

THE MEAL TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF MEALS ON WHEELS CENTRAL TEXAS



Volume 42, Issue 1
FEBRUARY 2017



“I Just Always Liked Working With Volunteers”

Some businesses are lucky enough to have one—that person who’s a walking, talking company history book. Someone who knows the personalities, peaks and valleys, character and culture of the place, and played a vital role in shaping that character and culture. For decades, Suellen Mills was that person at Meals on Wheels Central Texas. Suellen retired January 31st after more than 42 years on the job. She will be missed.

She started working here in the early 1970’s. Back then, Meals on Wheels used church kitchens to cook food for our homebound clients. Suellen spent her time at the St. Julia’s Catholic Church site. “I supervised the preparation of the meals and the volunteers picking up the meals and delivering them,” she recalls. Her duties also involved lots of grocery shopping. “I had to look at what was coming up on the menu (for client meals) and figure out what food I needed and go and pick it up and bring it back and unload it,” says Suellen.

Eventually, she settled in at the job she would hold for more than 30 years: recruiting, recognizing, and retaining our wonderful volunteers. “I just always liked working with volunteers. It’s just amazing to me that we can get so many great people to come in and

In the late 1990’s though, Suellen’s professional life and personal life collided. Her husband, Mike, who was a psychiatric social worker, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. He was 59. When the disease forced him to stop working, Suellen



Longtime MOWCTX employee Suellen Mills (third from left) with Mike’s Place clients, volunteers, and staff.

share their lives with our clients,” she explains. Under her watch, the number of people donating their time to our cause grew from dozens to thousands. She had a front row seat as our agency evolved from a grassroots effort to one of the largest non-profits in Central Texas. “It’s incredible,” she says of the changes she witnessed.

brought him to Meals on Wheels. “So, Mike hung out here. He’d walk around and everybody knew he was here and kept an eye on him. Everybody really liked him and he was kind of a jokester,” she says. Seeing Mike around the office planted a seed among the management team here. They realized East Austin lacked free respite care for people with

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An Important Message from Dan Pruett

As I mentioned in an earlier newsletter, I'll be retiring at the end of March. When I told our Board of Directors about my decision several months ago, they formed a transition committee to find the person who would take my place. After a thorough search on their part, I'm thrilled to announce they picked the perfect candidate in Adam Hauser.

Adam's been a member of the Meals on Wheels Central Texas family for nearly 30 years. He began delivering meals for us in the late 1980's—and still drives

a route every Friday. Adam was Managing Partner for Brown McCarroll, a local law firm, and later was the Office Managing Partner at the Austin office of Husch Blackwell LLP, a national legal firm. He has served on the Meals on Wheels Central Texas board of directors for years and was Board Chair from 2006-2008.

Before they began their search, the transition committee surveyed the folks who work here to find out the qualities they most want to see in a CEO. Adam fit those

descriptions to a T. He knows what it takes to empower people to perform their jobs in ways that not only assist and inspire the client, but also the people doing the work. Adam has a mind for business and a heart for helping those in need. I know he and the rest of the talented and dedicated MOWCTX team will be tireless, effective advocates for the vulnerable Central Texans we serve.

Please join me in congratulating Adam.

An Important Message from Adam Hauser

It is with deep gratitude, respect and enthusiasm that I prepare to assume the position of President and CEO of this great organization. Blessed with a strong foundation laid by the incredible MOWCTX team under Dan's leadership and commitment, the agency is poised to grow and further expand its life-enriching programs to those we serve.

I look forward to learning from and working with MOWCTX's hard-working staff, small army of dedicated volunteers, and generous donors. They all play a vital role in our efforts to help older adults and people with disabilities.

I love this organization, its people and its mission—and I'm deeply

humbled and honored to serve as its next leader.



Adam Hauser (left) will be MOWCTX's new President/CEO upon the March 31st retirement of Dan Pruett (right).

"I Just Always Liked Working With Volunteers" (cont.)

Alzheimer's and dementia. When MOWCTX moved into a new building in 2008, the agency finally had enough space to create its own program which Suellen would help run. But what would it be called? President/CEO Dan Pruett thought of the perfect name, Mike's Place.

Every Tuesday and Wednesday, caregivers bring their loved ones to Mike's Place. Participants are each paired with a caring, attentive volunteer - their friend

for the next several hours. There's singing, dancing, fun games, a little bit of exercise, a healthy meal—and up until recently, Suellen was right in the middle of all that. It was a labor of love for her. Although Mike passed away in 2012, his legacy lives on at the program that bears his name.

When Suellen found out not long ago she needed to have foot surgery, she made a decision. "I'm going to have some recovery

time for that and I just thought that maybe this is a good time," she says of her retirement. She then adds "I do hope to come back as a volunteer." All of us at MOWCTX certainly hope so too, Suellen!



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