



MEALS ON WHEELS
DIABLO REGION

1300 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

HAVE FUN WHILE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

All of us at MOW Diablo Region know about working hard. Through the pandemic, the need for meals grew dramatically and that need continues to increase. Last year, we delivered over 600,000 meals and this year we are on track to deliver even more! All our supportive programs have grown, including Fall Prevention which has increased by 150 percent since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While we all work hard, on Saturday, June 10, 2023, we hope you'll have some fun while helping us make a difference at the 2nd Annual Dining to Deliver Gala & Auction at the Blackhawk Museum in Danville. Last year's Gala hosted a sold-out crowd who enjoyed dinner, dancing, a live and silent auction, and the chance to socialize with a community committed to improving seniors' lives. Tickets are on sale now at www.mowdiablореgion.org/upcoming-events.

If you'd like to learn more about sponsorship opportunities, how to donate an auction item, or want to be added to our invitation list, contact Sherry Nadworny at 925-239-2487, snadworny@mowdr.org or visit www.mowdiablореgion.org/upcoming-events.

We hope to see you on Saturday, June 10th for the Dining to Deliver Gala. Your support of this event makes a difference in the lives of our older neighbors in need.



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

As we recover from the fire in our building this past September, it makes us realize how important it is that we have supporters like you. Even with the disruption the fire caused, we are proud that no senior missed a meal or supportive service. We are now settled in temporary office space, but our momentum never lags, and we continue to meet the increased demand for meals and services for a growing senior population.

We have been piloting new programs and have plans to expand others that have proven to be essential to seniors who depend on Meals on Wheels Diablo Region. For many elders, we are the safety net that allows them to remain nourished, less isolated, safe, and independent at home, and we want to ensure that we are there to meet unmet needs.

In this edition of Special Delivery, you'll meet a client who represents many of the older adults we serve. You'll learn about the success of our East County Project and the exciting match from the John Muir Community Health Fund that, if reached, will allow us to expand the program countywide. You'll also read about our 2nd Annual Dining to Deliver Gala on June 10th at the Blackhawk Museum in Danville. Last year's event was a tremendous success and the proceeds we raised helped many of our older neighbors. After a long rainy winter, we all look forward to the promise and hope spring brings and are fortunate we have staff, volunteers, and donors who make it possible for us to help our elders in need.

Caitlin Sly
Executive Director

FULL CIRCLE

Patricia heard about Meals on Wheels Diablo Region for the first time from people she waited on at Denny's in Pittsburg. "I'd serve many of the Meals on Wheels delivery volunteers who ate at my restaurant," says Patricia. "They were always friendly and easy to talk to." After waiting tables for over 55 years, Patricia finally retired at 70, but she never anticipated that an auto collision would bring Meals on Wheels Diablo Region back into her life.

"Honestly, I didn't see the other car," she explains. "I didn't know the accident happened until the driver got out of the car and yelled at me." Although it was a minor collision, it served as a wake-up call, and she decided to stop driving. That's when she reached out to MOW Diablo Region. Patricia now receives home delivered meals and Breakfast Bags. "The meals are great, but I really LOVE Breakfast Bags! There's so much good food!"

At 82, Patricia is like many other older adults who depend on MOW Diablo Region. They are unable to drive, which makes having access to food more difficult. Inflation has also had an impact, driving up Patricia's cost of living. "MOW Diablo Region

has taken the stress out of meals," Patricia explains. "I don't think I'd eat as well or as healthy without these deliveries!"

Patricia finds the delivery volunteers as friendly as the ones she met at Denny's. Sometimes they are the only people she'll see in-person that week. MOW Diablo Region deliveries serve as a wellness check, ensuring that seniors are safe. "It's always a joy to see the volunteers, my dog even gets excited!" says Patricia. "He recognizes their faces and greets them with a wagging tail. I don't have enough words to express my gratitude for everyone who is a part of Meals on Wheels Diablo Region."



POONAM KHIYARA PROMOTED TO DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS



Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is pleased to announce the promotion of Poonam Khiyara to Director of Programs. In this new role, Khiyara will oversee Nutrition Services, Health and Wellness, Fall Prevention, Care Management, and the Outreach departments ensuring that each program continues its high levels of service. She will also plan for program expansion to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population of older adults in our community.

"We have experienced a tremendous demand for our services in the last three years. As our population ages, we need to provide services that address unmet needs," says Caitlin Sly, Executive Director. "Poonam has demonstrated that she has the knowledge, leadership skills, and creativity to help MOW Diablo Region continue to grow. She will help us ensure that seniors can remain nourished and independent, living with dignity."

Khiyara has held the position of Nutrition Services Division Manager since 2022. She joined MOW Diablo Region in 2018 as a Data Coordinator and then moved to Nutrition Services Assistant Division Manager. She started her nonprofit career as a volunteer with the Meals on Wheels of the Tri-Valley in 2016, where she eventually became the Program Coordinator. Before working in the nonprofit sector, she was an Interactive Media Manager serving clients in the consumer and technology industries.

MAY IS MEET THE MATCH MONTH!

In 2021, Meals on Wheels Diablo Region joined five organizations to create the East Contra Costa County Senior Resource Initiative, and our first step was hiring Lidia Gutierrez as our Older Adult Specialist. The goal of the project is to increase connections to and awareness of social services among older adults living in East Contra Costa County. Through outreach, Gutierrez works with East County seniors who face challenges accessing services because of language, technology, or other barriers and she assists them in connecting with and receiving the community services that improve their lives.

In order to build on the success of the project, Meals on Wheels Diablo Region has been offered a \$20,000 challenge grant from the John Muir Community Health Fund to expand the program throughout the County. May is Meet the Match Month to kickstart this campaign that concludes on December 31st. Every donation received will be doubled up to \$20,000!

"The East County Initiative has exceeded all expectations," says Caitlin Sly, Executive Director. "Elders living in both West and Central Contra Costa County face similar challenges accessing important services. Meeting this generous match from the John Muir Community Health Fund will allow us to provide essential services to these vulnerable seniors."

Seniors are the largest growing segment of the population in the County, and without attention and planning, the number of seniors unable to access services will continue to increase. This project has been able to coordinate a network of service providers, both those provided by County government and community-based organizations that benefit vulnerable seniors. The partnership is a collaboration of Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, Choice in Aging, Empowered Aging, and Contra Costa Legal Services, with support from the John Muir Community Health Fund.

"The John Muir Community Health Fund provided the seed funding to get the East County Initiative off the ground," explains Sly. "Our goal is to make this initiative available to our neighbors throughout the County. If we meet the match, we have the opportunity to raise \$40,000, because every gift will be doubled, but we need the support of our donors. We hope Meet the Match Month will be a big first step in meeting the \$20,000 goal so we can help seniors County-wide."



FEED THE SOUL



MOW Diablo Region held its third Feed the Soul campaign in February with the goal of raising \$28,000 in 28 days to help provide Breakfast Bags to our most food insecure seniors. This effort was made possible through the generous support of Chevron Corporation, NBC Bay Area, and Telemundo. An anonymous donor also helped with a \$6,000 match. We are happy to report that we met the match, but we came just shy of making the \$28,000. If you'd like to help us deliver Breakfast Bags and meet our \$28,000 goal, please make a donation to Feed the Soul online at <https://www.classy.org/give/451959/#!/donation/checkout> or write Feed the Soul on the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. Our thanks to everyone who made this generous effort possible!