

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

71 YEARS Side by Side



For Ernie and Lorene Crawford, some of life's most meaningful moments are also the simplest: sharing a meal, seeing a familiar face at the door, or simply being together in their home they built themselves over 40 years ago.

After 71 years of marriage, Ernie and Lorene, both in their 90s have built a lifetime around those simple joys.

As they've grown older, their family has had to navigate new challenges. After Ernie suffered a stroke, his mobility became limited, and he could no longer spend time in the kitchen as he once did. Lorene is experiencing early onset dementia.

"He loved being in the kitchen. He was the one I would always cook with growing up. His favorite thing was baking, and so that was our special thing to do together," their daughter Katrina remembers.

Like many families, their daughter can't always be there in person. Katrina's own daughter is experiencing health problems that have caused her family to move several hours away. Katrina is no longer able to stop in and check on her parents the way she once did. Knowing that a Meals on Wheels volunteer is stopping by with a meal, a friendly smile, and a moment of connection brings Katrina and her family much needed peace of mind.

Meals on Wheels San Diego County helps bridge that distance for her.

"The most special part is knowing that somebody's checking on them," she shares. "Knowing somebody is a familiar face to them that they're looking forward to seeing."

And there are still plenty of reasons to celebrate. Earlier this summer, Ernie and Lorene joined us at our Senior Prom Gala, where their remarkable 71-year love story earned them the titles of Prom King and Queen. It was a joyful evening celebrating a lifetime of love—and a beautiful reminder that the everyday moments of happiness are worth celebrating, too. Ernie and Lorene still have their sashes and crowns displayed in their kitchen hutch. Ernie humbly asked us after the event, **"I heard you raised more than ever at the gala...do you think my wife and I had anything to do with that? That would make us feel so good to know."** Yes, Ernie, we sure do! We all fell in love with this couple who are still so in love!

Meals on Wheels is honored to help Ernie and Lorene continue sharing life at home, side by side, and have our donors like you to thank.



Ernie and Lorene Crawford are crowned King and Queen by our CEO, Brent Wakefield, at our Senior Prom Gala earlier this year.



SCAN TO MEET
ERNIE & LORENE

Dear Meals on Wheels Friends and Family,

"I wonder if Wendy is delivering my lunch today. She's my favorite!"

"I need to get dressed and straightened up because Meals on Wheels folks are showing up in a little bit."

"They always remember my birthday. I wonder if they'll remember this year, too. Last year, they brought me flowers."

"I have a question about my new doctors. Maybe my Meals on Wheels volunteer can help me figure out who to call."

"Is that volunteer bringing her grandson today? I just love that little boy. His smile could light up a room!"

These are just a few of the thousands of **Moments That Matter** happening every day across San Diego County when a Meals on Wheels volunteer walks up to the door of a senior client. Everything we are doing today to grow and become more sophisticated is ultimately about creating more of these simple, yet profound, moments throughout our county. We know that 20 or 30 years from now, these same moments, thoughts, and smiles will still be the medicine we all need. And we will always rely on our volunteers and supporters like you to make this magic happen.

A big, heartfelt thank you for caring and for making a difference.

Thank you for the moments.



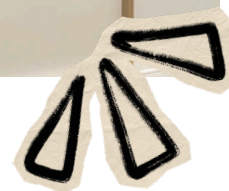
Brent Wakefield

Brent Wakefield | PRESIDENT & CEO

Welcome, Stephanie!

We're excited to welcome Stephanie as our new Volunteer Manager! Stephanie has been part of the Meals on Wheels San Diego County family for the past three years, beginning as an IR Driver at our South County Service Center before serving as Volunteer Coordinator and Assistant Manager.

Throughout her time with Meals on Wheels, Stephanie has seen firsthand the incredible impact our volunteers make in the lives of our clients. In her new role, she looks forward to supporting our dedicated volunteer community and creating meaningful experiences for those who give their time to serve our neighbors.





Peter Pan Man



Leung Bun “Bunny” Lau and Peter Wilkinson, aka Peter Pan Man.

When Peter Wilkinson arrives at Leung Bun “Bunny” Lau’s door with his Meals on Wheels delivery, there’s a good chance he’ll be greeted by a familiar name: “Peter Pan Man.”

Peter began delivering to Bunny, who is living with Alzheimer’s, in 2022. Early on, Bunny gave him a nickname he could remember that has stuck ever since.

“I think it was just a way for Bunny to remember my name,” Peter says. “He chose Peter Pan. So that is literally how he addresses me when I see him. I love it!”

Bunny is cared for by his son, David. As remembering names and faces has become more difficult, David keeps photos of familiar people in a photo book nearby to help his father hold onto those connections. Peter’s photo is among them.

David says Bunny associated Peter with the beloved Disney character, connecting a good memory with “a really good guy.” While Bunny has forgotten some people he has known much longer, David says Bunny has never forgotten Peter’s name.

Through their weekly visits, Peter has gotten to know the remarkable life and stories behind Bunny’s door. He has learned about Bunny’s journey to the United States from China, his career as an architect, and the buildings he helped design in downtown San Diego.

One visit in particular has stayed with Peter. As they looked through photos of buildings Bunny had helped design, Peter watched him come alive as he revisited that part of his life.

“I could appreciate his background, his struggles to get to the U.S., and his resulting pride,” Peter says.

Their connection has also grown through music. After learning that Bunny played violin and sang, Peter joined Bunny and one of his church friends for a “jam session,” with Bunny singing, his friend playing piano, and Peter playing guitar. Peter has even brought Bunny violin albums to enjoy between visits.

For David, those Monday visits make a difference, too. Peter’s arrival brings a “happy musical note” to the beginning of their week.

For Peter, it’s a reminder that the impact of volunteering can begin with something as simple as showing up.

“It’s humbling to know that I could have a positive impact on someone’s life, just by volunteering with Meals on Wheels,” Peter says.

After seven years of volunteering, Peter has learned that everyone has a journey and everyone has a story to tell— “if you are willing to listen.”

Planning for the Future—and Giving Along the Way

In about 15 years or so, I plan to retire. Like many of you, I'm trying to plan ahead—for myself, for my children, and for however many years I'll need my savings to last. And, honestly, there's a lot of guessing involved.

One thing I've learned along the way is that planning for the future isn't just about saving. It's also about being thoughtful about how we use the resources we have.

AGE 70 ½ OR OLDER?

Your IRA may offer a particularly smart way to support a cause you care about. A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) allows you to make a gift directly from your IRA to Meals on Wheels San Diego County.

Your gift can count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) and may be excluded from your taxable income. That means you can support local seniors while potentially receiving a tax benefit—without taking the money as income first.

It's a simple way to turn money you've saved for the future into something that makes a difference today.

Could an IRA gift be right for you?

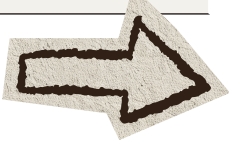
Talk with your financial or tax advisor about whether a QCD makes sense for your situation. If you decide to give, the distribution must come directly from your IRA to Meals on Wheels San Diego County to qualify.

Are you looking for a way to give differently this year? We're here to help. Feel free to reach out to me directly at abrown@meals-on-wheels.org or 619-278-4005.

Please consult your tax or financial advisor for advice specific to your situation. Tax rules and individual circumstances may vary.

I'm grateful that, as we each plan for our own futures, you continue to make a place for Meals on Wheels San Diego County in yours. Your generosity makes a lasting difference in the lives of our neighbors. Thank you.

Amie Brown
CHIEF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICER



Amie Brown

NOW OFFERING

LIVE SCAN SERVICES

Meals on Wheels San Diego County is now offering Live Scan fingerprinting services to the community. Our convenient electronic fingerprinting can be used for background checks required for employment, licensing, and more.



LEARN MORE
OR SCHEDULE
AN APPOINTMENT

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER



Senior Prom: Forever Young

This year's **Senior Prom: Forever Young Gala** was a joyful celebration of community, generosity, and the connections that make our work possible. Together, our supporters helped raise an incredible **\$725,000, surpassing our \$675,000 goal** and making the evening one to remember.

A highlight of the night was honoring **the Navarra Family and Jerome's Furniture** for their commitment to Meals on Wheels San Diego County and the seniors we serve. That spirit of generosity continued throughout the evening. Their support, alongside the generosity of everyone in the room, will help provide nutritious meals, wellness checks, friendly visits, and meaningful human connection to older adults throughout San Diego County.

One of the evening's sweetest moments came with the crowning of Meals on Wheels clients Ernie and Lorene as our Prom King and Queen. Married for 71 years, the couple brought the Forever Young theme to life and offered a beautiful reminder of the people and relationships at the heart of our mission.

From dinner and dancing, to an exciting live auction, the evening was filled with moments of connection and celebration, all in support of helping seniors remain independent, connected, and cared for in their own homes.

We are deeply grateful to our honorees, sponsors, donors, gala committee, volunteers, and everyone who joined us for this special evening. Because of you, the impact of one unforgettable night will be felt by San Diego seniors all year long.



Join us for next year's gala!



Save
THE DATE

06.05.27

KONA KAI RESORT

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