



# More Than Meals...



## **Message from the Executive Director, James G. Sigurdson**

2023 was quite a year! The need for Meals on Wheels of Ocean County has continued to grow (we served nearly 250,000 meals!) and we are seeing that more and more seniors who are facing food insecurity are turning to us to help fill the large nutrition and ongoing social isolation gap that our homebound older adults are experiencing. We have continued to expand the number of meals delivered and served as well as adding new programs to cement our standing as being “**More Than Meals.**”

Since 1973, Meals on Wheels of Ocean County has fed the social, nutritional, spiritual, and general well-being of older adults in Ocean County. Our mission is to ensure that older Americans can age with dignity, have choices in managing their own lives, and remain active and independent within their communities and most importantly, be where they are most comfortable – their own Home.

Meals on Wheels of Ocean County is **not** an entitlement program and **not** part of a government entity. We are a nonprofit organization and a member of Meals on Wheels of America national organization. Our funding comes from grants and donations from our friends and neighbors and if our funding runs out, Meals on Wheels goes away.

### **It's that simple.**

All we ask is for meal recipients to consider giving a small donation of \$2 per meal to help defray the cost and only 65% of our seniors can afford the nominal meal donation. To continue providing these meals, we established our **Pick Up the Tab** (PUTT) program for those who cannot afford the suggested donation.

Meals on Wheels recipients have limited to no mobility, suffer from multiple chronic conditions, are reliant on numerous daily medications, and struggle daily to resolve the dilemma between eating, filling their prescriptions or paying their bills. They desperately need live daily check-ins, nutrition, and companionship.

Recipients are rigorously screened to ensure our limited resources go to those who need them most. According to our nutrition screening findings, 64% of our homebound participants are at a high nutritional risk and 100% are frail and vulnerable. The program fills a large gap in service by addressing not only senior nutritional needs but also those of the disabled that would otherwise fall to the State, County, or Municipal Governments at a cost to Ocean County's taxpayers.

In 2023 the Community Café had over 200 senior participants of socialization, education, recreation, and physical activities in a safe and healthy setting. With nearly 182,000 Ocean County adults over the age of 60, social services remain nonstop and this last year our outreach workers helped more than 900 older adults with information and assistance.

Meals on Wheels of Ocean County also provides “blizzard bags” in cases of inclement weather should meal delivery be interrupted. Also, during the summer months fresh fruit and vegetable vouchers are available and distributed for those who are most in need. We are always thankful for our local community groups, such as the Girl Scouts or Seaport Stitchers Guild or Stiches by Debbie, who provide cards, placemats, and knitting items to gift to our participants.

Today, Meals on Wheels of Ocean County provides **More Than Meals** with our Home Delivered Meals, Community Café and Social Services to the senior residents who are 60 and older. Our drivers become a familiar friendly face to our older residents, and they not only deliver the meal and a smile but the important daily safety and wellness check that our seniors and their loved ones depend on.

At Meals on Wheels of Ocean County we strive to continue our mission of keeping older adults at home where they are most familiar and feel most comfortable.





# #SaveLunch

Meals on Wheels of Ocean County has joined local Meals on Wheels programs from across the country in calling upon Congress to **#SaveLunch** for millions of American seniors at a time when key hunger relief and nutrition programs are being threatened. The organization is urging our federal representatives to protect and increase funding for Meals on Wheels services and is asking YOU to take action by visiting [www.savelunch.org](http://www.savelunch.org), where you can easily send Congress a direct message about this.

Federal funding accounts for 36% of Meals on Wheels of Ocean County's 2024 annual budget, but it has neither kept pace with inflation nor the rapid growth in the County's senior population. Cuts of any kind will widen the existing gap between the seniors we are able to serve and those desperately in need of this lifeline.

"Meals on Wheels of Ocean County delivers results and helps keep our food insecure, economically disadvantaged, older homebound residents safe and well in their own homes," said Jim Sigurdson, Executive Director. "In a recent survey conducted among our participants, 98% said they feel more confident living independently, 94% eat a more balanced diet, 88% are less lonely and 64% reported they have fewer doctor's appointments due to receiving our services. The numbers don't lie, Meals on Wheels makes a major impact in our community and merely maintaining current funding levels isn't enough, given the existing gap between those Meals on Wheels can serve and those desperately in need."

**Please get involved and help us #SaveLunch by visiting [www.savelunch.org](http://www.savelunch.org)!**



## Board Corner

### Brian McCaskill - Secretary



I joined the Board of Directors of Meals on Wheels of Ocean County in 2017. I had known the Executive Director, Jim Sigurdson, from around town and I knew about the organization because I was on the Village Lutheran Church Council in Lacey and at that time, the Church was used as an onsite meal location. I work for Thrivent Financial as a Certified Financial Planner, and I started to work more with my clients on charitable giving and bequeaths. So, all these life moments came together, and Jim thought I was a good fit for the Board!

I'm glad he did, because being a member of the Board of Directors for Meals on Wheels of Ocean County has been extremely rewarding and fulfilling. For every board member, being a part of this organization means something different. As for what it means to me: I love to get into the numbers and the vision for the future and how Meals on Wheels of Ocean County is helping our growing aging population. But I can

tell you, nothing beats seeing a Meals on Wheels Truck on the road delivering some meals and knowing that I had a very small part in making that happen. It's such an immediate gratification to see that truck. I hear from people all the time about someone they love, receiving a hot, nutritious meal and a kind hello from their driver or from someone at a Community Cafe.

If you would like to know more about how YOU can help Meals on Wheels of Ocean County, please visit our website at [www.csimow.org](http://www.csimow.org) or you can email me at [brian.mccaskill@thrivent.com](mailto:brian.mccaskill@thrivent.com).





# Pick Up the Tab

The **Pick Up the Tab** Program (PUTT) began to help those who are homebound, food insecure and cannot afford the meal donation (they receive the meal regardless of whether they are able to contribute or not). In 2023, 35% of our seniors could not afford the suggested \$2 per meal donation, leaving a budget deficit that needed to be filled by grants and generous donors.

Significant increases in the costs to procure, prepare and deliver meals strained our limited resources but we persevered and served nearly 250,000 meals to more than 1,600 seniors in 2023. From food and packaging to fuel for our delivery fleet, the cost of feeding our homebound elders increased. Pre-pandemic our cost was around \$10 per meal and now it is over \$14 per meal. That's a 28% increase! But we aren't the only ones feeling the financial sting of rising costs. Imagine how the cost of inflation has impacted our seniors who are on fixed incomes and struggling just to make ends meet.

**Please help Pick Up The Tab today!**

Our Meals on Wheels program enables and affordably. When you consider the month for assisted living, or a nursing home Meals on Wheels of Ocean County receives meals 5 days a week) that's a families.



Nearly 1 in 5 of New Jersey's 2.01 million and 8% of NJ seniors are living in or near alone and 54% are 85 years or older. For lifeline to avoid making the awful decision that many of them face daily. Forgoing healthy food eventually leads to malnutrition and/or institutionalization which is why many older adults and their families are being proactive and are requesting our services.

With only 65% of our seniors able to afford the nominal \$2 per meal donation your gift goes directly to **Pick Up the Tab** for these seniors. Meals on Wheels recipients have limited to no mobility, suffer from multiple chronic conditions, are reliant on numerous daily medications, and struggle daily to resolve the dilemma between eating, filling their prescriptions, or paying their bills. They desperately need live daily check-ins, nutrition, and companionship which is why a **monetary gift is so important to the lives of Ocean County Seniors**.

# Check the Box

As New Jerseyans start filing their 2023 State income tax, did you know that you can **Check the Box** to donate to Meals on Wheels of New Jersey? We are one of the fortunate non-profit organizations that have this designation and Meals on Wheels of Ocean County receives a portion of these funds to continue our mission of serving homebound and disabled residents of Ocean County.

A charitable giving deduction to Meals on Wheels of New Jersey provides relief to taxpayers at all income levels who donate to charity, serves as an important lifeline when nonprofits need it most.

National data show that across the country, giving to charity has declined. According to the 2023 Giving USA report, total charitable giving from individuals, bequests, foundations, and corporations dropped sharply in 2022 compared to the prior year. Economic uncertainty and stock market volatility are key factors in the decline, and the 2022 fallback comes off two years of especially strong giving specifically in response to the pandemic.





## Our Services

- 🍎 Prepared & delivered nearly **250,000** meals to **1,600** Ocean County Seniors
- 🍎 Outreach serves over **900** seniors
- 🍎 Over **200** seniors attend a Community Café for meals and activities
- 🍎 The cost to prepare and deliver each Meal is more than **\$14.00**
- 🍎 Our drivers travel around the globe **11** times each year delivering meals

## Of the over **2,000** Seniors served...

- 🍎 **70%** Live Alone
- 🍎 **54%** over the age of 85
- 🍎 **66%** female
- 🍎 **100%** are frail
- 🍎 **64%** are a high nutritional risk
- 🍎 **98%** more confident on MOW



*That's what we call "going the extra mile" for someone you know and love!*

## FY 2023 Income

Source	Amount	Percentage
Grants	\$3,646,519	89%
Contributions	\$322,381	8%
Other	\$108,729	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,077,629</b>	<b>100%</b>

## FY 2023 Expense

Destination	Amount	Percentage
Food	\$987,094	24%
Administration	\$1,590,275	39%
Program Services	\$570,848	14%
Other	\$929,392	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,077,629</b>	<b>100%</b>

MUNICIPALITY	CLIENTS	MEALS
Barnegat Township	91	12,187
Barnegat Light Borough	2	269
Beach Haven Borough	3	209
Beachwood Borough	8	2,210
Berkeley Township	215	33,717
Brick Township	207	35,156
Eagleswood Township	10	1,453
Harvey Cedars Borough	1	56
Jackson Township	127	12,179
Lacey Township	46	6,236
Lakewood Township	150	26,593
Lavalette Borough	17	2,007
Little Egg Harbor Township	51	8,028
Long Beach Township	17	1,963

MUNICIPALITY	CLIENTS	MEALS
Manchester Township	339	50,983
Ocean Gate Borough	1	111
Ocean Township	18	1,565
Plumsted Township	13	2,446
Point Pleasant Beach Borough	8	1,343
Point Pleasant Borough	8	1,387
Seaside Heights Borough	9	2,092
Seaside Park Borough	9	1,099
Ship Bottom Borough	4	820
South Toms River Borough	3	539
Stafford Township	96	11,281
Surf City Borough	2	304
Toms River Township	156	26,480
Tuckerton Borough	17	3,032

