

## A SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP

# Hope Springs *Eternal*



Upon arriving at Navy Veteran Bob Stanford's beautiful Lakeside home, Meals on Wheels San Diego County volunteer, Elana, was greeted with a bag of fresh-picked lemons and oranges to take home. She has been delivering for Meals on Wheels San Diego County since April 2020 in response to the increased need for volunteers at the start of the pandemic. Bob gives Elana a fresh bag of fruit from his trees every Friday to thank her for delivering his Meals on Wheels lunch. Smiling, Elana stated, "That's just the kind of man Bob is." Although Bob receives meals every day, Friday is the day he most looks forward to because of his new friend, Elana. With his generous personality and her bright and bubbly demeanor, the two formed a strong bond from the very beginning.

When Bob welcomed Elena into his charming home, his tall pile of books and crossword puzzles were laid about the living room. He explained how, since he is often by himself, he loves to spend his time reading and he finishes a book almost every day. Elana was inspired by his love for reading and now likes to bring him books by his favorite authors whenever she finds one.

Bob currently resides in the home that he and his late wife, Beverly, built over 50 years ago. The two were married for 45 years and had two sons, Terry and Bob II. After graduating from UC Berkeley, Bob began serving in the Navy as an officer specializing in anti-submarine warfare for five years until moving on to become a junior high-school teacher.



His wife taught alongside him as a music teacher in Santee. His devotion to teaching resonated with Elana, who spent the majority of her career in the school system. With Elana also having a son in the military, the two have a lot in common. He lit up talking about his years teaching 5th grade and coaching girls softball, saying, "Looking back – I have had a wonderful life." When his wife passed a few years back, Bob knew he would need help, so he began services with us.

Elana looks forward to seeing Bob every week. She commented, "Bob is 90 years old, but he still comes out to greet me every Friday." Their special relationship continues to develop each week as they learn more and more about each other. When asked what Bob loves most about Elana, he said, "Well, she always talks to me - she smiles and is always happy to be here." These interactions shared between Bob and Elena are one of the things that bring joy to Bob's life, his loneliness eased with each visit. One day, Bob surprised Elana with a flower from his tree, and now she looks forward to a flower from Bob every Friday that accompanies the fresh fruit. These stories let us know that not only are we making days brighter for our seniors, but our seniors are doing the same for our volunteers.

As we finished our visit with Bob and thanked him for his time, he sent us off with this heart-warming statement: "I don't know what I would do without you guys!" Thank you, Bob, for your kindness and appreciation for our volunteers. We sure do appreciate you!



## MESSAGE FROM OUR

## President and CEO

Hope springs eternal, and there is no better time than the spring to talk about our hope for our future at Meals on Wheels San Diego County. The year of challenges we just faced had a definite silver lining; we saw how good we are at adapting to change and finding solutions. In our rush to deliver nearly 50% more meals almost overnight when the pandemic began, we learned that we are resourceful, dedicated, and resilient. As Italian novelist, Giuseppe Tomasi, from the early 20th century once wrote, "Everything must change for everything to remain the same."

In our newfound confidence, Meals on Wheels San Diego County has embarked upon a bold strategic plan for the next three years based on our experiences and lessons learned. We've convened our dedicated Board of Trustees, community partners, colleagues, and volunteers to identify the areas we need to focus on in order to serve more seniors, improve the quality of our services, and expand to meet the ever-changing demands of our growing older adult population. Our major areas of focus will include:

- Increase both the quantity and diversity of seniors we serve;
- Maximize efficiency in our operations and aim to have an even stronger presence in all corners of the county;
- Improve on our "More than a Meal" mantra by utilizing technology that enhances our wrap-around services and increases the quality time our clients spend with volunteers;
- Focus on how to recruit and retain an even larger pool of active volunteers;
- Expand our food offerings so that special dietary needs and cultural preferences can be front and center;
- Collaborate with healthcare providers to improve health outcomes of their older adult patients, minimize hospitalizations, and reduce healthcare costs;
- Shift any residual thoughts of "I have to call upon Meals on Wheels" to a new and enthusiastic perspective of "I get to call upon Meals on Wheels!"

Did you know that in San Diego County there are over 700,000 adults over the age of 60? We are currently serving 2,000 each day, so that begs the questions, are the other 698,000 seniors having their nutritional needs met and are they receiving daily visits from people who care about them? If you can imagine, in 10 years that number will be closer to 1,000,000 adults in San Diego County who are over 60 years of age. We all need to roll up our sleeves and be smart about how we can be the right resource for our seniors.



With the work of you, our volunteers, donors, and clients, we are building the change that will allow our special grassroots relationship with our clients to remain the same: heartfelt and meaningful. After a pandemic year of pivoting and reinventing, we embrace change and welcome you to embark upon this journey with us. Thank you!

Brent Wakefield



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### *A Call to Action*

Almost every single day, volunteer Carleen Joseph happily drives back to a South County drop site to return the coolers that were once packed with food. After a morning full of visiting with her regular clients, Carleen is overflowing with gratitude. An all-star volunteer, Carleen shows up 6 days a week, almost every week, to deliver to her favorite seniors across Imperial Beach.

Since 2017, Carleen has slowly begun to take on more routes, more days, and more clients. She knew after her retirement she wanted to do more for the community. One day, when filling out a donation form for Meals on Wheels San Diego County, she saw the small check box to indicate interest in volunteering, and the rest was history. Over two years later, Carleen has formed long-lasting friendships with not only the clients but also her fellow volunteers. One client in particular has always enjoyed visits from Carleen. The former SDSU professor would invite Carleen into his garden to give her beautiful flowers and goodies pre-COVID. This kind of bond between client and volunteer is what Carleen finds the most rewarding. "I always make sure to ask them how they are doing, how they are feeling, and make sure everything is okay," she says.

In her rare days off, her time is filled with helping care for her grandkids, who sometimes like to come out on routes with her. "I like them to learn to be helpers and give back to the community – you have to help each other out," she explains. Her eldest grandchild would often go with her on her routes and thanked her for letting her tag along, realizing how important it is to give back.

Passing along her giving nature to her grandchildren, she hopes to do the same with our readers. ***We are in need of volunteers all the time, especially in South County.*** She urges people to come out and help. For just a couple of hours a day, you can make all the difference in the world. She goes on to explain, "When the pandemic first started, we had so many volunteers and it was amazing to see. Now, they are just gone. People had to go back to work but the need is still here." We hope that volunteers like Carleen show our community just how rewarding and necessary volunteering is. Thank you, Carleen, for your years of dedication!



*Volunteer, Carleen*

#### MY FAVORITE PART ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IS...

**"TALKING TO OUR CLIENTS AND LETTING THEM KNOW SOMEONE CARES ABOUT THEM."**

*- Volunteer, Elena*

**"DOING SOMETHING GOOD FOR THE PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY."**

*- Volunteer, Mallory*

**"SEEING HOW APPRECIATIVE THE CLIENTS ARE FOR THE FRESH MEALS WE ARE BRINGING THEM!"**

*- Volunteer, Quang*

**"TEACHING MY KIDS THAT WE CAN HELP."**

*- Volunteer, Fernanda*

**"SEEING THE SMILES ON SENIORS' FACES. IT REMINDS ME OF THE GOOD WE ARE DOING FOR THE COMMUNITY."**

*- Volunteer, Charles*





## MEET OUR NEW

## Board Members

“

**I AM THOROUGHLY  
COMMITTED TO ENSURING  
THAT OUR SENIORS DO NOT  
SUFFER FOOD INSECURITIES  
AND LONELINESS.**

”



### ***Meet Jolene***

I have always had a soft spot in my heart for seniors but it was taken to another level when I experienced my first Meals on Wheels Gala. Soon after, I volunteered my time on the Event Planning Committee, naturally. This gave me a deeper appreciation for all that MOW did as a non-profit and the culture they represented within: family.

I believe with both my previous career as a 20-year veteran commercial/retail banker and currently a small business owner, I can bring fresh ideas and help MOW continue to touch the hearts of both seniors and veterans alike, one meal at a time!



**- Board Member, Jolene Marquez**



**- Board Member, Betty Torano**

### ***Meet Betty***

My journey with Meals on Wheels began 5 years ago when I became a volunteer to deliver meals, smiles, and wellness checks to our seniors in South County. To this date, I continue to deliver my route; my clients are awesome!

I was honored to accept the position in early 2020. Shortly after, the pandemic hit and my commitment as a volunteer never wavered and I continued to serve our homebound seniors during these crucial times. I am so proud of our MOW organization.

Despite my active real estate business, I will always make time to give back to my community, especially to our vulnerable homebound seniors. I am thoroughly committed to ensuring that our seniors do not suffer food insecurities and loneliness.

### ***Meet Aaron***

Causes that advance senior health and independence have been near and dear to me for my entire life, shaped in my formative years through the very close relationships I had with my grandparents, volunteer work at assisting living homes, and through a parent's career at a retirement community in Northern California. I have also spent my professional career in the energy industry serving customers in our community, including those who are most vulnerable.

Over ten years ago, I was introduced to Meals on Wheels through a volunteer and I never looked back. I am humbled to have been elected to the Board to continue service to seniors and I look forward to working alongside compassionate, committed, and service-driven leaders.



**- Board Member, Aaron Franz**



## NEWS AROUND TOWN

### Meals on Wheels

#### HELLO FROM...

#### MEAL CENTER

The kitchen has been hard at work meeting the increase in demand. With new equipment like our new cupping machine, our staff now has more time to pack our fresh lunches, like our new Asian slaw with peanut dressing and teriyaki steak strips! We are also introducing brand new salad and soups that our seniors love.

#### EAST COUNTY

East County thanks the City of Santee, the City of El Cajon, San Carlos United Methodist Church, Foothills United Methodist Church, La Mesa Rotary Club, and Santee Lakeside Rotary Club for their contributions as well as those who donated the beautiful "We Care" packages over the past year for our senior clients!

#### NORTH COUNTY

The North County Service Center had our 43rd Annual Volunteer Appreciation "Drive Through" Celebration on Thursday, April 22, 2021 to honor our dedicated volunteers, who selflessly donate their time and gas bringing smiles and care to our seniors during the pandemic. We wanted to celebrate our volunteers who have reached their milestone service years of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 35 years. Thank you!



#### METRO

Congratulations to Metro's own Sharp Coronado Auxiliary volunteers who recently received the Sharp Community Pillar CORE Award! Sharp Coronado Hospital Auxiliary Department has a long-standing partnership with Meals on Wheels San Diego County. The Auxiliary volunteers deliver meals to Coronado Island.

#### SOUTH COUNTY

We need you! In the past 12 months we have had a 45% increase in clients who need our help. Come deliver meals in South Bay! We deliver meals to the International Border Area (Otay Mesa, San Ysidro, Nestor, and Imperial Beach). Do you have family and or friends that are looking for something meaningful to do? Please send them our way!

#### YOUNG AT HEART

Metro client of 6 years, Gloria Grant, woke up one day this year and decided she wanted to jump out of a plane, with a parachute of course! The 93-year-old adrenaline junkie says, "I really hadn't planned on jumping, I guess something told me to do it on my birthday! I didn't feel afraid at all."

Gloria took the plunge alongside combat soldiers in training. Surrounded by these soldiers, Gloria walked fearlessly up to the small plane. She laughed when she explained the look of shock on the soldiers' faces as she boarded the plane. As they all sat lined up on the u-shaped seats, the instructors started counting down with each jump. Finally, it was time for Gloria to jump, 3-2-1, go! With an audience watching her from her church, she soared above Perris, California. Gloria explained how amazing the experience was for her, never once closing her eyes. "When the parachute went up I just thought to myself 'wow, it is so beautiful!'"

Gloria receives meals 3 days a week from Meals on Wheels and says, "My favorite thing about Meals on Wheels is that I don't have to cook!" We love that we are able to help Gloria stay independent and adventurous by helping her stay in her home. When asked what else she wants to do with her life she replied with a smile, "Just to help all the people that I can!" Gloria is an inspiration to us all. With her forever young spirit, she will surely touch many more lives over the years!



## YOUR SUPPORT IS APPRECIATED

*You Keep Us Going*

We had the best time celebrating Champions Week, an annual event allowing over a dozen local officials to show support for our seniors. Our clients appreciated the visits and fun interactions they had with all of our amazing leaders. It was a memorable week and we can't wait for next year!

### Thank you to our champions!

- Dr. Shirley N. Weber - CA Secretary of State
- Ed Musgrove - San Marcos Councilmember
- Ilima-Lei Macfarlane - MMA Champion Fighter
- Esther C Sanchez - Oceanside Mayor
- Summer Stephan - District Attorney
- Jill Galvez - Chula Vista District 2 Councilmember
- Jennifer Campbell - San Diego District 2 Council President
- Randy Walton - San Marcos District 2 Councilmember
- Kori Jensen - Oceanside District 1 Councilmember
- Marni Von Wilpert - San Diego District 5 Councilmember
- Jim Desmond - District 5 Board of Supervisors
- Alejandra Sotelo-Solis - National City Mayor
- Paul McNamara - Escondido Mayor
- Mary Salas - Chula Vista Mayor
- Raul Campillo - San Diego District 7 Councilmember
- Sean Elo-Rivera - San Diego District 9 Councilmember
- Joel Anderson - District 2 Board of Supervisors
- Liana LeBaron - Lemon Grove Councilmember
- Kristi Beck - Solana Beach Deputy Mayor
- Tasha Boerner-Horvath - 76th District Assemblymember

- Nora Vargas - District 1 Board of Supervisors
- Matthew Leyba-Gonzalez - Imperial Beach Councilmember
- Randy Voepel - District 71 Assemblymember
- Jewel Edson - Solana Beach District 3 Councilmember
- Christopher Rodriguez - Oceanside District 2 Councilmember
- Joe LaCava - San Diego District 1 Councilmember
- Rebecca Jones - San Marcos Mayor



*CA Secretary of State, Dr. Shirley N. Weber*



*District 2 Supervisor, Joel Anderson*



**REELS ON WHEELS**

**GREASE**

**SING-A-LONG**

Drive-In Gala

**AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup>**

Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina

6 PM - 10 PM

**SAVE THE DATE!**