

# NOURISH NEWS

Nourishing the Whole Person

Spring 2026



## Meeting our Neighbors Where they Are

After her longtime partner passed away, grief settled heavily over Susan. Depression followed, along with a hospitalization, the loss of her home, and the difficult navigation of transitional housing. Three years later, after moving into stable housing, Susan heard a knock at her door that would come to mean far more than just a meal. She had been connected to Meals on Wheels of Wake County. At the time, she was rebuilding her life piece by piece. "God has a reason for everything, trials and tribulations," she says with a laugh. "But sometimes I wanna say, you're pushing it, man!"

Susan is visually impaired, which makes everyday tasks - like grocery shopping or preparing meals - especially challenging. Having a hot meal delivered not only eases the strain of cooking but also brings something just as nourishing: conversation with the community volunteers who deliver her meals. She looks forward to the friendly volunteers who stop by, sometimes sending them off with fresh basil from her community garden.



Story continues on next page





*Susan holds a photo of Isabella- Isabella is shy and disappears when company comes over, but is fearless at the window watching birds flutter at the bird feeder!*

Inside her home, another presence fills the rooms with comfort-her cat, Isabella. Isabella “owns the place,” Susan says proudly, gesturing to the toys scattered around the living room. With limited income, pet supplies can be a stretch, so Susan deeply appreciates the additional pet food deliveries delivered by Meals on Wheels in partnership with the SPCA of Wake County that help her care for Isabella.

For the more than 1,400 seniors served each year by Meals on Wheels of Wake County, that knock on the door is more than a delivery – it is a lifeline. And as our county’s population continues to age, the need only grows, with countless other older adults quietly hoping for the same nourishment, connection, and reassurance that someone cares. Meals on Wheels is not simply feeding neighbors; it is strengthening the fabric of our entire community, one visit at a time.

**Thanks to your support of Meals on Wheels, seniors like Susan can remain in their homes with dignity, comfort, and the companionship that brightens even the hardest days.**



**Provide Meals for Seniors like Susan**

## What Seniors Have to Say



### Home Delivered Meals

Floyd, a longtime downtown Raleigh Resident, finds nourishment through Meals on Wheels: “I worked all my life, I paid all my bills, I provided for my family. I’ve always taken care of myself. Now I needed to know that someone could help me instead of helping someone and that’s what ya’ll now do for me. Meals on Wheels really helped me out.”

### Friendship Cafe

After Dorothy W.’s husband died in 2022, she started shopping every day just to leave the home that was so empty without him. “I was running from store to store, not for any particular things I needed, just to get out of the house,” she says. Dorothy heard about Friendship Cafe, and started attending the Redeeming Love location. “I came over here to see what it was all about. I’m a regular now. I come every day. It keeps my mind busy.”





## A Message from the Executive Director

Ashley C. McCumber



As I write this message to you, it's only one day after a horrible apartment fire in Morrisville in late February that displaced more than 70 people. As someone who has led Meals on Wheels programs for almost 20 years, the first thing I think when news arrives like this is to find out if any of our homebound clients are involved or affected. My mind always goes there because a core part of our daily mission is to make sure our clients are seen, visible, and safe. This is the same response we have during other natural disasters and even power outages. Our volunteers and staff truly become a lifeline for many in circumstances like this.

That's why I am so committed to making sure that our city, state, and federal governments are making smart and sufficient investments in the services we need for our aging population. The timing for more action in Wake County has never been more imminent. By 2040 there will be more seniors in Wake County than children and we are nowhere near prepared to meet that need.

Slightly more than 50% of our annual budget comes from fundraising from our generous annual donors and supporters. On top of that, volunteers generated over \$1 million of in-kind support, making sure our deliveries reached the more than 1,000 doors we deliver to each day.

But philanthropy alone cannot meet the need. We need an increasing amount of support across governments – city, county, state, and federal with a match in increased donations. Without both ascending together, we will have to make tough decisions and create a wait list for all programs. Wake-MOW is not alone in this conundrum; it's a problem Meals on Wheels chapters are facing nationwide. The needs are simply greater than current funding can sustain.

North Carolina's aging plan, specifically the "[All Ages, All Stages NC](#)" initiative, aims to strengthen communities and expand local support for older adults across all 100 counties. It focuses on enhancing in-home, community-based services, and digital access through regional partnerships, though implementation faces challenges due to limited state funding.

### **Key aspects of how the NC plan seeks to expand county support include:**

**Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG):** Designed to increase local flexibility in funding aging services, ensuring better coordination of services for the elderly.

**Regional Collaboration:** Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are working with counties to improve services, such as digital navigator programs, for seniors.

**Targeted Support:** The plan emphasizes strengthening local capacity to support caregivers and providing resources to help seniors remain in their communities.

**Addressing Funding Gaps:** While the plan seeks to improve services, it notes that many counties face funding shortages, often relying on limited federal funds to fill gaps in services like adult protective services and nutrition.

So, there is real hope that we can move this agenda forward in meaningful ways. But as they say, "the proof is in the pudding." Without funding, plans are just that, plans.

It's important to lift our voices and our actions to make sure that we talk about the need of our aging population. It's a moral imperative but it's also just plain smart to do so. Every dollar invested in nutrition support for seniors has been shown to save \$9 in expensive health care and skilled nursing costs.

In this election year, ask every candidate for every office that you encounter, what they will do to support seniors and create aging-friendly communities.

Vote your values and hold your elected officials accountable. Every politician "loves seniors" and their votes, but we need to ask them "what have you done for me lately?"

It's Spring and soon we will see flowers and warmer weather. Let's hope we also see a renewed commitment to ensuring the dignity and independence of our senior neighbors.

# Meals on Wheels Loves Pets!



When Michael starts his volunteering shift at Blair Drive, there is often a tiny volunteer assistant following closely behind. Michael's dog Beau has been helping deliver Meals on Wheels for the past 3 years. We asked Michael, who also serves on the board of Meals on Wheels, about his experience volunteering:

## **When did you start delivering Meals on Wheels? When did Beau join you?**

We (Beau and I) started volunteering together six years ago. Ruth, my wife, had him become a certified therapy dog – she thought it may be fun if he came with me. That's why he's so good with people - it feels natural for him to go up to people's places.

I got started when Rachel Finley, former MOW board president and a former colleague of mine at Meredith, recruited me into it. I keep doing it because I often think what wouldn't happen if I don't do it? Some really good people wouldn't get the food that they need and deserve. It's really what it is all about.

## **Why is Meals on Wheels a valuable program?**

It's simple, without Meals on Wheels many deserving people would not get a fresh meal on the daily. The program really meets a variety of needs, it's not just delivering food. It has to do with eliminating isolation, loneliness, food shortage, and building companionship.

## **What is the importance of having a pet in the home for senior clients?**

Simply put, unconditional love and companionship. I think it also helps to build confidence, keeps them connected, makes them smile.

## **How do the clients react when they see Beau delivering meals with you?**

They are always happy and willing to engage, and most importantly, spoil him just like I do. I have to cut his treats down on Meals on Wheels delivery day because of all the treats folks want to give him!

## **Why would you tell others to get involved with Meals on Wheels?**

When people ask me, I tell them it's an opportunity to get out of your own head and serve and serve with an impact. But most importantly, it gives you a chance to interact with great folks in real life and I don't think we have enough of those opportunities.



**VOLUNTEER WITH US**





# Miles for Meals 5k + Field Day

Join us for a fun, family-friendly day featuring a 5K run and field day activities, all in support of Meals on Wheels of Wake County! Join the post-race celebration with food trucks, beer vendors, and activities for the entire family, runners and non-runners, to enjoy!



**BUY YOUR  
TICKETS**

**Saturday April 18th 11:30am  
Wake County Speedway  
2109 Simpkins Road, Raleigh, NC 27603**

**5K (age 18+) \$50**

**5K (age 17 & Under) \$25**

**General Admission (non-runner age 18+) \$35**

**General Admission (non-runner 17 & Under) \$10**

[www.wakemow.org/miles-meals](http://www.wakemow.org/miles-meals)

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# MARCH FOR MEALS

**In the month of March, Meals on Wheels of Wake County calls on our community to come together in support of our seniors and the neighbors who care for them. Caring for older adults is a shared responsibility and a shared opportunity to strengthen Wake County as a whole.**

On March 22, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed into law a measure that amended the Older Americans Act of 1965 and established a national nutrition program for seniors 60 years and older. These critical programs – commonly referred to as Meals on Wheels – have delivered more than just nutritious meals to home-bound seniors in virtually every community across the country.

For more than 50 years, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has been the primary piece of federal legislation supporting the social and nutritional needs of adults age 60 and older. The dedicated volunteers who deliver these meals each week provide a lifeline and connection to the community, which are sometimes all it takes to keep our senior neighbors at home, where they want to be.

While the OAA laid a strong foundation, federal funding alone has never been enough to meet the growing need. The Older Americans Act was designed to supplement community efforts- not replace them.

As America's senior population rapidly expands and more older adults choose to age in place, demand for home-delivered meals continues to rise. Unfortunately, federal appropriations have not kept pace with inflation, food costs, fuel expenses, and the increasing number of seniors who qualify for services.

**Without broader community investment, programs like ours face difficult decisions about who receives services and how often meals can be delivered. This is why community engagement is not optional- it is essential!**

Ensuring that older Americans receive nutritious meals and daily human connection is not solely a federal responsibility; it is a shared community commitment. When we invest locally in Meals on Wheels, we provide more than a meal.

Our senior population in Wake County is growing rapidly- by 2040, there will be more seniors in Wake County than children according to the NC Office of Budget and Management. Demand for nutritious meals, safety checks, and supportive services will continue to rise- now is the time to strengthen programs that help aging neighbors remain healthy and independent.

**Wake County is prospering – we must not leave behind the elders who built it. Our community's growth and prosperity were built by today's seniors. They include former teachers, veterans, small business owners, public servants, and parents. As Wake County thrives, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure seniors can age with dignity, security, and support.**



## ACT NOW



**GIVE**



**VOLUNTEER**

# Gifts Made in Tribute



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Honor or remember someone special while supporting seniors in need! Dedicate your donation & we'll send a personalized email to let someone know a gift has been made in their honor or memory.



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**LEARN MORE**



Are you a State or Federal Employee? Support us through Combined Giving Campaigns!  
State Employees Combined Campaign – 1820; Combined Federal Campaign – 59456



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