



2025

ANNUAL REPORT



MEALS ON WHEELS OCEAN COUNTY

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A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Happy New Year!

As we reflect on 2025, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the unwavering commitment of our community. Because of you, Meals on Wheels Ocean County has continued to expand services, strengthen partnerships, and provide vital support to thousands of seniors across our county.

This past year, we proudly introduced our new brand—More Than Meals: Community, Care and Connection—because our work goes far beyond delivering just a meal. We create essential support systems that help seniors live safely and independently in their own homes by providing reassurance, a friendly face, and vital connection.

COMMUNITY

We create welcoming spaces and supportive services that keep seniors engaged, informed, and connected to their community. Meals on Wheels Ocean County hosts a Community Café in Manahawkin and provides meals to cafés across the county, where seniors enjoy companionship and engaging activities that range from chair volleyball to holiday parties. We also distribute Community Impact Surveys to ensure our services continue to meet evolving needs, and we advocate at all levels of government to help amplify the voices of older adults.

CARE

We believe food security, safety, and well-being are human rights. Our program mobilizes nutritious food that is preventative healthcare for aging adults, and our drivers deliver daily wellness and safety checks with every meal to ensure our seniors are supported. Meals on Wheels Ocean County's community partners show their care for our participants by donating items ranging from quilted placemats to everyday necessities, as well as special treats like cases of Girl Scout cookies, bringing comfort and connection beyond the meal.

CONNECTION

We address social isolation among older adults by providing meaningful daily interactions with caring and trusted drivers. Our participants are often part of an overlooked population, and Meals on Wheels Ocean County's drivers bring a friendly hello and a brief conversation, something they may not otherwise receive. Our team will also inquire about other services they may need to live safely. These older adults have access to social services and referrals for housing repairs or accessibility accommodations, mental health support, and other essential programs that foster belonging, emotional wellness, and stability.

With your support of Community, Care, and Connection, we can ensure that no senior in Ocean County goes hungry or unseen, while strengthening a resilient and innovative organization and building lasting partnerships that support healthy aging and independence.

As we look ahead to 2026, we invite you to help shape the future of this bold vision.

More Than Meals,



James Sigurdson



More Than Meals: Community. Care. Connection



MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee



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Monmouth/Ocean AFL CIO



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Mercy Center



Brian McCaskill

Thrivent Financial



Wm. David Richardson

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The Board of Directors invites you to learn more, share ideas, or explore ways to get involved with Meals on Wheels Ocean County by visiting csimow.org



DID YOU KNOW?



1 entire year

=



1 day

=



1 month

MOWOC can serve a senior for an entire year for the same cost as 1 day in the hospital or just under 1 month in a nursing home

More Than Meals: Community. Care. Connection



2025 Year in Review

BY THE NUMBERS



272,000+

nutritious meals delivered with safety checks to seniors in Ocean County



2,295

seniors served by staff and volunteers
up from 1,700 in 2024



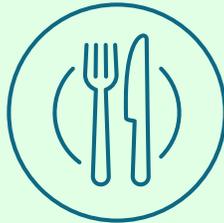
14,000+

meals served at Community Cafés across Ocean County



12 trips

our drivers take around the world delivering community care + connection



286,000+

meals served to seniors in Ocean County.
up from 260,000 in 2024



97%

report greater confidence in their ability to live independently



95%

report improved nutrition through more consistent, well-balanced meal



45%

report having fewer doctor visits while receiving our services



89%

report they would not have a daily hot meal without MOWOC



53%

of participants cannot afford the voluntary \$3/meal donation



\$13.66

avg. cost to prepare, package, administer and deliver 1 nutritious meal + wellness check

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MORE THAN MEALS IMPACT

Community

Laura M. and her mother, Ruth B., joined our program in 2020. Laura, who is wheelchair-bound, faces significant mobility and cognitive challenges that make even moving around her home difficult—preparing meals or shopping on her own is simply not possible. After Ruth passed away in November 2023, Laura remained on our program with no local support system; her closest family member lives in Pennsylvania. For Laura, Meals on Wheels Ocean County is not only her primary source of nutrition but also a critical daily wellness check. She receives weekday meals as well as weekend and holiday meals to ensure that she is never without support. Laura is the very reason our program exists—providing nourishment, safety, and reassurance to seniors who would otherwise be left without care

Care

In August we had a Brick participant not answer his door as he always does. The Meals on Wheels office called his emergency contact, who tried to reach him as well, but couldn't and was concerned. MOW office called Brick Senior Services, and an Outreach Worker went to the home for a well check. Brick PD were also called and the landlord let them in. Our senior was found on the floor and EMS were called. He had fallen sometime after we delivered his meal the day before and had been unable to get up. This was such an awesome effort between Meals on Wheels Ocean County, Brick Senior Services, Police and EMS and goes to show how when we work together we deliver **More Than Meals**.

Connection

Barbara “Bobbi” G. has been part of our program since February 2019. Over the years, we have provided her with daily nourishment and safety checks, ensuring she could continue living independently. In 2022, Bobbi suffered a stroke that left her even more vulnerable. Since then, our drivers have played a vital role in monitoring her wellbeing. Her niece has expressed deep gratitude, knowing she will be contacted immediately if Bobbi does not answer the door. For Bobbi, our service means more than a meal—it is a daily safeguard, a connection to others, and the comfort of knowing she is not alone.

MOBILIZING 2026

Meals on Wheels Ocean County is in a transformative era with the completion of our first-ever Strategic Plan—a roadmap to strengthen our services and prepare for the future.

For more than 50 years, we have delivered more than meals. Each day, our dedicated staff and volunteers provide nutrition, wellness checks, and meaningful human connection to over 1,000 homebound seniors, helping them remain healthy and independent in their own homes.

Looking ahead, our Strategic Plan outlines a bold vision centered on innovation, sustainability, and community impact. Key priorities include strengthening governance and leadership, diversifying funding to ensure long-term stability, integrating technology to improve efficiency and client experience, enhancing marketing and communications, and deepening partnerships that support aging in place.

This plan comes at a critical time. With federal funding for social services increasingly uncertain, Meals on Wheels Ocean County must continue to lead with resilience and innovation. Our history—from Superstorm Sandy to the COVID-19 pandemic—demonstrates our ability to adapt and deliver essential services when our community needs us most. To ensure our staff is informed and engaged, we hosted an in-service session to explain the details of the Strategic Plan, invite feedback, and foster collaboration as we move forward together.

At the heart of our work is Community, Care and Connection. For many seniors, our drivers are the only human contact they receive each day, providing both a nutritious meal, socialization and a vital wellness check.

Thank you to the Leaders who served on Meals on Wheels Ocean County

Strategic Planning Committee

Co-Chair Joe Stroffolino, Causeway Family of Dealerships	Co-Chair Brian McCaskill, Thrivent Financial
Hon. Robert Arace, Ocean County Commissioner	Kathy Durante, OceanFirst Foundation
Wyatt Earp, MOWOC Board President	Jeremy Grunin, Grunin Foundation
Hon. Kim Guadagno, Mercy Center	Wm. David Richardson, MOWOC Treasurer
Kevin Walsh, St. Francis Community Center	

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CHECK THE BOX

As New Jerseyans start filing their 2025 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 Ocean County receives a portion of these funds to continue our mission of mobilizing resources to help older adults achieve food security, maintain independence, & build community.

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

With the uncertainty of government funding increasing or even continuing, that leaves Meals on Wheels programs in a precarious position to plan effectively or even continue to serve, all who need Community, Care and Connection. This is despite soaring costs to programs like ours to procure, produce and deliver food to our frail and vulnerable neighbors.

You can Check the Box to the Meals on Wheels of New Jersey Fund and the amount you choose will either reduce your refund or increase your balance due. This makes it easier for generous New Jerseyans to donate while helping to ensure that Meals on Wheels Ocean County can more effectively meet our community needs.

Please Check the Box today or directly donate to Meals on Wheels Ocean County at www.csimow.org.



NOURISHING MOOD IN WINTER

As the days shorten and winter settles in, many adults, particularly older adults, experience changes in mood, appetite, and energy. Seasonal shifts can influence neurochemistry and well-being, making thoughtful nutrition and attentive eating habits especially important for seniors.

A 2025 narrative review concluded that nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids and probiotics—alongside dietary patterns rich in fiber and complex carbohydrates—play a significant role in emotional well-being by supporting brain and gut health.

- Omega-3 fatty acids, found abundantly in fatty fish (e.g., salmon, sardines, mackerel), walnuts, flaxseeds, and chia seeds, are integral to neuronal membrane structure and neurotransmitter function. These fats have been associated with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety and improved cognitive resilience.
- Whole grains such as oats, brown rice, quinoa, and barley supply complex carbohydrates and B vitamins that support steady energy release and neurotransmitter production. Research is still evolving; several studies suggest higher whole-grain intake correlates with more stable mood and reduced anxiety scores.
- Fermented foods—including yogurt with live cultures, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and miso—provide probiotics that help maintain a diverse and balanced gut microbiome. The gut produces many mood-related neurotransmitters and has been linked to diminished stress and improved emotional regulation.

Beyond what we eat, how we eat influences mood and appetite—especially in winter when changes in routine and daylight can affect hunger cues. Mindful eating encourages slowing down, savoring meals, and paying attention to the body's internal signals. This approach can help seniors better recognize hunger and fullness, improve digestion, and derive greater pleasure from food.

Winter can be a season of reflection and renewal. Choosing nutrient-rich foods that support both body and mind, and eating with awareness, equips us to meet the season with resilience and grace.

More Than Meals: Community. Care. Connection



DONOR SUPPORT

Because of your generosity, older adults across Ocean County receive
More Than Meals through *Community Care and Connection*

Thank you to the following foundations for their support in 2025:

Albertsons Companies Foundation
Ann Earle Talcott Fund
Carolyn Jane Scott Trust
Community Foundation of South Jersey
First Energy
Fred C. Rummel Foundation
Health Equity
IGH Charitable Foundation
Kiwanis Club of Jackson
Kotzas Family Charitable Foundation
La Jarochita
Manasquan Bank Foundation
Meals on Wheels America
Naval Civilian Managers Association
OceanFirst Foundation
Saint Andrew United Methodist Church
State of NJ - Office of Faith Based Initiatives
Target Impact
Toms River Sunrise Rotary Charitable Foundation
Township of Brick
Wawa Foundation

COMMUNITY FOUNDERS SOCIETY

DONORS CONTRIBUTING \$10,000 ANNUALLY IN 2025



**BARRY SEGAL
CITTA FOUNDATION
FLORIAN J. LOMBARDI FOUNDATION
GOLDMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION
GRUNIN FOUNDATION
WINTRODE FAMILY FOUNDATION**



COUNTY SUPPORT

Meals on Wheels Ocean County extends our sincere gratitude to the County of Ocean for its continued partnership and support. Through critical funding, collaboration, and shared commitment to older adults, the County plays an essential role in helping us deliver **More Than Meals**: ensuring seniors across Ocean County receive nutritious meals, vital services, and meaningful connection.

Together, we are ensuring no senior in Ocean County is hungry, isolated, or forgotten.



Funded in part by a grant
from the Ocean County
Board of Commissioners



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