



Special DELIVERY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

In July, I joined Meals on Wheels Diablo Region as its new Executive Director. I'm excited to bring my nine years of experience as MOW San Francisco's Chief Operating Officer and Interim Executive Director to this vibrant and compassionate community. I have a keen understanding of MOW Diablo Region's mission to keep seniors nourished, safe, less isolated, and independent for as long as possible.

Because I serve as an advisor to the Board of Meals on Wheels California, and as the Chair of its Membership Committee, I've had the opportunity to engage with MOWs around the state. I'm proud to share that Meals on Wheels Diablo Region is held in the highest regard for its innovative programs and sound financial management. That's why I'm pleased to be leading this great organization with the help of a committed staff and Board, incredible volunteers, and dedicated donors who understand that all seniors should be able to age with dignity.

I'm also aware of the challenges that MOW Diablo Region faces, including the loss of Covid stimulus funding, a growing senior population, and the increasing requests for our meals and supportive services. But I know the organization has a solid track record for overcoming challenges with strong community support, and I'm confident that we will continue to meet the needs of our aging neighbors.

In this newsletter, we'll introduce you to three new Board members whose experience will help guide us. You'll also meet some of the people who depend on us every day for meals and supportive services. I hope you enjoy reading how they are living healthy and engaged lives.

I look forward to meeting you and, in the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Linnell'.

David Linnell
Executive Director

welcomes three new Board Members



SARAH YOELL

Sarah is the Local Government Affairs Manager for Pacific Gas & Electricity's Greater Bay Area Region where she works with local elected officials, developers, private companies, and community-based organizations to connect the nation's largest utility company with regional stakeholders.

Born to a teenage mom, Sarah grew up living in poverty, receiving food and clothes from her local church and foodbank. The importance of community-based organizations like Meals on Wheels Diablo Region stuck with her as an adult because of the impact those organizations had on her adolescence.

LINDY MAYNES-KOLTHOFF

Lindy Maynes-Kolthoff spent over 35 years serving students in higher education at both the university and community college levels. As the Executive Director of the Los Medanos College Foundation, Lindy was active in her East Contra Costa County as a member of the Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce, member of the Industrial Association of Contra Costa County, presented with a proclamation honoring her volunteer work in the City of Pittsburg, and served 21 years on the Board of Directors for the Rotary Club of Antioch.

Lindy's father volunteered for MOW forty years ago and said that it was the best job he ever had. Then ten years ago, her father-in-law needed services. Lindy says the meal deliveries literally saved his life. She currently is a volunteer in Meals on Wheels Diablo Region's Breakfast Bag program.



SUSAN HURL

For over 30 years, Susan has worked in management positions for Republic Services, and currently as the Division Municipal Business Manager where she is responsible for contract compliance, community donations, and being the liaison to cities and counties. Susan also worked in government with the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and the California State Legislature.

As a founding member of the Elderly Wish Foundation and as a supporter of many programs that benefit seniors, Susan brings to the MOW Diablo Region Board a deep understanding of the challenges facing seniors and the importance of preventing food insecurity.

MOW DIABLO REGION Cafés meet many needs

Meals on Wheels Diablo Region keeps seniors who are not home-bound nourished and engaged at its seven Cafés throughout the county. Hosted at local senior centers and recreational facilities, the Cafés offer a warm, welcoming environment where seniors can enjoy a nutritious, well-balanced lunch and participate in activities like crafts, bingo, and holiday celebrations.

Many seniors have outlived their siblings, spouses, and close friends, and some have even outlived their children. The loneliness and social isolation they experience creates a significant emotional and physical health risk. According to the World Health Organization, the mortality effects of isolation are comparable to smoking 17 cigarettes a day.

The Cafés address isolation head-on by providing a safe environment for seniors to connect with others and form meaningful relationships. Dan O., a longtime regular at the Walnut Creek Café, said he was lonelier before he started coming to the Café for lunch every day. In fact, he now encourages his neighbors to join him, even offering rides to folks who don't drive anymore.

Good Food, Good People

Volunteers and managers form close bonds with the Café regulars, often going above and beyond to ensure their well-being and create a supportive, welcoming atmosphere. Maria Perez, the Pittsburg Café Manager, checks in with any regulars who don't show up for lunch. She also celebrates Café clients' birthdays with cake. These small acts of kindness give rise to a strong sense of belonging and support that some older adults may not experience otherwise.



"There's good food, good people," says Café client Robert W. "It's a luxury for us seniors. I wish more folks knew about this program because there are a lot of older people who are lonely or hungry when they don't need to be."

During extreme heat, the Cafés also serve as cooling centers, providing safe, comfortable spaces to escape the high temperatures. On one of the summer's hottest days, NBC Bay Area News visited the Pittsburg Café and spoke with Nutrition Manager Fern Fonseca. She explained that many of the Café's clients live without air conditioning and would be at risk of heat-related illness without options like those offered by Meals on Wheels Diablo Region's Cafés.

Volunteers At The Heart

Volunteering at the Cafés offers the chance to build deeper connections. Many of the volunteers are seniors themselves. Maddie M. likes to volunteer at the Rodeo Café because she gets so much from the experience. "I have no family left. It's just me. These folks here are my family now, and they treat me like family, too."

The Meals on Wheels Diablo Region Café program is a lifeline that nourishes and provides essential support to our community's seniors. If you would like to attend a Café or volunteer at one, visit us at mowdiableregion.org/cafés or mowdiableregion.org/get-involved.





MEALS ON WHEELS
DIABLO REGION

1300 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

DOORBELL DRIVE a huge success

In July, MOW Diablo Region held a tremendously successful doorbell drive. Many of our seniors didn't have working doorbells, which made it challenging for our drivers to deliver meals. Volunteers cannot leave food if no one answers, which unfortunately was happening with 5 -10% of all deliveries.

"People aren't always aware of the many barriers seniors face to getting food," says Executive Director David Linnell. "One solution can be as simple as installing a doorbell."

All the seniors who needed doorbells have now received one, thanks to our generous community. If you would like to donate other items to support seniors in need, or purchase an Amazon Gift Card that can be used to fulfill specific requests, please visit our Amazon Wish List. It can be found at mowdiableregion.org/how-give. Just click on the Amazon logo at the bottom of the page.

