

# IN-HOME CARE NEWSLETTER

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IN-HOME CARE



## CAREGIVERS

### Unsung Heroes of COVID-19 Pandemic

**Meals on Wheels Central Texas In-Home Care's** 250+ caregivers are on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic - and the stakes could not be higher. The vulnerable older adults we are honored to serve face a much higher risk of developing more serious complications from COVID-19. In-home care supportive services help those we serve to remain safe at home during these uncertain times, and has been shown to reduce emergency room visits and premature nursing home admissions. Yet, too often in our society, the important work done by caregivers is either overlooked or taken for granted.

In the best of times, our caregivers transform clients' homes into safer environments in which to age in place with dignity. In the middle of a pandemic, however, their professional services and unwavering dedication are even more vital to the older adults and people living with disabilities that we serve. Our detail-oriented caregivers strictly adhere to all required health and safety precautions, pre-screening themselves and the clients they serve for symptoms of COVID-19 and other illnesses before delivering services.

We thank these unsung heroes for going above and beyond during these unsettling times, and for protecting the health and wellbeing of the wonderful people we serve, people just like Carol Nathanson:

"Debbie always wears a mask and is constantly disinfecting things around my home. She was worried about the virus [late last year] and I laughed at her. I'm not laughing anymore," says 75-year-old Carol Nathanson.

Ms. Nathanson's talking about Debbie Lopez, her Meals on Wheels Central Texas In-Home Care provider. Twelve years ago, Ms. Nathanson became disabled after a surgery that went wrong. She relies on Debbie for help with the activities of everyday life - and she doesn't know what she would do without her. "When people ask me how I'm doing [during the pandemic], I say 'I'm blessed. I'm doing great.' And Debbie's a big reason why I'm doing great."

Debbie, who has two children and two grandchildren, says "I think that's what I'm here for - to be a mother, a grandmother, and to take care of people." From housecleaning, to

*Carol Nathanson (right) credits MOWCTX In-Home Care caregiver Debbie Lopez for keeping her healthy and safe in the middle of a pandemic.*

shopping and running errands, to cooking, Debbie does it all. "[Ms. Nathanson] loves my special omelet and my chicken parmesan," she says with a laugh.

But even more than the chicken parmesan, Ms. Nathanson appreciates Debbie's companionship. "When she comes into my house, I'm not alone anymore. I have a friend. We laugh every day" she says.

And the feeling is mutual. "When I walk into her home, she makes me feel like I am home," says Debbie.

Ms. Nathanson has used other in-home care agencies in the past. She says she hit the jackpot when she found Meals on Wheels Central Texas IHC and Debbie.

"To have a caregiver who is also your friend is very, very special. I don't know where I'd be if I didn't have Debbie."

# "SHE'S THE BEST THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED TO ME!"

To step into 89-year-old Betty Ridley's small North Austin apartment is to take a quick trip around the globe. Commemorative plates plaster the walls of her home, each one bearing the name of a different spot on the map.

When she was younger, Ms. Ridley and her late husband, John, loved to travel. And Mr. Ridley's career in the U.S. Army made it possible for them to see the world. "We got plates from everywhere we could," recalls Ms. Ridley. "I know I'll never get back to a lot of places that are up there [on the walls]. But that's okay, I've been, I've seen, I've done."

These days, travelling any distance at all is extremely challenging for Ms. Ridley. She suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and that, along with other health issues, stripped her of the ability to cook for herself or clean the apartment where she lives alone. Fortunately, Meals on Wheels Central Texas In-Home Care is there for her -

ensuring she is able to age in place with dignity and comfort in her own home.

Ms. Ridley's attendant, Krystal Horn, spends four hours every weekday helping her with the activities of daily living. "I've had Krystal for two years and she's the best thing that's ever happened to me! She washes my clothes and puts them away, she cleans my house and makes up the bed every day. She even helps me sew. I can't sew anymore, so she'll hem up my pants," says Ms. Ridley. And Krystal is happy to be of service. "[Ms. Ridley] means a lot to me. I'm glad that I'm able to help her. It makes me feel good to do these things for her," she says.

Ms. Ridley appreciates the TLC she gets from Krystal and Meals on Wheels Central Texas In-Home Care. Ms.



*Betty Ridley relies on MOWCTX In-Home Care caregiver Krystal Horn for help with activities of everyday living.*

Ridley even considers Krystal to be part of her family: "She's more than just pleasant to be around. She even calls me on the telephone to say hello and let me know that I'm wanted. I like Meals on Wheels [In-Home Care]. It's a lifesaver. I probably wouldn't be here now if it wasn't for them!"

## Meals on Wheels Central Texas In-Home Care thanks the following organizations for their generous support of our mission during the COVID-19 pandemic:

**Austin Community Foundation and United Way Greater Austin's All Together ATX fund**  
for supporting MOWCTX In-Home Care

**Susan G. Komen Foundation**  
for supporting MOWCTX In-Home Care

**The University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School**  
for donating masks

**Austin City Councilmember Ann Kitchen's office**  
for donating masks

**Build a Sofa**  
for donating masks

**Christine Salazar**  
for donating masks

**Foundation Communities**  
for donating hand sanitizer

**Tito's Handmade Vodka**  
for donating hand sanitizer

**Desert Door Distillery**  
for donating hand sanitizer