

The **WHEELER** report

Metro Meals on Wheels Newsletter – Spring 2015

The numbers back it up – Meals on Wheels provides more than just a meal

We're fond of saying Meals on Wheels provides more than just a meal. Healthy food is definitely important for those who get Meals on Wheels, but for many, the daily visit from a friendly volunteer is just as valued.

There are plenty of anecdotes to back this up ranging from volunteers changing light bulbs for meal recipients to those who call 911 when a meal recipient doesn't answer the door because of a fall. While the value volunteers bring to meal recipients in the form of a friendly visit was no secret to us, Meals on Wheels America recently conducted a scientific study to see whether this extra service provided by Meals on Wheels was quantifiable. The More than a Meal Research Study also examined health outcomes related to the daily delivery of nutritious food.

In conjunction with the Brown University School for Public Health, Meals on Wheels America surveyed 626 people on Meals on Wheels waiting lists from locations throughout the country. Recipients were then split into three groups: those who received daily delivery of meals, weekly delivery of meals and those who remained on the waiting list. *Note: While programs in other states have waiting lists due to high demand for home-delivered meals, programs in the Twin Cities have not yet had to implement them.*

So did those who received the delivery of daily meals reap the benefits of better health and decreased social isolation, as we like to promote? We were pleased to find that the answer to that question was a resounding yes.

Daily meals bring better health outcomes

"It brings something to look forward to, and it brings a good, nourishing lunch." - Quote from a meal recipient in south Minneapolis

According to the study, seniors who received daily meals showed improvements in categories related to both health and quality of life. Those who received daily meal delivery demonstrated the following outcomes compared to those who did not receive

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Gardening season is finally here!

Plan to plant a little extra for meal recipients

As you're planning your vegetable plots for the growing season, we'd like to again extend the opportunity to plant fresh produce for people receiving Meals on Wheels. Since meal recipients don't always have access to fresh vegetables, a number of our neighborhood sites have decided to offer weekly delivery of fresh produce.

This year, the West 7th neighborhood site in St. Paul, Community Emergency Services (CES) in Minneapolis, Southshore Meals on Wheels in Excelsior, Hastings Meals on Wheels and Bloomington/Eden Prairie Meals on Wheels are all offering garden-fresh produce as part of regular meal delivery. Meal programs get the produce from gardens grown on site, local distributors and, in some cases, gardeners like you!

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Doug, who receives meals in his Fridley home, says the delivery volunteer might be the only person he and other recipients see all day.





The numbers back it up Continued from Page 1

meals or received frozen deliveries on a weekly basis:

- **Improved mental health, specifically decreases in depression and anxiety**
- **Improved physical health**
- **Reduced likelihood of falls**
- **Reduced feelings of isolation and loneliness**
- **Less worry about being able to remain living at home**
- **Increased feelings of safety**
- **A higher likelihood of eating healthy**

“Bringing the combination of both nutrition and social interaction is what our local Meals on Wheels programs were founded on,” says Patrick Rowan, Metro Meals on Wheels executive director. “While it certainly wasn’t a surprise to see the conclusions of this study, it’s great to know that the tireless work of more than 12,000 volunteers is not only appreciated by our meal recipients, but scientifically proven to have a positive effect on health and well-being.”

Recipients in the group that received weekly delivery of frozen meals also showed improvements in both physical and mental health. Yet in all categories, the group that received daily delivery of hot meals showed the most improvement.

Of those receiving daily meal delivery, 77 percent said that the services received from the home-delivered meals program helped them feel less lonely. Those receiving daily delivery of meals were also more likely to report improvements in their health compared to those who didn’t receive them.

Serving the most vulnerable

“One time I was laying in my bed on my stomach, and I’d rock and cry because I was so hungry. Then they showed up to help me.” - Maurice, a meal recipient in Minneapolis

As a rule, Meals on Wheels programs here in the Twin Cities serve anyone who could benefit from the service. Interested people can enroll whether they lack access to nutritious food or simply can benefit from the convenience of



having healthy food delivered daily to alleviate any problems they might have with preparing healthy meals. Meal recipients do not have to demonstrate any sort of hardship to receive meals, but the More than Meal study showed that those who request meals are significantly more vulnerable than the senior population as a whole:

In Fair or Poor Health

Nationally	in Meal Study
26%	70%

Suffer from Depression

Nationally	in Meal Study
14%	28%

Experience Anxiety

Nationally	in Meal Study
14%	31%

Unable to Shop for Groceries

Nationally	in Meal Study
23%	87%

Unable to Prepare Food

Nationally	in Meal Study
20%	69%



Meals on Wheels exists to serve all who can benefit from the service, and this study is a good reminder that many of the people our local programs serve are among our most vulnerable neighbors. For many of those folks, receiving hot meals on a daily basis means the difference between living at home or moving to a nursing home or assisted living facility.

In addition to allowing seniors and people with disabilities to live at home, where they want to live, services that help people live independently also make financial sense. The average cost of living in a nursing home in Minnesota is \$62,000. With help from programs like Meals on Wheels, our senior neighbors can live independently while avoiding this costly move for as long as possible.

Norm, who lives in Maple Grove, says Meals on Wheels helped him get back to health after a hospital stay.

3 reasons to become a sustaining donor

As a Meals on Wheels donor, you do your part to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities can live independently in our community with the help of nutritious meals and friendly visits from volunteers. Did you know you can take that commitment one step further by becoming a sustaining donor to Metro Meals on Wheels?

When you become a sustaining donor, you commit to making a monthly donation to Metro Meals on Wheels that's automatically drawn from your credit or debit card. For as little as \$5 per month, you can help ensure the stability and effectiveness of local Meals on Wheels programs.

Here's three reasons to become a sustaining donor today:

1. Donating made easy! You just sign up once and your requested donation is charged to your debit or credit card automatically each month. You can become a sustaining donor by visiting meals-on-wheels.com/sustain. If you ever need to pause your donation, you can simply contact us and we can make that happen immediately.

2. It helps everyone plan. When you become a sustaining donor, you can easily budget your donations a month or a year at a time. At the same time, it helps add certainty to our budgeting at Meals on Wheels.

3. Paperwork, be gone! By becoming a sustaining donor, you eliminate the need to complete donation forms through the mail. Also, you help us save on administrative costs so we can direct the savings to helping seniors in need. We will be sure to continue to update you on what your donation is supporting by sending you our regular newsletter.

We're kicking off our first-ever sustaining donor drive this summer and we would love for you to be a part of it. Learn more about becoming a sustaining donor at meals-on-wheels.com/sustain.

Remembering a Meals on Wheels Hero

The Meals on Wheels family experienced a staggering loss early this year when Gigi Fitzpatrick, director of the Gladstone Meals on Wheels program in North St. Paul, passed away. Gigi died Feb. 19 after a courageous battle with leukemia.

Gigi dedicated her life to supporting seniors in our community, directing the Gladstone Meals on Wheels program for the last 25 years. In addition to running the Meals on Wheels program, Gigi was responsible for a host of senior programs operated by the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District. Prior to coming to North St. Paul, she coordinated the Senior Companion Program in Minneapolis.



We're deeply saddened to lose such a tireless advocate for seniors and a beloved member of the Meals on Wheels family. We at Metro Meals on Wheels will remember Gigi as a force for good who had a knack for making everyone around her feel important, from the seniors she served to her colleagues. We could not be more appreciative of the many years she spent making life better for seniors and volunteers in our community.

Gardening season is finally here!

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You can donate your produce at the following locations:

- **Bloomington/Eden Prairie Meals on Wheels, 8400 France Avenue South, Bloomington, dropoff hours 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Monday-Friday, 952-835-1665**
- **CES Food Shelf, 1900 11th Ave., Minneapolis, dropoff hours 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday, 612-870-1125**

The best types of produce to donate are fruits and vegetables that can be eaten raw or need minimal preparation, such as salad greens, cucumbers, tomatoes, berries, radishes, etc. Produce should be thoroughly washed and can be delivered in bags or bunches.

Here's to a fruitful growing season! We're appreciative of anything extra you can share from your garden bounty.





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5 ways to learn more about what we're up to online

1. Save the date of Aug. 13 for Meals on Heels – The Party with a Purpose! Learn more at mealsonheelsevent.org.
2. Factor the Walk to End Hunger into your Thanksgiving plans! Meals on Wheels will again be among the organizations benefiting from this great event. Learn more at meals-on-wheels.com/hungerwalk.
3. Meet our volunteers! During National Volunteer Month, we recognized some of the 12,000+ volunteers that make Meals on Wheels work. Read up at our blog: meals-on-wheels.com/blog.
4. Sign up for our enewsletter to get monthly updates from us: meals-on-wheels.com/enewsletter.
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