



Dear Friends,

There will be no ghosts or goblins ringing our bells for candy this Halloween. The tradition that has been part of the season is now only a hope that next year we can again welcome children back on our doorsteps.

At Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, we hope we never have to change our tradition of ringing bells to deliver food to those we serve. When Covid-19 hit, we quickly pivoted our delivery process to make sure that NO senior missed a meal!

Our tradition is boots on the ground — delivering both meals and wraparound services that address all the needs of our clients. In this issue of *Special Delivery*, you'll meet some of the people who made the delivery process continue to work. You'll read about how we are partnering with PG&E in the event of a power outage, how we are working to make sure the upcoming holiday season is brighter for our clients, and about the amazing support the community is providing helping us meet the financial challenges of doing business during Covid-19.

We will all miss welcoming trick or treaters to our doors, but we hope that you will find the stories in this edition of *Special Delivery* to be uplifting. There are so many people in our community who have helped us continue to ring bells and show up on doorsteps with meals that are truly a treat for our seniors!

Sincerely,

The signature of Caitlin Sly, written in a blue, flowing cursive font.

Caitlin Sly
Executive Director

BECOMING FAMILY

When Brenda De La Ossa retired, she knew she wanted to do something in her free time — so, she called Meals on Wheels Diablo Region. Fifteen years later she's still delivering meals to homebound seniors in Pittsburg.

Brenda grew up in England, but always wanted to be on the West Coast. Since moving to the Bay Area, she's made a huge impact on the lives of vulnerable seniors who live here. But if you ask Brenda, it's the seniors that have had the greater impact on her life. "My clients have become like family to me. I look so forward to visiting with them," she said. "I look forward to Mondays because I get to see my 'family.' I'm very blessed."

Here at Meals on Wheels Diablo Region we agree with Brenda — we are all like one big family, and we look out for each other and our clients! "One time when I dropped off a meal, my client kept crying," Brenda said. "She seemed extra sad that day. Then I phoned the MOW Diablo Region office and reported what I witnessed. They immediately followed up and continued to check on her. It's a very important resource to have."

Since the pandemic, MOW Diablo Region has seen more than a 40% increase in clients, and the need continues to grow. It's critically important that there are volunteers like Brenda who deliver meals to fragile seniors. "For me and for the seniors I deliver to, it provides a sense of normalcy...you know in all my years of delivering, I have never had a negative experience," said Brenda.



MEALS ON WHEELS DIABLO REGION AND PG&E PARTNER TO PROVIDE FOOD TO VULNERABLE SENIORS DURING PUBLIC SAFETY POWER SHUTOFF EVENTS



Meals on Wheels Diablo Region has partnered with Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to provide critical food support to individuals who experience food loss during natural disasters and Public Safety Power Shutoff events (PSPS).

Under the agreement and new for 2020, PG&E will provide MOW Diablo Region advance notice of a PSPS, allowing us to coordinate with Mt. Diablo Unified School District to prepare an additional meal to be delivered to seniors impacted by a PSPS event. The additional meal ensures seniors in need have food support throughout the event. The funding provided by PG&E covers the cost of the additional shelf-stable meal for seniors who are impacted by the shutoffs. While last year's PSPS events created challenges for MOW Diablo Region and our clients, we had a rapid response that was heralded in both local and national news, and successfully delivered meals to all our clients. Coupled with Covid-19, a PSPS event could be even more difficult on senior clients. This spring, we began delivering weekly frozen meals in order to ensure greater social distancing. With power outages, seniors will not be able to heat the weekly meals or keep them cold and safe.

"For many of our clients, the loss of power is more than an inconvenience. It presents a real hardship," said MOW Diablo Region Executive Director Caitlin Sly. "We are pleased that PG&E has stepped forward to make sure that the most vulnerable seniors in our county will not go without a meal in the event of a PSPS event."

Due to rapidly changing environmental conditions in California, and in the interest of public safety, PG&E may need to turn off electricity if severe weather affects part of the electric system. The most likely electric lines to be shutoff for safety will be those that pass through High Fire Threat Districts (HFTD).

"PG&E understands PSPS event impacts are compounded for those already experiencing hardship. PG&E is proud of the partnership with MOW Diablo Region providing an immediate solution to food replacement needs as a result of shutting off the power for safety," said PG&E PSPS Engagement, Strategy and Planning Manager Vanessa Bryan.

BUS DRIVERS LIGHTEN THE LOAD DURING THE PANDEMIC COUNTY CONNECTION BUS DRIVERS STEP UP TO MAKE SURE NO SENIORS GO HUNGRY

It was a five day a week ritual. Cars jockeyed for a spot in the parking lot. Voices and laughter filled our lobby. Our volunteers were ready to load up their cars to deliver meals that our senior clients depended on every day.

Then came Covid-19 and life changed for everyone. We had to transition from daily hot meals to once a week frozen meals in order to reduce physical contact with the seniors we serve. This created a real challenge for MOW Diablo Region because the size of the deliveries became so large that some of our volunteer's cars couldn't hold all the meals for their whole route. Our staff were working to create new routes to deliver more meals to over 40% more people. The logistics were a challenge, but that's when our friends at County Connection pitched in to help. "We always adapt," said County Connection Driver Jeff Blair, "There was a need and we wanted to help."

Today, meals are loaded onto County Connection buses and our volunteers hop aboard as well. With County Connection delivering with our volunteers, MOW Diablo Region was able to make sure no senior ever missed a delivered meal. The County Connection drivers also enjoy waving to our seniors. Janine Lapping who has been a



MOW Diablo Region volunteer for two years shared, "The best part for me has always been the interaction with the clients. We aren't able to do it as much with the pandemic, but at least we are still feeding our seniors with the assistance of the great drivers from County Connection."

It really does take a team effort to keep our wheels turning during these trying times. Jeff from County Connection agrees, "Everyone is ready to go with their personal protective equipment like masks and gloves. We take turns loading the buses with coolers filled with meals and off we go. A real team effort."



FEEDING THE HEART

It's never too late to find love — just ask Sal! At the age of 90, he decided to try online dating where he met Marilyn, also 90. After some flirting and a bit of playing hard to get, Sal finally asked Marilyn to marry him. Years later, the two still feel like honeymooners. Sal's neighbor, Martha Ann, occasionally would drop off meals for the love birds. Their neighborly friendship began in the late 1960s when Martha

Ann moved across the street from Sal. Having a reliable neighbor is helpful, and it's even more essential as one ages. "Those two just amaze me," said Martha Ann. "You know, as you get older, cooking becomes harder and harder. I donate to Meals on Wheels Diablo Region because I think it's important to help seniors. It doesn't take a lot to make a huge impact," said Martha Ann.

When the pandemic hit, Sal and Marilyn were concerned about being exposed to Covid-19. That's when their neighbor, Martha Ann, who's an avid supporter of Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, suggested the two might benefit from the services. "We decided to sign up to receive home-delivered meals. It's a great program," said Sal.

Sal and Marilyn can't thank Martha Ann enough for all she has done for them. "Her family is like our family," Sal said. The relationship between Sal, Marilyn, and Martha Ann proves that love can conquer all. "We have to look out for one another especially now more than ever," said Martha Ann.



You, our generous donors, helped us meet the Travis Credit Union Foundation's Community Initiative \$20,000 match! Every dollar donated was doubled because of you. This \$40,000 will increase the impact Meals on Wheels Diablo Region has on the lives of vulnerable seniors who depend on us to deliver healthy meals and wraparound services so they can remain at home with dignity. "We are extremely grateful for the support of our donors and from Travis Credit Union. This is going to have a huge impact on the seniors we serve," said MOW Diablo Region's Executive Director, Caitlin Sly.



The holiday season can be stressful and lonely during normal times, but it may be more difficult this year as a result of Covid-19, especially for the elderly.

That's why, Aetna, a CVS Health company, and Meals on Wheels Diablo Region have joined forces to host an online class **Wednesday, November 18 from 3:00PM to 4:00PM**.

The class will demonstrate techniques on managing stress, explain warning signs of depression, address caregiver

STAYING HEALTHY AND CONNECTED DURING THE COVID-19 HOLIDAY SEASON

A CONVERSATION WITH AETNA, A CVS HEALTH COMPANY, AND MEALS ON WHEELS DIABLO REGION

burnout, and provide resources available in the community. During this online class, participants will hear about practical tools that help reset and restore their physical and mental well-being.

To register, email Shanti Peterson at speterson@mowdr.org. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.