

## Meals on Wheels Responds to COVID-19 Pandemic

In March Meals on Wheels of Wake County was faced with its biggest challenge since it was formed in 1974 – how to serve and take care of our elderly clients in the face of a national health crisis. There was no playbook to follow. The staff got together and developed a plan to transition from a daily hot meal delivery program to a once a week delivery of seven frozen meals per person. With 1,400+ clients living throughout Wake County, it was not an easy undertaking. The frozen meal program started on March 31 and will continue for the foreseeable future, until it is safe to return to daily hot meal delivery. Our clients who dined at our congregate dining rooms are also receiving the frozen meals.

“This once a week delivery provides for safer and reduced interactions between our elderly clients and the volunteers who deliver. Because of the reduced visits, our staff is continuing to call our clients to make sure they are okay and to provide additional information on services they may need. So far the change has been successful due to our dedicated volunteers and staff,” explained Executive Director Alan Winstead.



The “new” normal for MOW meal pick-up. Cars line up to receive their route sheet and have the meal boxes loaded into their cars. A volunteer commented that we worked with military precision!

## MOW Staff Updates:

### Congratulations on Promotions:

Morgan Arnold is now Assistant Director of Program Services, Client Services

Lesley Richmond is now Assistant Director of Program Services, Nutrition Services

### Welcome to New Staff:

Amy Akroyd - Administrative Assistant

Ashlynn Ehrler - Outreach Specialist

Mark Demario - truck driver

Stephanie Thurm - Americorp Service Team Member assigned to MOW



**Best Wishes to Martha Cooper** who retired in January 2020. Martha was our dedicated, hard-working administrative assistant for 23 years. She was the voice of MOW. Clients and volunteers loved hearing her voice on the other end of the phone and still ask for her. She is greatly missed, but enjoying a much deserved retirement.

Martha Cooper (center) celebrated her retirement with current MOW Executive Director Alan Winstead and former ED Vivien Keys.



**302**  
new clients added



**275**  
volunteers delivering  
each Tuesday



**10%**  
increase in meals served in  
April and May 2020

### Thank You to our Top Donors from April and May, 2020

Biogen IDEC Foundation • Blue Cross Blue Shield NC • Richard and Nancy Cavallaro • Citrix  
Coastal Federal Credit Union Foundation • CVS Health • Gaston Community Foundation  
Genworth Foundation • Hayes Barton United Methodist Church • Meals on Wheels America  
NC State Employees Credit Union • Nivison Family Foundation • PhRMA/We Work for Health • Proactive  
The Stewards Fund • UNC Rex Healthcare • White Memorial Presbyterian Church • 4 Others Foundation  
Catering Works (provides a refrigerated truck weekly for deliveries)



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
TO OUR  
100+ CLIENTS  
(BIRTHDAYS  
MAY THROUGH  
JULY, 2020)**

*Lillian – 101*

*Eloise - 101*

*Hazel - 102*

*Clydia - 103*

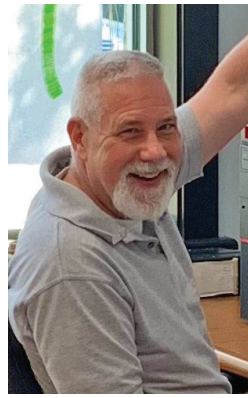
*John - 104*

*Martha - 105*

State Employees  
Combined Campaign  
donor option number  
for Meals on Wheels  
of Wake County —  
**1820**

Combined Federal  
Campaign donor  
option number for  
Meals on Wheels  
of Wake County —  
**59456**

Meals on Wheels of  
Wake County, Inc.  
is a Triangle United  
Way Member Agency.



## A Message of Gratitude from the Executive Director

*Alan Winstead*

I join the Meals on Wheels of Wake County Board of Directors and staff in sending everyone the very biggest thanks possible for the outpouring of support that we have received in response to the COVID-19 crisis. We have seen over the past weeks and months how very generous our community really is. Our participants remain resilient and our volunteers continue to show up faithfully. Our donors have outdone themselves to make certain we have the resources necessary to meet our mission. Individually and collectively, we have seen so many heroes. None of our accomplishments during this time would be possible without your tremendous support.

Since April our generous donors have donated over \$600,000 and we welcomed over 1,200 new donors to our cause. We are humbled by your support and your belief in our mission to provide meals and companionship to our local homebound senior neighbors in need.

Due to your generosity we have been able to add 300+ new clients to the program and currently do not have a waiting list. All clients, 1400+, are receiving seven frozen meals per week. And these meals are being delivered by a group of wonderful volunteers who are doing an outstanding job. We are also grateful for the donations of thousands of masks, fresh produce, greeting cards, and other supplies for our clients. We are truly blessed to be in a community of such generous and caring people.

***Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.***



**Our masked heroes! MOW had a mask contest for volunteers to show off their fun mask styles. Here's a sample: The Family of Hornets Fans, NC Pride, Ice Cream Dreams**

## Meet Ellen – Matriarch of a Large Family



Ellen with her daughter Brenda

Ellen has been a Meals on Wheels participant since 2003. She was 91 in May 2020. She loves to spend time with her family, especially her daughter Brenda, who checks on her to make sure she is being safe and following her doctor's orders. Her family is full of love and tradition. Originally from Wagram, NC, she has 9 siblings and is the mother of 10 children. She has 53 grand and great-grandchildren, with another great grandchild due this year.

Ellen worked for Dorothea Dix Hospital for over 33 years, retiring from the state with pride. She has spent many years helping those who are sick but finally recognizes that it is time to focus on her own health. Every morning she practices home rehabilitation therapy by doing small stretches, movements and walks. She loves to eat healthy foods, including vegetables and fish. Her favorite Meals on Wheels meal is crab cakes!

She also recognizes how serious the coronavirus is and is taking every precaution she needs to maintain her safety. When a Meals on Wheels volunteer arrives at her house to deliver her weekly box of 7 frozen meals, she is extremely grateful for the visit and the meals.

## Seniors and Isolation During COVID-19

In addition to being one of the most vulnerable populations to succumb to the coronavirus, homebound seniors are also at increased risk for isolation and loneliness. In a recent article by Erwin Tan, M.D., director at AARP Thought Leadership, he explains that "43% of adults age 60 or older in the U.S. reported feeling lonely. At the same time, people 60 and older and people with severe chronic health conditions — such as heart disease, lung disease and diabetes — are at higher risk for developing more serious illness from COVID-19. Americans will all likely experience increased social isolation and loneliness in combatting the pandemic. Identifying these additional health risks and developing mitigation plans are important first steps."

Dr. Tan suggests that family and friends of the elderly have a plan to help and connect regularly with their loved ones. You may not be able to visit in person, but you can connect by phone, Zoom meetings, and from the driveway. Make sure they have food, medication, and other supplies. Sometimes just a phone call to chat can be all the medicine that is needed.

Research your local community for resources that can help. The NC Division of Aging and Adult Services ([www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/daas](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/daas)), Resources for Seniors ([www.resourcesforseniors.com](http://www.resourcesforseniors.com)) here in Wake County, and the local AARP office (<https://states.aarp.org/north-carolina>) are excellent places to start. Also many local churches can provide assistance for their older members.

Know who may need assistance in your neighborhood. Senior citizens are often "unseen" by people in their own neighborhood. They are reluctant to ask for help. Take the initiative and find out what they need. Perhaps it's just a conversation, but it may be an emergency situation. Remember – it's a long day when you are alone in your home.

If we all take the time to reach out to elderly neighbors in need we can help protect them from COVID-19 as well as social isolation and loneliness.