

## "Best Special Friend"

Sharon, 81, was referred to Meals on Wheels about a year ago after her caretaker passed away. Since joining, she says her life hasn't been the same. "I don't know what I would do without you," she says. Legally blind and living alone, Sharon relies on Meals on Wheels to get through the day. Over the past year, she has developed a special friendship with staff member and Immediate Response (IR) driver, Bret. IR Drivers are Meals on Wheels staff, hired to deliver meals in the backcountry areas of San Diego County. Sometimes they help clients with special needs, like Sharon. "I depend on him; he is my rock," she explains. They call each other "BSF" which Sharon says is code for "Best Special Friend".

The "BSFs" have grown to love each other's company and Sharon explains she sees Bret as a friend, not an employee. Bret has been with Meals on Wheels for about as long as Sharon has been a client. He says, "This doesn't feel like a job, it feels like a friendship." After Bret brings Sharon her two daily meals, he reads to her what is on the menu for the day, sets up her lunch, and then places her dinner in the fridge. He then fills up her sippy cups, which she uses so she doesn't spill, with coffee, per their routine. When Sharon is all set with her coffee and food, Bret will take out the trash and help with little things around the house while they talk about their days. This has been their routine since the beginning and it is something



Client, Sharon

both of them look forward to every day. "Sometimes he brings me peanut butter cookies from the Meals on Wheels kitchen, which are my favorite!" she beams.

Sharon's sense of optimism is contagious to everyone around her. She smiles and says, "I am right now, truly content and that has 99% to do with your organization and Bret. He comes in and all is right in the world and my heart is full." If it weren't for Bret and Meals on Wheels, Sharon wouldn't be able to live in her home in which she has resided in since she came to San Diego 40 years ago. Her home is the only place she feels safe being blind and she feels comfort knowing she can stay. The independence she gains from Meals on Wheels is priceless. When asked what Meals on Wheels means to her she says, "Really the biggest difference they make in my day is just having someone stopping and talking to me for a minute." Stories like Sharon's and Bret's inspire all of us and shows just how much Meals on Wheels is needed *and* wanted.



Sharon and IR Driver, Bret

## MESSAGE FROM OUR *President and CEO*

Spring is a time of great hope and energy. We focus on what we aim to achieve and with optimism in our hearts we dive in and make the magic happen. In the month of March, Meals on Wheels organizations all across the country celebrated our advocates and our champions. In fact, we hosted a Champions Week with celebrities and elected officials who turned out in record numbers to deliver meals to homebound seniors because they choose to live in a world where people may age with grace and where citizens care for their elders. This is the world we want to live in here at Meals on Wheels and why we advocate for seniors.

This advocacy is so critical here in California where we will be the "oldest state" in the nation by 2030. But in California we also do things better and innovate and find solutions that the rest of the country then follows. The CA Department of Aging believes this to be true, Meals on Wheels California believes this to be true, and so do we at Meals on Wheels San Diego. The force of our Advocates at the state and local levels is formidable and we send this newsletter to underscore that and celebrate all of you. Thank you for being a fierce senior advocate and for making a difference in so many lives. Our world is better because of you.

Onward with hope and courage!



Brent Wakefield



President and CEO

## YOU'RE INVITED *To Our Galaxy Gala!*



Join us for a night of dancing and fun! Enjoy silent and live auctions, live entertainment, and our famous Chef Appetizer Showcase! We are so excited to celebrate and honor our supporters.

### Special thanks to our sponsors:

#### **\$20,000:**

- Gary and Mary West Foundation
- Scatena Daniels Communications

#### **\$10,000**

- Robert and Susan Snyder - *in memory of Dolly Snyder*

#### **\$5,000**

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**PURCHASE TICKETS TODAY:**  
[www.meals-on-wheels.org/events](http://www.meals-on-wheels.org/events)

Questions? Contact Jenna Snyder  
at [jsnyder@meals-on-wheels.org](mailto:jsnyder@meals-on-wheels.org)



## IN THE COMMUNITY *Champions Week 2022*

Champion's Week, which is a part of Meals on Wheels America's nationwide initiative - *March for Meals* - was a huge success thanks to the "Champions" who joined us to make deliveries to our seniors. This year, we witnessed a record number of participants which included over 50 elected officials, San Diego County Sheriff lieutenants and deputies, and other public figures. These Champions not only delivered meals and smiles, they helped raise awareness for the nutritional and social needs of seniors across San Diego County. All these inspirational individuals came together to show their support for the well-being of seniors across San Diego and we couldn't be more grateful.



**Board Chair, Antoinette Middleton and  
Dr. Shirley Weber, Secretary of State**

Special shout out to Mayor Todd Gloria for kicking off our event and the Honorable Dr. Shirley Weber for presenting an inspirational speech at our closing event. See you next year!

**District Two Councilmember,  
Jennifer Campbell**



**Mayor Todd Gloria and Board  
Chair, Antionette Middleton**



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT *Filling the Need*

Meals on Wheels volunteer, Larry Coffinberry, has dedicated 30 loving years to helping and befriending seniors across San Diego County. Originally from Oakland, Larry has resided near Old Town since 1969 with no plans to ever leave this beautiful town. While he has dedicated his time to many worthy organizations, Meals on Wheels San Diego County is the one with which he has stayed the longest. During the most crucial time during the pandemic, Larry generously delivered meals every single day for over two months. He says, humbly, "I just knew the need was there and I had the time to do it so I didn't mind."

Now delivering every Saturday, he has grown close with the clients he visits. He says his favorite thing about Meals on Wheels is the people. From the staff to the clients, Larry has developed meaningful relationships with so many of us. One client, in particular, has touched his heart, always eager to give him fruit off of her avocado tree every time she sees him. One Christmas, in return, Larry brought her a gift. After expressing her gratitude she said, "You know, this is probably the only Christmas present I am going to get". That's something he will never forget.

Relationships like this one are what makes Meals on Wheels so very special to both clients and volunteers. Thank you, Larry, for your dedication to the health and well-being of seniors in our community and for making so many seniors smile for the past 30 years!

**Volunteer, Larry Coffinberry**



**INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING? CONTACT  
VOLUNTEER@MEALS-ON-WHEELS.ORG.**

## NEWS AROUND TOWN

# Meals on Wheels

### *Pet Vet Program*

In February of this year, Meals on Wheels San Diego County and Helen Woodward Animal Center (HWAC) teamed up to create a brand new program for all Meals on Wheels clients who receive free cat and dog food through our joint AniMeals program. This program launched a mobile vet clinic that will be visiting all Meals on Wheels locations throughout the county in order to serve every client that owns a pet or pets who would like to have someone check up on their furry friends. We know that veterinary care can be costly for most of our seniors, so this program allows all of our clients to bring their pet in for a free check-up, thanks to the Lewyt Family's incredibly generous donation. The relationship a senior has with their pet can reduce stress, loneliness, and even blood pressure.

Anyone who has ever had a pet can understand how important these friends can be to seniors living alone. We are so grateful to be able to partner with such an amazing organization as HWAC and to be able to give our clients peace of mind knowing their little friends are healthy and happy. We can't wait to see more of these precious animals!



### HELLO FROM...

### MEAL CENTER

With the abundance of fruits and vegetables this season has to offer, we have been busily developing new menu items to include robust flavors of the Mediterranean and bright flavors of the tropics. New menu items are not the only thing emerging this season, we have also welcomed a new Food Center Manager, Mike Wolfenden, onto our team!

### EAST COUNTY

A special thanks to HA Builder for donating \$5,000 toward gas cards for our volunteers. Our volunteers are the driving force behind getting meals to our clients. And, with the soaring gas prices, it's creating a strain on our volunteers' wallets. We couldn't make this happen without your support. We appreciate you!

### METRO

Metro is currently recruiting individuals who are passionate about our seniors to form an Advocacy & Civic Engagement group, focusing on Education, Communication, and Leadership to help advance key senior-related issues. Interested? Email Willy Gloria: [wgloria@meals-on-wheels.org](mailto:wgloria@meals-on-wheels.org).

### NORTH COUNTY

North County Service Center held our 44th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Drive-Through Celebration on Saturday, April 23, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the North County Service Center parking lot. We thanked our amazing volunteers and honored the ones for receiving their milestone service awards, 5 to 25 years' service certificates. Hats off to all of them!!

### SOUTH COUNTY

After 2+ years of working out of the gymnasium at the Norman Park Senior Center, we are so excited to have begun the remodel for our South County offices. We are looking forward to inviting the community to an open house very soon!