

THE MEAL TIMES

Newsletter of Meals On Wheels Central Texas



"I TAKE CARE OF MY HUSBAND AND MEALS ON WHEELS CENTRAL TEXAS TAKES CARE OF US BOTH."

Dominga Olivarez, 91, and her husband, Refugio, 94, have been living in their East Austin home since 1965. They are proud home owners. As new arrivals in the 1960s, the couple rented a few houses before they had saved up enough money from Mr. Olivarez's farming business to buy this home. Mrs. Olivarez helped with the down payment by taking any job she could find. "I did a lot of work in the fields. You name it, I've done it!"

Both now receive nutritious meals delivered by Meals on Wheels Central Texas volunteers, even throughout the entire pandemic. Mrs. Olivarez says the food deliveries make her role as primary caregiver for her husband, who is disabled, easier.

The couple also receives pet food and free veterinary care for their two dogs, Boo and Tyson, and their cat, Becky,

through the MOWCTX PALS (Pets Assisting the Lives of Seniors) program. Mrs. Olivarez tells us the dogs belonged to her grandsons, one of whom passed away a few years ago.

She tells us that the home holds decades of memories for the couple; they raised their two children here and hosted visits by their grandchildren. "We have been through a lot in this house and many, many years. It's important to us that we stay here."

In February, the East Austin couple lost power during the historic winter storm. Mrs. Olivarez shares that, for about four or five days, they didn't have any electricity and were very cold. "I was in the corner, covered with quilts, but I was shaking." Her family was able to stop by to check in on them and make sure they stayed warm. And, when it was safe to do so,

MOWCTX volunteers also brought them cases of water and an emergency disaster relief box.

Once the power was restored, the couple still struggled with a water outage because of a burst pipe in the restroom. They were very thankful for the MOWCTX Home Repair team who fixed the damage so they could recover from the storm.

When she is not caring for her husband or pets, Mrs. Olivarez spends her time gardening. Thanks to the Home Repair team, her husband can now join her outside: they built a special wheelchair ramp to make their East Austin home more accessible. She shares that it is their happy place. "When I'm outside, in my garden, I forget everything."

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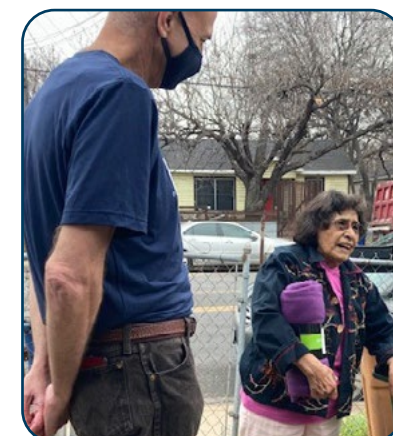
Dear Friends,

This month is *Older Americans Month*, and the theme for 2021 is "Communities of Strength". A few months ago, we marked one year operating under the cloud of COVID while we also recovered from a devastating winter storm. As I reflect on these circumstances, I cannot think of a more appropriate theme for this year's celebration.

Unwavering in its commitment for many years, the Meals on Wheels Central Texas community of volunteers, donors, partners and our own team members has truly been a model "Community of Strength". And because of all of you, the community of older adults we serve every day is strong as well.

As you will read on these pages, the seniors we serve face significant challenges every day and their courage and fortitude in the face of those challenges support and inspire all of us. By delivering the "More Than a Meal" services we do and working together to engage with our vulnerable senior neighbors, all of us help build strong communities.

So during this special month, we celebrate the resilience older adults have built over their lives and learn from their life lessons. This past year, due to increased isolation among our seniors, the community recognized and re-committed to what our mission is all about—connecting with our elder neighbors. Thanks to all of you for helping to create a strong community of seniors in Central Texas!



Yours in Service,

Adam I. Hauser
President and CEO

WINTER STORM RESPONSE



This February, a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, our community was hit by an unprecedented winter storm that affected our clients, volunteers and staff. But it was also a moment that really showed the strength of community. Everyone came together to help those affected by the storm damage, and power and water outages.

During the storm, the Meals on Wheels Central Texas Client Services team called all of our clients even from their driveways – charging phones in their cars when their own homes lost power – to ensure they were safe and warm. In the aftermath of the storm, many of the older adults we serve were in need of food and clean drinking water. Right away, 200 dedicated volunteers answered our "call to action" by delivering donated emergency meals and clean drinking water to our senior neighbors.

After the storm left our region, we received calls from clients who were still experiencing home damage due to frozen water pipes. Our Home Repair team worked every day of the week to fix pipes and other structural damage as a result of the storm. Thank you to everyone in our community who donated, volunteered and advocated for our mission to care for homebound elders when they needed us the most.



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

All Together ATX for supporting MOWCTX during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Anderson Charitable Foundation for supporting MOWCTX

BBVA Foundation for supporting Home Repair Winter Storm Relief

Charles H. Phipps Family Foundation for supporting Meals on Wheels program

Federal Home Loan Bank and Texas Capital Bank for supporting Home Repair

HDR Foundation for support toward a meal delivery vehicle

James D. Abrams Foundation for supporting PALS

JKL Foundation for supporting Winter Storm Relief

LGR Foundation Fund of Austin Community Foundation for supporting Mike's Place

Lola Wright Foundation for support toward a meal delivery vehicle

Silicon Labs for supporting Breakfast Meals

St. David's Foundation for supporting Winter Storm Relief and MOWCTX

The Applied Materials Foundation for supporting Meals on Wheels program

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program for supporting Breakfast Meals and MOWCTX during the COVID-19 pandemic

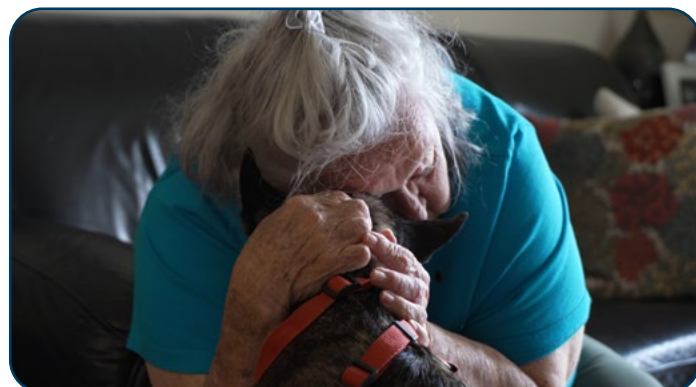
The Home Depot Foundation for supporting Winter Storm Relief

The Moody Foundation for supporting COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Relief

Theodore P. Davis Charitable Trust for supporting MOWCTX

Topfer Family Foundation for supporting the Meals on Wheels program and Client Assistance program

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH 2021: COMMUNITIES OF STRENGTH



Eva McKay credits her furry companion, dog Maizey, with saving her life. Maizey kept rubbing against her neck – where she had been experiencing pain – and it prompted her to see the doctor. That is when she found out she had cancer.

And while her furry friend supports her during these hard times, the MOWCTX Pets Assisting the Lives of Seniors (PALS) program helps Ms. McKay care for Maizey. The program provides free pet food and veterinary care to our senior clients and their animal companions. She says she is thankful for the assistance: "...just somebody caring enough about me and Maizey. Forget about me, caring for Maizey. Because Maizey is a special being."



U.S. Army veteran Rigoberto Clarke has been a home owner since 2006. He feels very blessed that he is able to live independently in his own home. As he put it, "where I come from, people don't own homes. Having grass and trees and my own house, it means a lot to me."

Thanks to generous funding from The Home Depot Foundation, the Meals on Wheels Central Texas Home Repair program recently fixed Mr. Clarke's home's foundation – a much-needed repair – and renovated his bathroom to increase accessibility.

Mr. Clarke says he feels veterans are often forgotten by the community and is thankful that Meals on Wheels Central Texas is there for him. "If it was not for you guys I don't know what my life would have been like. God bless you, and thank you."



Meals on Wheels Central Texas client Skye Mathews and her husband, Ronald, have been receiving home-delivered meals for over a year. "It's been nice. There's the knock at the door. They've really taken care of people."

During the pandemic, Mrs. Mathews also participated in our Sunshine Calls program, a collaboration between MOWCTX and the Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin. Sunshine Calls was a randomized controlled trial that assessed the effect of regular friendly calls to homebound seniors by measuring a range of mental health and quality-of-life outcomes. For six weeks, a volunteer called her every couple of days. The two spent a lot of time talking about her art. "I enjoyed it very much. I think he did, too."

Mrs. Mathews also receives pet food deliveries through our PALS (Pets Assisting the Lives of Seniors) program for their beloved Chihuahua, Mr. Pickles, who provides them company.



Longtime Meals on Wheels Central Texas client Pam Morgan is the primary caretaker of her husband of 50 years, Roy Morgan, who has Multiple Sclerosis and is wheelchair-bound. A few years ago, the Home Repair team made safety and accessibility adjustments to her home, including a special ramp for her husband, to accommodate the wheelchair.

During Winter Storm Uri, they lost power and water and Pam says they were so cold, she did not think they were going to make it. When the MOWCTX team arrived to deliver donated water and emergency supplies, she met them on the front porch. "It was not an easy thing for us but we pulled through," she said. Before the team left, she proudly pointed at the wheelchair ramp: "you built this for me, remember? I love my ramp, it is beautiful."

HOW MOWCTX TAKES ON INCREASED SOCIAL ISOLATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

Studies have shown that nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older, nationwide, are considered to be socially isolated. Older adults are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness, and hearing loss. Our holistic approach to senior care includes programs to help battle senior isolation and loneliness.

As with all of our services, the COVID-19 pandemic and safety measures have limited our ability to see clients in person. We also realized that connection and engagement with our senior clients is more important than ever during these times of quarantine and social distancing. So, we re-committed our efforts to stay connected with the seniors we serve.

First, our case management team called all of our clients more regularly to check in on them during the pandemic. We also re-implemented our Care Calls program, matching volunteers and staff with clients most at risk for senior isolation so that those most in need received even more calls to ensure they were safe and healthy.

We also worked with our friends at the Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin to evaluate the impact of a similar four-week program named "Sunshine Calls." The study with 240 of our MOWCTX clients showed that the friendly calls significantly reduced loneliness, depression and anxiety and improved the general mental health of our clients within four weeks. The results were recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in February 2021 and the link to the full text can be found online at <https://sites.utexas.edu/factorhealth/sunshinecalls/>. Once the program concluded, many of the participants then joined our ongoing Care Calls program.

During the pandemic, Mike's Place, our respite program for



adults and seniors with dementia, Alzheimer's Disease and other types of memory loss, switched to virtual programming for participants. Volunteers for the program deliver weekly activity kits that complement the virtual meetings. Our volunteers also join clients for socially-distanced porch visits.

MARCH FOR MEALS

Each year, Meals on Wheels programs across the country take part in March for Meals, a month of celebration of our mission to nourish and enrich the lives of hungry and isolated seniors. March for Meals was created by Meals on Wheels America to recognize the historic signing of the Older Americans Act in 1972, which established a national nutrition program for seniors. During March for Meals, we invite key partners

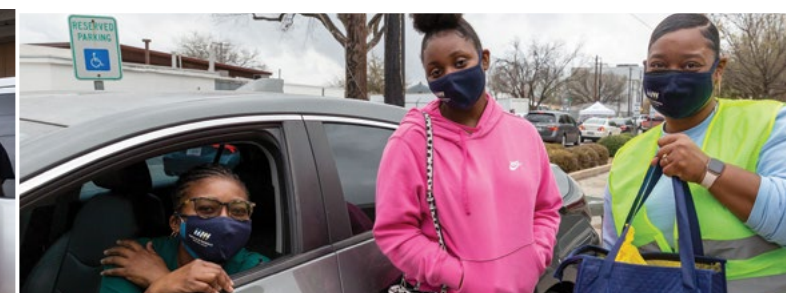


in to help us raise awareness of senior hunger and isolation in our own community.

We saw a record turnout of elected officials this year



as they joined our staff and board members to deliver nutritious meals and safety checks to our homebound senior neighbors.



Central Texans interested in learning more about volunteering can visit www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org and clicking on the "Get Involved" tab.