

# THE MEAL TIMES

*Newsletter of Meals On Wheels Central Texas*

VOLUME 45,  
ISSUE 4

DECEMBER  
2020



MEALS ON WHEELS  
CENTRAL TEXAS

## "I DON'T FEEL ALONE ANYMORE"

Nelson and Maria Toala stand in front of their Southeast Austin home.

"I miss everything....the food.... the people," Nelson Toala says wistfully.

He's talking about the job he loved – the one that allowed him the opportunity to cook for two U.S. Presidents, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, and the same job that provided him the means to buy a home.

Mr. Toala spent 15 years as a chef at Austin's historic Driskill Hotel. His cooking skills, rock-solid work ethic and friendly demeanor made him a popular employee. Landing that job was the final step in a long journey to financial security. When he and his wife, Maria, came to the U.S. from their native Ecuador, Mr. Toala didn't speak English-but he was determined to learn. Working two jobs, he took English classes at night. After that, he went to culinary school at Austin Community College and eventually landed the job at the Driskill where his employers quickly noticed his hard work. He absolutely thrived in the hotel's kitchen. "We used to prepare quail and pack it with cream cheese and different herbs and then we'd bake it. Oh my gosh, that was my favorite," he recalls.

But in March, the pandemic forced the Driskill to furlough many of its employees, including Mr. Toala. Shortly thereafter, he suffered a stroke that left him disabled and

unable to work. "That changed my life completely. Now I cannot take care of my basic needs myself. It's not easy for a person who is used to working," says Mr. Toala who was the primary provider for his family which includes his two granddaughters, ages 10 and 12.

Fortunately, Meals on Wheels Central Texas was there to help. "The meals that they have been sending to my door make a huge difference because that is the meal we use every day to survive," he says.

And our assistance goes well beyond home-delivered meals. "They have been providing me with a huge range of social services including a case manager," he explains. We also helped him with his house payments and his utility bills through funds provided by BSS Plus, a collaboration of 12 local nonprofits, including MOWCTX, dedicated to housing people who are experiencing homelessness, and preventing homelessness for residents at risk of losing their housing.

Mr. Toala is currently going through physical rehabilitation in hopes he can one day return to the Driskill. "That's my dream...to go back and work again." Until that day, though, he takes comfort in the help he receives from MOWCTX: "I don't feel alone anymore. I feel like my family and I are in good hands."

CONTINUED INSIDE

## Statesman season for caring

The Toala family is one of the featured families in this year's Austin American Statesman's Season for Caring campaign. The event is a partnership between the newspaper's Editorial and Community Development departments and introduces readers to Central Texans in need and the non-profit agencies that provide services to them.

To find out how you can help the Toala's this holiday season, please visit [bit.ly/mowctxsfc20](https://bit.ly/mowctxsfc20)

"IT MAKES ME FEEL  
KIND OF SPECIAL"



Before the pandemic, volunteer Barbara Alfred (right) delivered meals and friendship to 97-year-old Maggie Bedford (Above) every Tuesday. These days, the two friends stay in touch through our Care Calls program.

"I just fell in love with them. They're like family," 97-year-old Maggie Bedford says of the dedicated Meals on Wheels Central Texas volunteers who deliver nutritious meals to her North Austin home.

Ms. Bedford certainly relies on the food they bring. "It means I'm going to have at least one good meal that day. I don't feel like I'm going to go hungry," she explains. But she also relishes the visits from volunteers. Ms. Bedford, who moved to Austin in 1944 to attend beauty college, lives alone and she welcomes the company.

MOWCTX volunteer Barbara Alfred began delivering hot meals and warm smiles to Ms. Bedford every Tuesday five years ago. To say the two have grown close is an understatement. "I lost my mother in 2013. {Ms. Bedford} is like a mom to me. She is just the sweetest soul," says Ms. Alfred. "Tuesdays were just precious to me. There were

always lots of smiles and hugs. When the pandemic hit, it threw me for a loop."

That's because our agency pivoted from daily meal deliveries to deliveries of two weeks' worth of meals every other Friday in order to safeguard the health of our clients and volunteers. So no more Tuesdays with Ms. Bedford until it's safe to resume daily service. And yet, the two friends continue to visit with one another on a weekly basis - only these days, it's by phone. Ms. Alfred volunteers for our Care Calls program, which provides frequent friendly phone calls to our homebound clients. "I get to talk to her again," says Ms. Alfred.

Asked what the phone calls mean to her, Ms. Bedford replies "she asks me how I'm doing. She tells me she looks forward to seeing me again after the pandemic. It makes me feel kind of special."



## THANKS THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS AND COMPANIES FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION

**3M Foundation** for supporting Meals on Wheels Central Texas

**AMD** for supporting Meals on Wheels

**Boomerang's Pies** for supporting Meals on Wheels Central Texas

**Creativity for a Cause** for supporting Meals on Wheels Central Texas

**H-E-B** for supporting Thanksgiving holiday meal delivery

**Isla Carroll Turner Friendship Trust** for supporting Meals on Wheels Central Texas

**Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation** for supporting Home Repair

**The Applied Materials Foundation** for supporting MOWCTX during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Topfer Family Foundation** for supporting MOWCTX during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Triumphant Love Lutheran Endowment Fund** for supporting Groceries to Go

**The Andrew Delaney Foundation** for supporting Meals on Wheels Central Texas

**The Cantu Family** for supporting Christmas holiday meal delivery

**The Why Knot Now Foundation** for supporting PALS

## BILLBOARDS PROMOTE MOWCTX MISSION

Check out our new outdoor ads that will be up through the end of the year. Strategically placed in locations throughout the Greater Austin area, the billboards are designed to encourage folks to get involved in our life-sustaining mission. That's especially important these days as demand for our services continues to increase!



## MOWCTX EARNS TOP AWARD FOR FISCAL TRANSPARENCY!

GuideStar, the world's largest source of information on nonprofit organizations, awarded MOWCTX with a 2019 Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level possible!

When you donate to us, you can rest assured your generous contribution will be used in a fiscally responsible and transparent manner to help our homebound older neighbors in need!



H-E-B associates help out with our Thanksgiving meal delivery on November 20. A generous donation from H-E-B allowed us to provide a delicious turkey dinner with all of the trimmings to nearly 3,000 homebound Central Texas seniors.

## MOWCTX & H-E-B PROVIDE THANKSGIVING MEALS TO HOMEBOUND SENIORS

Nearly 3,000 homebound Central Texans enjoyed turkey dinners with all of the trimmings thanks to H-E-B

and MOWCTX.

With H-E-B generously underwriting the cost of the meals, our amazing kitchen staff whipped up a feast that included turkey with gravy, cornbread dressing, creamed spinach and a gingerbread cookie.

Our dedicated volunteers then delivered the frozen meals to clients' homes on Friday, November 20, so the people we are honored to serve could enjoy a delicious meal on Turkey Day. H-E-B associates even helped load the meals into volunteers' cars.

Thank you H-E-B for helping Central Texas seniors celebrate Thanksgiving and age in place with dignity!



Organizers of the Austin Empty Bowl Project refuse to let COVID-19 deter them from their longtime mission to feed hungry Central Texans.

Austin Empty Bowl Project is an annual event that benefits Meals on Wheels Central Texas and the Central Texas Foodbank. It's always held the Sunday before Thanksgiving and features the work of local potters

who donate bowls of every shape, size, and color to the cause. For a donation, participants pick out a bowl, fill it with soup furnished by several local restaurants, and enjoy live music.

Due to the pandemic, this year's event was a virtual affair that raised \$25,000 for our Meals for Kid's program. Since 2012, the Austin Empty Bowl Project has raised nearly \$325,000 for Meals for Kids which provides nutritious, kid-friendly snacks to children of low-income families.

## “OUR HOUSE WOULD HAVE FALLEN APART”



Marcia Rachford stands in front of the home she and her late husband, Peter, bought 36-years ago.

“If it hadn’t been for Meals on Wheels Central Texas and The Home Depot Foundation, our house would have fallen apart,” says Marcia Rachford.

Ms. Rachford and her husband, Peter, bought the North Austin home in 1984. “We loved it. It was just the right size for us,” Ms. Rachford recalls. But within the past few years, the house began to pose serious problems for the couple. By that time, Mr. Rachford, who served in the United States Air Force in the late 1950’s and early 60’s, was in ill-health, and mobility issues made it challenging for him to get in and out of the house. Getting in and out of the bathtub was also an arduous process.

On top of all of that, the Rachfords needed a new roof and new siding. But they lacked the money needed to fix their problems. That’s when they turned to Meals on Wheels Central Texas (MOWCTX) and The Home Depot Foundation (HDF) for help. “When we got accepted, I was just floored,” says Ms. Rachford of the day she learned her

prayers had been answered.

The MOWCTX Home Repair Program, using funds generously provided by HDF, installed a new roof, new siding and windows, and converted the bathtub into a walk-in shower. Workers also installed ramps to the front and back doors.

Ms. Rachford, her husband’s full time caregiver at the time, says the repairs made a world of difference in her ability to care for him. Earlier this year, Mr. Rachford passed away. A few months later, on Veterans Day, a dozen Team Depot members erected a flagpole in the front yard of the Rachford home. When they completed their work, Ms. Rachford watched in tears as they raised Old Glory in honor of her husband’s service to our Country, the flag snapping in the wind over the little house she and her late husband loved so much.

Asked what the home repairs mean to her, Ms. Rachford says “It means I can stay in this house until I die. I can’t thank [MOWCTX and HDF] enough.”

## CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

MOWCTX will continue our bi-weekly meal deliveries until it is safe to resume daily meal service.

And in order to make that transition as soon as possible next year, we will need 200 new volunteers. Please help us ensure that the people we serve will get the meals they need once we can safely resume daily deliveries.

Central Texans interested in learning more about volunteering can visit [www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org](http://www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org) and clicking on the “Get Involved” tab.



Did you know that Subaru will donate \$250 to the customer’s choice of participating charities for every new vehicle sold or leased now through January 4, 2021? If you’re in the market for a new Subaru, please choose Meals on Wheels as your charity of choice!

## ADAM'S CORNER



### Dear Friends,

Whoever coined the curse “may you live in interesting times” certainly described 2020 to a T.

COVID-19 has upended our world and radically changed the ways in which we operate as a society and how we interact with one another. Routines and processes we took for granted are – at least for now – things of the past. Handshakes, hugs, and large gatherings have been replaced by elbow bumps, air hugs, and virtual events.

The pandemic certainly upended the core service model of Meals on Wheels Central Texas! No longer able to regularly interact face-to-face with thousands of our older homebound neighbors most at risk of serious complications from COVID-19, we changed the ways in which we provide them our life-sustaining services to keep them safe and healthy. After all, the fine people we serve—some of whom you will read about in these pages—rely on us for critical assistance that helps them age in place with dignity. So with masks on and from a distance, and with the help of our wonderful volunteers, we continue to deliver nutritious meals (a little less frequently and in bulk to reduce exposure) to nourish our client’s bodies. And because isolation and loneliness are just as harmful “viruses” as COVID-19, we implemented programs using the phone and virtual platforms to stay connected with our clients and nourish their souls.

But there’s one thing the pandemic hasn’t changed – and that’s our deep appreciation of your unwavering support of our mission. We literally could not do what we do without your help. And that’s never been truer than now. The pandemic’s adverse effect on our economy has driven up demand for our services – and we expect that trend to continue through 2021. We remain confident, though, that with your continued commitment to our cause, we can be there for our homebound elders when they need us most.

On behalf of the 5,000 seniors we serve every year, thank you! I wish you and yours a joyful, safe and healthy holiday season and a very happy New Year!

Yours in Service,

Adam I. Hauser  
MOWCTX President/CEO

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Norine Yukon** Chair  
*Affiliate Faculty | University of Texas School of Nursing*

**Nick Weynand** Vice Chair  
*Mighty Citizen*

**Michael C. Brown** Treasurer  
*Plains Capital Bank*

**Samuel Lee Houston**  
Secretary  
*Houston's Computer Software Services*

**Meg Youngblood** Immediate Past Chair  
*Maxwell Locke & Ritter LLP*

**Namkee G. Choi, Ph.D.**  
*Steve Hicks School of Social Work | The University of Texas at Austin*

**BJ Friedman, Ph.D., RDN**  
*Professor Emeritus | Texas State University*

**Billy Hill**  
*Highland Park Financial Corp.*

**Julian Rivera**  
*Husch Blackwell LLP*

**Jon Weizenbaum, MPAff, MSSW**  
*Weizenbaum Consulting*

**Stewart Whitehead**  
*Winstead*

**Greg Williams**  
*Life Care Services LLC*

### Non-Voting Members

**Perry Ginsburg**  
*UT McCombs School of Business MBA Candidate*

**Chika Okafor**  
*UT McCombs School of Business MBA Candidate*

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Adam I. Hauser, JD**  
*President and CEO*

**Michael Wilson, Ph.D**  
*Sr. Vice-President and COO*

**Samantha Weinmeister**  
*CFO*

**Marsha Wier, SPHR**  
*Executive Director/MOWCTX In-Home Care*

**Melanie Alexander, SHRM-CP**  
*Vice-President for Human Resources*

**Lucinda Cassidy**  
*Vice-President for Development*

**Charles Cloutman**  
*Vice-President for Home Repair*

**Theresa Medlin Crawford, MS**  
*Vice-President for Volunteer Services and Distribution*

**Seanna Marceaux, MS RDN LD**  
*Vice-President for Nutrition, Health and Impact*

**Linda Perez, LBSW**  
*Vice-President for Client Services*

**Thad Rosenfeld**  
*Vice-President for Communications*