



For Immediate Release
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Urgent Need for Meals On Wheels Volunteers

Meals On Wheels programs throughout the state are in desperate need of volunteer drivers as the need for meals increases daily. Senior hunger is on the rise and the Meals On Wheels (MOW) programs are vital components in the fight to end this plague.

"I think the need is only going to get greater which means we will have to add more routes which means we will need more volunteers," said Stefanie Thomas Meals On Wheels Coordinator at *Newark Senior Center*, a meal delivery provider.

Today, one in nine seniors is at risk of hunger. The Meals On Wheels Association of America projects that by 2025, an estimated 9.5 million senior Americans will experience some form of hunger or "food insecurity", about 75 percent higher than the number in 2005.

Meals On Wheels programs throughout the state deliver a hot meal each weekday at lunchtime. Currently, there is no waitlist for a senior to receive a meal in Delaware. However, with the daily increase of seniors in need of meals, combined with a shortage of volunteers, the threat of a waitlist for meal delivery looms near on the horizon.

All counties in Delaware are struggling to find enough volunteers to meet the increased need. Everything has a ripple effect. The rising need for more volunteers directly corresponds to the rapidly growing demand for meals. The number of seniors in need of meals is growing, making the delivery routes longer and causing routes to be split into two—resulting in the need for more volunteers. There are already close to 200 meal delivery routes throughout the state.

Volunteers are the heart of the MOW program. Not only do they deliver nutritious meals to frail seniors who are unable to leave their homes or prepare food, they also provide seniors with companionship and a warm, friendly smile when they arrive. Sometimes the volunteer is the only person the senior sees each day. But for a variety of reasons, many volunteers have had to leave or take a break from the MOW program.

According to Elizabeth Walls, Volunteer Director for *Cheer* a meal delivery provider in Sussex County, said, "A lot our volunteers work as a husband-wife team. We see them quit when one of them gets sick and the other has to care for an ill spouse. We have also seen our volunteers return to work and they don't have the time or energy to continue delivering meals." Some MOW volunteers are retirees and many of those volunteers take time off during the harsh winter months.

There is also a significant decline in corporate involvement, as businesses are downsizing and asking more of their employees, the employees are unable to deliver.

Unfortunately, the escalating need for meals is not an isolated issue. There is a desperate need for meal delivery volunteers in *all* areas of the state.

"Personally, my wife and I have seen the need firsthand as meal delivery drivers. The bottom line is... without the Meals On Wheels program, many of Delaware's seniors would be alone and without hope," said Scott Lugar, Board Chair for Meals On Wheels Delaware and Volunteer Driver.

This is a time for Delawareans to join together to care for our elderly neighbors. This is a request for individuals, businesses, and civic groups to accept the call or recommit.

With five meal delivery providers located throughout Delaware, there is a convenient pick-up location in each county. For meal delivery information visit www.mealsonwheelsde.org/meal-delivery. Newark Senior Center, City Fare in New Castle County, Modern Maturity Center in Kent County, CHEER in Sussex County, and Meals On Wheels Lewes Rehoboth could all use help delivering meals to our community's vulnerable seniors.

All are affected by senior hunger because senior hunger is: our aging parent, relative, friend or neighbor. The time to act is now. Sign up to volunteer today.

About Meals On Wheels

The mission of Meals On Wheels Delaware is to ensure, through the provision of financial and human resources, that every eligible senior in the State of Delaware receives a hot, nutritious meal in their home. Meals On Wheels Delaware is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, a public/private partnership between the federal government, the State of Delaware, five meal-providing agencies and thousands of volunteers from corporations, civic, religious and community groups. Together, the program provides and delivers meals every day to almost 4,000 homebound seniors. In fact, last year nearly 635,000 meals were served throughout the state. Meals On Wheels Delaware strengthens the partnership by providing additional financial and volunteer resources to the agency providers to ensure that no senior in Delaware is on a waiting list for a hot meal delivered to their home. Meals On wheels Delaware provides more than a meal...it also provides a gift of health, independence and companionship to homebound seniors in Delaware.