level which makes these challenges worth it. On today's route, we learned that Rye-Ji knows how to use sign language. One of our clients, Sheila, is deaf and Rye-Ji just happened to sign enough to make a connection with this senior. Sheila lives alone and likely doesn't have a large deaf community supporting her. Sheila's face lit up when Rye-Ji signed to her that we'd like to take her picture. Sheila agreed but only if we let her go inside and fix her hair first. We think she looks absolutely beautiful!

Another notable stop came with Richard. Recently, Richard suffered from a stroke and now has to use a wheelchair to get around. He was waiting for us at the door and clearly had a deep connection with Rye-Ji.

He showered her with compliments for being warm and friendly, and told us about how important

Meals on Wheels was to his recovery and overall health. We could tell it was his daily visits from Rye-Ji that he looked forward to most.

Our last client of the day was Ocie. Ocie is in a recovery program and makes jewelry to keep his hands and mind busy. He left us with enough of his creations to hand to all of our staff who don't experience the pleasure of visiting with our clients.

As much as we adored watching Rye-Ji interact with our clients and to see how much they looked forward to her visits, we need Rye-Ji in the office! There are so many seniors calling in who need meals and she needs to be there to help them.

Whether it's a route in Metro, East County, North County, or South County, we ALWAYS need volunteers! Our volunteers save us upwards of \$3 million a year in staffing expenses. If you or a friend are looking for a rewarding and meaningful experience, please reach out today to learn how you can help put a smile on a senior's face...and yours, too!



**Rye-Ji - Operations Specialist
Sheila - Client
Brent - CEO**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Special Connections

Residing in San Diego since 1966, Jacqueline and Richard Songer begin their daily Friday morning delivery at 10:30 a.m., a routine they have been doing for the last fifteen years. Since dedicating these years to Meals on Wheels San Diego County, the Songers have been able to build the most incredible connections with the clients they serve. Married for 39 years, the Songers appreciated this special time spent together. "We love the clients and volunteers we meet and the best part is that we can do it together," says Jacqueline.

One special client in particular has touched their hearts in more ways than one. Mary Ann, 89, has been with Meals on Wheels since her husband passed away in November 2020. Her husband also received Meals on Wheels prior to his passing, which is how Mary Ann first came to know our organization and volunteers. On one particular sunny Friday morning, Mary Ann came out to happily greet the Songers wearing a freshly pressed blue blouse. Jacqueline and Mary Ann were excited to show off their new manicures; Mary Ann's pink sparkly nails caught the attention of Jacqueline right away. Jacqueline and Mary Ann love to discuss what they like to do with their nails and hair, a favorite part of seeing each other.

The Songers did their usual delivery and check-in, making sure Mary Ann had everything she needed and that she was holding up okay. Richard went on to say, "This woman is one of our favorites. We love coming by here – you always have a smile and it's such a delight." The couple places high value on being able to connect with our clients, especially those like Mary Ann who are living alone and recently widowed. This friendship makes each day a little brighter for Mary Ann.

She explained how every single one of the volunteers she meets goes the extra mile to make sure she is okay and taken care of, especially after her husband's passing.



*Volunteers, Jacqueline and Richard Songer
Client, Mary Ann Lambrecht*

"They always make me feel good," she says about the Songers. "They always ask if I am doing okay, even though I know they are busy with other deliveries." The conversations she has with our volunteers are sometimes the only ones she will have for the day. When speaking about losing her husband, she explains, "It's just very lonely." In times like these, we are especially grateful to have the opportunity to make sure Mary Ann and all of our clients have the chance to feel cared for and connected.

When asked why they choose to volunteer, Jacqueline explains, "Volunteering is a way of life, a part of who we are. It is important as a person and as a citizen to give to others when and as you can. If you want a volunteer job that is rewarding, can be modified to your availability, and be deeply appreciated by the clients and their friends and family, MOW fits the bill." Thank you Jacqueline and Richard Songer for your 15 years of service. You make all the difference to this organization.



INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

CONTACT

VOLUNTEER@MEALS-ON-WHEELS.ORG

MESSAGE FROM OUR

President and CEO

A Year of Learning from the Experts

If I could summarize my first amazing year as President & CEO of Meals on Wheels, it would be that I spent my time learning from the experts - my team. I've worked in grassroots types of organizations whose impact is not always so easy to articulate and measure. What I've noted is that the sophistication and the level of individualized solutions always shine a light on the importance of person-centered programs. There is no "one size fits all" that for-profit industries can rely on for more volume and less expense to the organization. We have 2,000 clients on any given day and which means there are 2,000 distinct ways of caring for people that will make us more effective. It's mind-blowing and who we are at our core. It's how we can really effectively address what so many refer to as the Social Determinants of Health.

So how do I learn all the nuances? This summer we created a CEO Shadow Program, and I have had the absolute pleasure of shadowing my remarkable colleagues to see what goes into making our wheels turn, so to speak, at Meals on Wheels. I got to visit our different sites around the county with staff who chose to participate and sit for a few hours and learn, roll up my sleeves, and share some good laughs. I've helped with client intakes and adding clients to new routes in our East County site. I've scooped muffins, poured our delicious

soup into individual bowls for our clients, and worked on the assembly line of packing food at our Meal Center.

I've processed donations by check and credit card and observed how CalFresh is charged for qualified clients. I even got to see the magic of our receptionist in South County who answers the phone in both perfect English and perfect Spanish addressing a myriad of questions from menu options to delivery times and costs, with remarkable skill and a servant leader's heart.

As we plot our growth and emphasize person-centered solutions, the only way that I can make the heart to head connection of what we need to do is by sitting with my teachers. In doing so, I can say that we have the best people working with us and we are truly impacting the lives of the older adults we serve here in San Diego County. We've got this!

Thank you,



Brent Wakefield



MEET OUR NEW

Volunteer Manager

Dear Meals on Wheels Family,

I am thrilled to serve you as the new Volunteer Manager here at Meals on Wheels San Diego County. With my numerous years of nonprofit experience, I plan to take our volunteer program to the next level by simultaneously growing our volunteer base and enhancing the overall volunteer experience.

Firstly, a huge THANK YOU to our volunteers! The pandemic has been devastating for many, especially for our seniors, and we could not have continued to serve them during this crucial period without the tireless efforts of our volunteers. What a difference it makes in a senior's life to see a friendly face, safely delivering a meal and checking in on their well-being during this time of increased isolation.

Since this time last year, our volunteers have delivered over 640,000 meals to seniors and veterans with disabilities in San Diego County. To accomplish this, our volunteers drove over 680,000 miles and dedicated over 100,000 hours of time. Incredible! Meals on Wheels volunteers have shown that no matter the obstacle, they are committed to helping seniors in our community.

My vision for our volunteer program moving forward is to enhance the overall volunteer experience by building a culture of engagement. Keeping volunteers apprised more regularly about Meals on Wheels news and activities will allow volunteers to see how their efforts impact the organization as a whole. Another way I plan to enhance the volunteer experience is by utilizing and identifying new resources to improve the operational side of volunteering, such as leveraging better technology to optimize routes and reduce driving time.

Finally, I want to cultivate open communication among our volunteers and want to hear from you. Do you have suggestions for improvements? Heartwarming delivery stories to share? Ideas to recruit more volunteers? We greatly value feedback and I encourage volunteers to share their thoughts by contacting us here: volunteer@meals-on-wheels.org.

Thank you again for all that you do for seniors in our community.

Sincerely,



Vivian Grifantini
Volunteer Manager

**“
OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE THE
FOUNDATION OF OUR
ORGANIZATION AND MAKE
OUR SERVICE TO SENIORS
POSSIBLE.
”**



NEWS AROUND TOWN

Meals on Wheels

HELLO FROM...

MEAL CENTER

Meet our newest dish: Italian Tortellini Pasta with Tomatoes and Olives. This dish has been one of the most well-received and enjoyed recipes we have introduced. One woman sang its praises by leaving a message in an Italian-inspired song, using each ingredient as the lyrics! "Tortelliiiiinnnniiiiii, tomatoeeeee, olives, and artichoooookes pasta is fantastic," adding at the end that she is Italian and she approves. This kind of reaction is what the kitchen works so hard to produce: nutritious meals and happy seniors.

EAST COUNTY

East County is thankful for the generous \$5,000 donation from HA Builder, Santee-Lakeside Rotary Club's large donation of "We Care" packages for our clients' birthdays and holiday gifts, as well as our volunteer, Nancy Graham, for spearheading her MOW project, "Operation Doorbell," providing doorbells to our clients who are hard of hearing!

East County Service Center Manager, Tim Ray



METRO

Metro is currently offering "The Meal a Day Program." It provides Promise Zone community members 62 years and older with access to healthy foods. By residing in the designated Promise Zone zip codes (92101, 92102, 92105, 92113, 92114) you are qualified to receive ONE MEAL A DAY for the suggested payment of \$1.00.

Metro Service Center Manager, Willy Gloria



NORTH COUNTY

North County is planning our Annual Holiday Concert. We are hoping to be able to hold an in-person live concert on Saturday, December 11, 2021, at the Carlsbad Community Church. Considering the unknown future development of the pandemic, there is a possibility that we might revamp the live concert and resort to a holiday CD! Fingers crossed!

North County Service Center Manager, Charlotte Fan



SOUTH COUNTY

South County Volunteer Advisory Committee took a short summer break and will start meeting again on the third Monday of each month by Zoom. Our focus over the next year will be to become organizational ambassadors in the community. Anyone interested in joining can contact our office for the Zoom link, date, and meeting time.

South County Service Center Manager, Chequita Falls



YOUR SUPPORT IS APPRECIATED

You Keep Us Going

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

It is clients like Art Seamans, 90, who motivate us to continue to serve seniors in our community. After joining Meals on Wheels at the beginning of 2020, he shows his appreciation for the organization and our volunteers with his beautiful poetry. Thank you, Art, for the kind words.

"MEALS ON WHEELS"

“

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A CUP OF WATER

IT'S A HOT MEAL, BALANCED AND DELICIOUS,

BROUGHT RIGHT UP TO MY FRONT DOOR

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A PASSING "HOW ARE YOU DOING?"

IT'S A CANDLE LIT WITH CARE

KINDLING A BLAZE OF SIMPLE GOODNESS FAIR,

WARMING THE WINDY WORLD WE SHARE.

”

- ART SEAMANS, MEALS ON WHEELS CLIENT



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

We have had all hands on deck this season at Meals on Wheels! Just this past week, we received a donation of 800 lbs of tuna from Fisherman's Landing. This gracious donation not only contributes to the clients by offering fresh and locally-sourced tuna, but more importantly, highlights the deep roots of the community's support and it's people. From their docks to our dishes, we couldn't be more thankful to have such a wonderful connection.

As we entered the parking lot to receive the donation, we were met with a sea of smiles. What a great little shop! The donation went seamlessly! In less than twenty minutes, we were driving away with fresh, locally sourced tuna steaks.

Thank you, Larry Sasser, for maintaining connections with businesses and people, allowing for such gifts to be made possible!



Larry Sasser, Meal Center Supervisor