



**MEALS ON WHEELS**  
DIABLO REGION

1300 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

## WHY SHOULD YOU VOLUNTEER FOR MOW DIABLO REGION?



- It's personally fulfilling
- It's a way to help others
- It isn't a major time commitment
- It's a way to give back to seniors who have given so much
- You bring joy to an elders' life
- Our seniors need you, and...
- MOW Diablo Region loves our volunteers!!

Go online to [mowdiableregion.org/get-involved](http://mowdiableregion.org/get-involved) or reach out to Lee Davenport at 925.954.8736 or [ldavenport@mowdr.org](mailto:ldavenport@mowdr.org).



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

During this holiday season, we at MOW Diablo Region are focusing on what we have and not what we have lost. As many of you know in September, we had a fire in our building in Walnut Creek. The damage was severe and we will be displaced for 6 months to a year. We are thankful that no one was in the building and the fire did not cause major structural damage. We are also thankful for the resiliency of our staff. The fire was on a Saturday night, on Monday, meal delivery and other services continued uninterrupted, despite our staff not having an office to work from.

Currently, our staff are in temporary office space, but the displacement and being away from colleagues is felt by all. However, we understand that this is nothing compared to the challenges of isolation and hunger our seniors face every day. We feel fortunate that we can continue to do our work making sure seniors are nourished, less isolated, safe in their homes, and able to remain independent.

We could not do any of this, without our incredible volunteers, the hearts and hands of our organization who never missed a beat. They met in our parking lot to pick up their deliveries making sure no senior missed a meal. We also couldn't do our work without the support of our donors, whose generosity is needed now more than ever. The demand for our services and home delivered meals has grown by 50% since the onset of the pandemic and we are thankful that these generous individuals are allowing us to meet those demands even with our recent fire challenges. Thank you and wishing you all a happy, healthy, and joyous holiday season.

Caitlin Sly  
Executive Director

## THE MEANING OF LIFE

John Graf came from humble beginnings. He lost his father when he was young, and to support the family, his mother took a job in banking as a “page girl” delivering the mail between departments. When John was fifteen, his mother reached out to one of her coworkers and got him a job as a summer messenger at CitiCorp. The opportunity launched him on to a successful career as an Institutional Investment Manager at Chancellor Capital Management.

John always believed in giving back, but 25 years ago he had an epiphany that would become the touchstone of his life. “At the end of my life, I didn’t want to ask, what was it all about? I started thinking about the real meaning of life, and then I saw something that said, ‘the real meaning of life is to make it meaningful.’”

John retired and dedicated his life to giving back, either through participating on committees through his church or sitting on nonprofit Boards. “I realized that there were those who need help through no fault of their own,” explains John. “When I was young, people brought me along, gave

me opportunities, and helped me be successful. It would be hypocritical for me to turn my back on people in need.”

For many years, John has supported Meals on Wheels Diablo Region because he feels the organization is more than a meal. “MOW Diablo Region is resourceful. It addresses issues that people face as they age like, hunger, isolation, remaining safe and at home. I have a half dozen charities that I support, but MOW Diablo Region is one of my favorites because it really makes a difference. Donating to them has meaning.”



## BELIEVE THE UNBELIEVABLE



Bernie S. could probably write the best book in the world after nine decades of life and the title of that book would be Believe the Unbelievable. He would include an extraordinary list of life experiences on everything from being in the Marines during World War II serving in Guam, Japan, and China to winning a Decathlon with no formal training. “I was a volunteer code enforcement leader for Concord, and I probably helped clean-up well over 40,000 illegal signs,” says Bernie. The Code Enforcement Unit is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the quality of life in the City of Concord. “Being a volunteer for any cause is great and I wish I could individually thank every hand that makes my meals possible.”

Bernie has been receiving meals from Meals on Wheels Diablo Region for a little over a year and a half. “One thing that’s for sure is that older people often die from neglect and not having proper nutrition. That’s coming from my daughter who’s a nurse,” explains Bernie.

An increasing number of seniors are isolated and can’t visit their friends and family. MOW Diablo Region volunteer delivery drivers provide a safety check and a friendly face to homebound seniors. They are often the only person the client will speak to all day.

When MOW Diablo Region says, “more than a meal,” we mean it. Services are directed to the specific needs of our elders. “I think this world would be a better place because of organizations like Meals on Wheels Diablo Region that focus on helping our everyday people out there. It’s truly wonderful,” concludes Bernie.



## FALL PREVENTION PROGRAM SKYROCKETS

Any of us can fall, but for seniors who are frail and homebound falling can become a life-threatening event. The likelihood of falling has increased because many older adults have not been very active during the pandemic and now find themselves unsteady on their feet. Therefore, it is no surprise that MOW Diablo Region’s Fall Prevention Program has grown, but what is amazing is the number of people we serve has skyrocketed in the last year. The Fall Prevention Program has provided 150% more home modifications since the onset of the pandemic and had a 194% increase in households served.

“Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the population in the County,” says Michele Alba, Fall Prevention Program Manager. “With more people aging and experiencing mobility issues, there is a greater demand for fall prevention.”

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death and nursing home placement for older adults, but most falls can be prevented. MOW Diablo Region’s Fall Prevention Program offers fall screening, education, evidence-based exercise classes,

as well as home safety modification services. All services are free, with the highest priority going to isolated, low-income individuals.

While Fall Prevention helps seniors remain safe and independent, funding sources are limited. The program depends on the support of individual donors and grants from the few local foundations who support this type of important program. “People aren’t aware of the real cost of falling,” says Alba. “When a senior falls, it can cause their adult children to lose work time, it increases the cost of healthcare, and a major loss is that it strips the older adult of their independence and dignity.”

MOW Diablo Region is one of the few meals on wheels organizations that provides Fall Prevention. “We appreciate any support we receive and are proud that we have been able to keep up with this monumental growth. MOW Diablo Region is committed to continuing this program so seniors can retain their dignity and independence.” concludes Alba.

## MOW DIABLO REGION WELCOMES WENDY ESCAMILLA

Wendy Escamilla has joined MOW Diablo Region as our Care Management Programs Manager. She comes to the organization with deep experience working in Contra Costa County. She previously worked for Contra Costa Public Health on nutrition education and obesity prevention. Most recently, she has been the clinic director for Brighter Beginnings, an organization that runs two health clinics serving low-income communities in Antioch and Richmond.

In her new role, Wendy will oversee the Care Management Department which helps vulnerable seniors navigate a myriad of social issues, including elder abuse, evictions, depression, and more. “I’m delighted to be joining MOW Diablo Region,” says Wendy. “I’ve known about their incredible work for a longtime and feel privileged to be part of the team working to keep our seniors safe and independent at home.”

