



More Than Meals...

END *the* WAIT™

For more than 50 years, Meals on Wheels of Ocean County (MOWOC) has remained the most effective solution to address senior hunger, wellness, safety and isolation. Now, more than ever, we are experiencing a higher demand for our services. Just ten years ago, Meals on Wheels of Ocean County received 20-30 referrals a month, now we receive 20-30 referrals a week. The need is growing.

As a result, the increased demand for our services has exceeded our available resources, causing wait lists, at times of over 100 frail and vulnerable seniors. To combat this problem, MOWOC has joined the national campaign of Meals on Wheels America to **END the Wait**.

How are we going to **END the Wait**?

MOWOC continues to look at our programming and partnerships to see how we can improve and become more efficient. Currently, MOWOC prepares and delivers 1,000 meals daily. Recently, we decided to remove the juice cup from our menu, which is not part of the 1/3 dietary reference intake requirement that our meals provide. This omission alone will save MOWOC nearly \$40,000 a year. The organization is adapting to our seniors' medical needs and in 2025 all meals delivered are lower in sugar, carbohydrates and sodium to help enhance the overall wellness of our participants.

Partnerships have been a pillar of Meals on Wheels programs, and with our exceptional partners in Ocean County, we plan to reestablish a volunteer delivery program. These new volunteer routes will expand the home delivered meal program to serve more seniors and help **END the Wait** as well as give community members and organizations pride in helping their homebound neighbors.

Meals on Wheels of Ocean County continues to leverage our influence to raise awareness and drive change across systems, practices and policies but YOU can help enhance engagement. YOU can contact your Federal, State, County and Local Elected Officials and tell them why our program is

important. Encourage them to participate in a ride-along or visit our kitchen and Community Cafe to see firsthand how we are *More Than Meals*. Ask them to advocate to **END the Wait** by reauthorizing the Older American's Act and increase funding so that Meals on Wheels programs across the nation can serve ALL seniors in need.

Funding is always a priority for Meals on Wheels of Ocean County. With the skyrocketing food costs, transportation expenses and insurance rates it is extremely hard to keep up with demand. Please donate today to **END the Wait** by scanning the QR code here.



Of the 2,000 older adults MOWOC served in 2024, 65% live alone. Our participants are homebound, frail, socially isolated, and lonely. When we asked our seniors how often they lacked companionship, 62% said it was sometimes or often, and 53% said that that they feel isolated from others all the time.

The services that Meals on Wheels of Ocean County provides are crucial and nurture our seniors' whole-being, which is why it is vital to **END the Wait**.

Our daily safety and wellness checks, provided with the meal delivery, helps to ease the anxiety our seniors and their family and friends experience. 98% of our participants said they are more confident living independently because of MOWOC, and 98% eat a more nutritious and balanced diet, decreasing doctors' visits and hospitalizations. 83% stated that if they did not have Meals on Wheels, they would not have a daily hot meal.

Older adults in Ocean County cannot afford to **Wait** for the essential services of daily nutrition, wellness checks and socialization that keep our seniors living safely independently. Help **END the Wait** today by visiting www.csimow.org!





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

As I finish my 25th year as Executive Director of Meals on Wheels of Ocean County (MOWOC), I am looking back on the changes and challenges that we have faced, but more importantly, looking forward to what we will accomplish this year to enable our seniors to maintain the highest level of independence while living safely in their own homes by providing nutritious meals, daily wellness checks, and supportive social services.

I witnessed the resilience of my staff and the community at large in 2012 when Superstorm Sandy devastated our area. The storm left our kitchens inoperable, but we found a partner in the old LaBove Grande in Lakehurst to make our meals and three days later we were back on the road delivering hot, nutritious meals to our homebound participants.

When the Global Pandemic hit in 2020, I was afraid that one outbreak among our staff would halt our operations. We put in place and followed all the safety protocols and guidelines, and not only did we persevere, but we did not miss one day delivering hot and nutritious meals to our frail and vulnerable older adults. MOWOC also received and distributed donated items such as toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitizer, disinfectants, paper towels, and tissues, all the necessities our seniors needed to remain safe.

Our seniors count on us to make it through crisis' not only for the hot, nutritious meals, but also for the daily safety and wellness checks and social connection our drivers provide. We are ***More than Meals!*** Our drivers become an extended family of sorts to our participants and can tell if they aren't feeling well or if something is off and we will let their family know or in more serious cases, contact EMS or Police to get immediate, often lifesaving, assistance.

As the baby boomers are peaking, and older adults are living longer on stretched fixed incomes, the need for our services will only continue to increase. I would be remiss if I did not tell you that funding to sustain our program is an issue that looms large over the organization. Meals on Wheels of Ocean County is a non-profit organization, not an entitlement program, and as such we rely on government and private grants and donations from our participants, their loved ones, and the community at large to help us feed and keep our seniors safe. (Participants are asked to consider a voluntary \$3 donation per meal to help defray our costs. The actual cost to prepare and deliver each meal is \$14. No one is ever denied a meal because they cannot afford to donate). We have been told that government funding at the current level is not tenable with the growing need in Ocean County and to me, this is not acceptable. Meals on Wheels of Ocean County will fight for what our seniors deserve.

As I sit here today and write this, I am reminded once again of our resilience. We are continually looking for new sources of revenue and tweaking the program so we can continue the daily meal delivery, wellness checks, the Community Café and outreach services that we have been providing to Ocean County seniors for 50 years.

Check the Box

As New Jerseyans start filing their 2024 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 food insecure, homebound and socially isolated seniors and disabled residents.

A charitable giving deduction to Meals on Wheels of New Jersey provides relief to taxpayers at all income levels who donate to charity and 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 2024 Giving USA report, total charitable giving from individuals, bequests, foundations, and corporations is shrinking despite soaring costs to programs like Meals on Wheels to procure, produce and deliver food to our seniors.



Checking the Box to Meals on Wheels of New Jersey makes it easier for generous New Jerseyans to donate while helping to ensure that Meals on Wheels of Ocean County can more effectively meet community needs. Please **Check the Box** today or directly donate to Meals on Wheels of Ocean County at www.csimow.org.





Meet our new Ocean County Commissioner & Liaison to the Office of Senior Services

Commissioner Rob Arace

** What made you want to serve the residents of Ocean County?*
Service to my community has always been a passion of mine. Ocean County is my home, and I want to ensure it remains a place where families thrive, businesses grow, and our seniors are supported. My time as Mayor of Manchester taught me the importance of strong local leadership, and as

Commissioner, I'm committed to using that experience to advocate for all residents, especially our most vulnerable populations.

** As the liaison to the Office of Senior Services, what are your vision and goals for our seniors in 2025?*
My vision for Senior Services in 2025 is to expand access to essential services and grow our community connections. Specifically, I want to introduce more educational opportunities and work to make transportation more accessible for our senior community.

** As the former Mayor of Manchester, what is the biggest lesson you learned working for seniors?*
The biggest lesson I learned is that seniors want a representative with a clear line of communication and someone who can proactively address their needs. It is not always as simple as it should be to contact your local officials, which was my big focus. Creating a liaison to assist with communication and growing our accessibility through an annex in Whiting for County and Municipal services was pivotal.

** Any tips for aging gracefully?*

Family and friends are a significant factor, as well as community-based work are extremely fulfilling to me.

** What is your favorite meal?* I'm a big fan of a classic chicken parm.

** We are hosting a Spring of Community Champion activities; can we count on you to participate?*
Absolutely! Supporting Meals on Wheels is incredibly important to me, and I'd be honored to participate. It's a wonderful way to connect with the community and make a tangible impact. I'll be there!

Achieve Your Resolutions...

S.M.A.R.T. goals for seniors: Simple, Maintainable, Age-appropriate, Realistic and Tailored

Simple: Create a goal that has just one step or creates one small change in your daily life.

Maintainable: Choose something that builds on a healthy habit you've already established.

Age-appropriate: Make sure it will serve you well as you continue to add years to your life.

Realistic: Understand your abilities (and limitations).

Tailored: Work with your healthcare and wellness teams so a goal aligns with your unique needs.

The best goals will touch on one (or more) of the mind, body and spirit approach to total wellness. Here are examples of S.M.A.R.T. goals that address each of our total wellness areas.

Intellectual – sharpen your brain

Social – enhance friendships and meaningful connections

Emotional – stay happy or content

Spiritual – Connect to your higher power

Occupational – maintain or improve lifelong skills

Physical – move your body

Putting it all together

If all this seems overwhelming and you've had enough acronyms in your life, we just have one more for you: K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simple, Silly. That's right, if you stick to one aspect of S.M.A.R.T. goals for seniors — Simple, Maintainable, Age-appropriate, Realistic and Tailored — just keep it simple.

After all, life can be far too complicated at times, and you probably don't need a New Year's resolution to keep that at top of mind. When you have a plan, you will get where you want to be. Making a S.M.A.R.T goal creates a roadmap that will make achieving your goals possible.



By the Numbers in 2024...

- 🍎 Prepared & delivered nearly **260,000** meals to **1,700** Ocean County Seniors
- 🍎 Outreach Workers helped **490** more seniors with information and assistance
- 🍎 **500** seniors attended a Community Café for meals and socialization
- 🍎 The cost to prepare and deliver each meal has increased **28%** since 2020
- 🍎 Our drivers traveled around the globe **11** times in 2024 delivering meals

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

- 🍎 **65%** Live Alone
- 🍎 **67%** female
- 🍎 **85%** are frail
- 🍎 **35%** cannot afford the \$2 voluntary donation
- 🍎 **83%** would not have a daily hot meal
- 🍎 **98%** more confident on MOW



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

FY 2024 Income

Source	Amount	Percentage
Grants	\$3,602,132	88%
Contributions	\$324,550	8%
Other	\$173,807	4%
Total	\$4,100,489	100%

FY 2024 Expense

Destination	Amount	Percentage
Food	\$975,346	24%
Administration	\$1,497,749	37%
Program Services	\$1,285,340	31%
Other	\$342,054	8%
Total	\$4,100,489	100%

MUNICIPALITY	CLIENTS	MEALS
Barnegat Township	100	11,664
Barnegat Light Borough	3	396
Bay Head	1	6
Beach Haven Borough	2	396
Beachwood Borough	14	1,374
Berkeley Township	223	33,118
Brick Township	209	33,170
Eagleswood Township	8	1,177
Jackson Township	137	12,991
Lacey Township	50	5,857
Lakewood Township	169	27,137
Lavalette Borough	20	2,155
Little Egg Harbor Township	94	9,007
Long Beach Township	20	2,287

MUNICIPALITY	CLIENTS	MEALS
Manchester Township	358	54,730
Ocean Gate Borough	2	397
Ocean Township	13	1,293
Plumsted Township	14	2,549
Point Pleasant Beach Borough	9	1,665
Point Pleasant Borough	6	557
Seaside Heights Borough	12	1,262
Seaside Park Borough	10	1,906
Ship Bottom Borough	10	1,197
South Toms River Borough	1	223
Stafford Township	113	11,031
Surf City Borough	8	377
Toms River Township	175	28,261
Tuckerton Borough	19	3,339



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