



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

If you know anything about sports, you have heard the phrase, “there is no ‘I’ in team.” At Meals at Wheels Diablo Region, we know that it takes a team of people, participating in whatever way they can, to help us fulfill our mission of improving the lives of vulnerable seniors in our community.

When they were younger, our older neighbors were part of the team, too. They were engaged members of our community. They nursed the sick, built our roads, taught our children, paid their taxes, and lent a helping hand whenever they were needed. But now, many vulnerable elders are homebound, isolated, and have a fragile support system, so they depend on our team to stay healthy, nourished, safe, and socially connected.

In this edition of Special Delivery, you’ll learn about the many partnerships that make our work possible. You’ll be introduced to a couple who found each other later in life, but thanks to our meals, are still able to remain at home together. You’ll meet a Board Member who has been recognized for her leadership and hear about how we celebrate our incredible volunteers who give their time and compassion to care for their older neighbors.

You are receiving this newsletter because you understand how important it is for Meals on Wheels Diablo Region to deliver free meals and supportive services to our elder community. We hope you enjoy this edition of Special Delivery, and we wish you a joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Caitlin Sly'.

Caitlin Sly
Executive Director



Special
DELIVERY
NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023





LOVE AND good food

As the Beatles sang, “all you need is love.” Ethel and Frederick were both in their seventies when they found love through online dating.

Ethel moved to the Bay Area from Mississippi when her first husband inherited a house. After the end of that long marriage, her granddaughter tried to convince her to try online dating. “I told her I didn’t want to, but she was crying that I had to try. I thought, what do I have to lose?”

Frederick, a military veteran who spent his early years traveling the world as the son of a diplomat, had also decided to take a chance at online dating. Ethel and Frederick matched, sharing a love of dancing, music, and creating memories. “He always has a way to make me laugh,” says Ethel. Their bond grew stronger, leading to a heartfelt proposal and an amazing wedding.

Ethel, who is now 87, cares for Frederick who is 88. While their love continues to nourish their souls, they found they also needed nourishing food. Meals on Wheels Diablo Region was the match for their needs and their family who cares for them. They began receiving meals from the organization’s new Cultural Cuisine Program, which offers Latin-American inspired meals. It was a choice that satisfied their palates, while ensuring that they were well-fed. “Some nights, my mom would be so tired at the end of the day that she would sleep instead of having dinner,” explains her daughter, Shiela. “MOW Diablo Region’s home-delivered meals means that she does not have to skip meals, and the wellness checks also give me peace of mind.”

Ethel and Frederick are grateful for the Cultural Cuisine meals from Meals on Wheels Diablo Region and their compassionate volunteers. “It’s part of the love that always surrounded us,” concludes Ethel.

BOARD MEMBER NAMED

most influential woman of 2023

Tessie Bellarmine, a Meals on Wheels Diablo Region Board Member, was recently recognized by the San Francisco Business Journal as one of the most Influential Women of 2023. Each year, the Business Journal chooses influential women in the Bay Area who are outstanding professionals and leaders in their field.

Tessie became a member of the Board in 2022 and serves on the audit committee. She brings over 22 years of experience as a business and operations leader with a track record of making and executing sound strategic decisions. In her career, she has implemented company-wide transformations across business and technology in support of business strategy and operational functions. Tessie is Vice President, Operations Process and Performance for CSAA Insurance, a AAA Insurer.

“We are so fortunate to have Tessie on the MOW Diablo Region Board,” says Caitlin Sly, Executive Director. “This award is incredibly well-deserved.”



THE POWER OF partnerships

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region recognizes the power that comes from partnerships. We witness how working together with other organizations allows us to have a profound and lasting impact on the lives of seniors.

During the pandemic, we partnered with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano to create the Grocery Bag Program. This program delivers healthy groceries to homebound elders who need additional food but can't get to the Food Bank distribution sites. The Grocery Bag Program has been a game-changer for food-insecure seniors and we continue to expand to more communities.

Two years ago, MOW Diablo Region partnered with Choice in Aging, Contra Costa Senior Legal Services, and Empowered Aging to create the East Contra Costa Senior Resource Initiative, supported by the John Muir Community Health Fund. The goal was to help seniors who face barriers in accessing services. Because of its success, the program is expanding Countywide.

Our Fall Prevention Program also benefits from its partnership with the Fall Prevention Coalition of Contra Costa County. Service providers and individuals meet quarterly for both learning and information-sharing ideas that help build a stronger network to help frail elders.

We are also a part of the Countywide Elder Abuse Prevention Program. Together with the Family Justice Center, the District Attorney's office, Contra Costa Senior Legal Services, Empowered Aging, Adult Protective Services and others, we work to protect seniors who are experiencing abuse.

Last year, MOW Diablo Region had a fire in its office. Through our membership at East Bay Leadership Council, we were connected to fellow members BPM who offered us temporary office space. This support is helping us during our displacement and has allowed us to continue to deliver meals and services uninterrupted to our clients.

"Our partnerships demonstrate how we are stronger together," says Caitlin Sly, Executive Director. "When we come together with the goal of improving the lives of seniors, it not only benefits our older neighbors, but the entire community."



THANK YOU, volunteers!

Volunteers are an essential part of our work at Meals on Wheels Diablo Region. To celebrate these dedicated and selfless individuals, we honored them during our Volunteer Appreciation Event in October. "Our volunteers are the hearts and hands of our organization," says Caitlin Sly. "They are the most giving and compassionate people I've ever met."

If hours were converted to dollars, volunteers donated over \$450,000 last year! Thanks to the work of our volunteers, MOW Diablo Region was able to deliver over 700,000 meals and provide vital support to vulnerable seniors in our community. If you would like to help, visit volunteer@mowdr.org or call 925-954-8736.





MEALS ON WHEELS
DIABLO REGION

1300 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

SAVE THE DATE dining to deliver 2024



Mark your calendars for **June 8th**. That's when MOW Diablo Region will celebrate the 3rd Annual Dining to Deliver Gala at the Blackhawk Museum in Danville.

Guests have told us what a fabulous and fun event it was last year, and this year it will be even better. We have extended the time for dancing and invited back the incredible band, the Time Bandits. Our silent and live auction items are always great and will include weekend getaways, restaurants, and unique experiences. Plus, the sumptuous food and magical atmosphere of the Blackhawk Museum makes for a wonderful evening. But most importantly, the event surpassed its goal last year and allowed us to deliver more meals and supportive services to vulnerable seniors. With your participation, we will surpass our goal again this year.

For information on sponsorships, auction items, or tickets, please visit our website mowdiableregion.org/upcoming-events or contact Sherry Nadworny at snadworny@mowdr.org, 925-239-2487.