



# NEWS ON WHEELS

*The Annual Newsletter for Meals On Wheels of Ridgefield*

FALL 2009

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Darwin Yoran*  
President

*Kathryn Cuny*  
Vice President

*Linda Almira*  
Secretary

*Anthony Octavio*  
Treasurer

*Joyce Ligi*  
Assistant Treasurer

*John Bengston*

*Dyane Brandt*

*Celeste Cobb*

*Deirdre Condon*

*Fran McConnell*

*Susan Yerg*

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

*Anthony Octavio*

*Joyce Ligi*

*Gary Condon*

*Robert Ramsey*

## OPERATIONS MANAGER

*Caroll Bancel, RD*

## KITCHEN MANAGERS

*Kathryn Guido*

*Joni Karsh*

*Mary Pat Sexton*

## ADVISORY BOARD

*John Frey*

*David Pazer, MD*

*Tom Reynolds*

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

*Celeste Cobb*

## GRAPHIC DESIGNER

*Liz Marcus*

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,  
As we publish our first newsletter, I thought it appropriate to present a short history of our program and indicate why it differs so completely from the majority of other programs with similar

names and objectives.

In 1972, Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield began its service to the Ridgefield community. Our founders, Barbara Deegan, Marion Sloan and Annette Zelson, did their cooking in the basement kitchen of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. This set us apart from the start – we would prepare tasty, nutritious meals in our own kitchen rather than contract with nursing home or hospital kitchens. Initially 24 meals were prepared and delivered per week.

As demand grew, we moved first to the then Ridgefield Family Y (at the former, and once again, Barlow Mountain Elementary School) and in 1984 to our present home in Ballard Green. In 2003 we expanded and totally renovated the kitchen. This was made possible by a grant to the town by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. It was a timely upgrade as ten years ago we prepared and delivered an average of 200 meals per week – this past April that average had risen to over 500 meals per week.

That one time grant represents the only state or federal funds ever received. The three ladies who founded Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield very wisely had it incorporated under the laws of the State of

Connecticut as a totally independent not-for-profit corporation. With no government affiliations we are not bound by government constraints. We are free to serve any resident of Ridgefield we determine is in need of our service. I'm reasonably certain that two of the clients profiled on page 3 would not qualify for assistance under government affiliated programs - which most Meals on Wheels are.

The current economic climate has affected us as it has most everyone. Costs are up and donations, especially from trusts and foundations, are down. We are forecasting a rather substantial deficit for the year and have instituted a vigorous cost containment program. Significant savings in several areas have been identified and action taken and several of our vendors are now working with us to further reduce costs. However, we do not plan to compromise the excellent quality of our meals. In July, for only the second time since inception, we increased what we charge our clients for a meal – dinners now cost \$3.50 - an increase of \$0.50. Lunches remain priced at \$2.00.

I am extremely thankful for all the volunteers who have contributed so much to the program over the years - without them we would not exist. And, many, many thanks to our financial contributors – you have kept the ship afloat. Your support is essential for our continuing service to the Ridgefield community.

Sincerely,

Darwin Yoran  
President

## INSIDE

Kitchen Chat with  
Caroll Bancel

Ridgefielders  
Choosing MOW

Invaluable MOW  
Volunteers

Annual Volunteer  
Luncheon

## Kitchen Chat with Carol Bancel

Carol Bancel is Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield's (MOW) Operations Manager. Carol has been with MOW since 2005 and is a registered dietitian with a B.S. from the University of Connecticut, School of Allied Health Professions. She has 20 years' experience in health care management and clinical nutrition, and is licensed in Food Service Safety. We spent some time with Carol to learn a bit more about a very valuable part of our operation – the kitchen.



### Having our own MOW kitchen is unique, correct?

Yes it is. Most Meals on Wheels organizations rely on nursing homes or hospitals for their food preparation. We, on the other hand, are very fortunate to have our own state-of-the-art

kitchen. This gives us the ability to truly provide nutritionally balanced meals with a home cooked taste. Additionally, we can better serve our clients who have special requests either due to dietary restrictions or preference.

We also label all of our meals and include an expiration date in case a meal needs to be frozen for later consumption.

### Clearly a lot of preparation and thought goes into these meals.

It does indeed. At the close of each week, I decide what the menu will be for the following week. Our menus rotate about every six weeks. All of our menus are planned using the USDA food pyramid; it is important that we deliver nutritionally balanced meals to our clients. For example, all of our dinners include a starch, protein and vegetable. Many of our recipes come from an industry standard cookbook, *Food for 50*. We also modify some of our own family favorites for our clients. The menus are prepared with the season in mind. In the summer months the fare tends to be lighter and includes more fresh fruits and vegetables while in the winter we include hearty soups and stews.

Overall, we prepare about 74 hot meals (dinner) and 55 cold meals (lunch) per day. We accomplish this with a separate kitchen staff each Monday, Wednesday and Friday. A kitchen supervisor (who is an accomplished cook) oversees meal preparation and is supported by 2 – 3 cooks. Each cook is in turn supported by prep. cooks who work on salads, fruit and sandwiches. It typically takes a staff of 15 – 16 two hours to prepare the meals. Our coordinators then ensure each meal goes in the right bag and delivery cooler. Our drivers take it from there.

### You also prepare special holiday meals.

Yes, at those times of year when many families gather to enjoy a special meal, we can offer our clients the same experience. We prepare special holiday meals for the traditional holidays (for example, Thanksgiving, Easter, etc.) as well as some of the “lesser” holidays like St. Patrick's day, the 4th of July, Memorial Day and many others. Most importantly, we always make sure to recognize the most special day of the year for all of our clients – their birthdays. Our birthday meals include a small cake and gift bag.

### It sounds like you have a “well oiled” kitchen – is there anything you worry about?

Not really – just winter weather and the possibility of some of our major equipment failing. Obviously, we do all we can to prevent the latter and rely on the generosity of Mother Nature for the former!

## KITCHEN HOURS

MON-WED-FRI  
8AM-NOON  
203.438.8788



FOR CALLS DURING NON-KITCHEN HOURS, PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE ON THE MACHINE. CALLS SEEKING INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEERING OR MAKING A DONATION WILL BE REFERRED TO THE APPROPRIATE MEALS ON WHEELS STAFF MEMBER.

It is unanimous amongst our volunteers and clients that decorated delivery bags are the best! Periodically, children in our community take the time and pleasure to decorate our white bags with wonderful sayings and drawings.



## A GIFT THAT GIVES BACK

Please help us help Ridgefield residents in need. Look for our Annual Appeal letter in November - or - send contributions to: Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield, 25 Gilbert Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877 203.438.8788 **Thank you for your support!**



## Ridgefielders Benefitting from Meals on Wheels



*Dottie Hall*



*Robert Helmus*



*Lynne Ryan*

Our clients come to us for a variety of reasons. It may be because they can no longer manage shopping and/or because putting meals together has become too difficult. Whatever the reason, of course, we are here to help. Three of our clients chose to share their stories below.

**Dottie Hall** injured her wrist and needed surgery after a car accident. Needless-to-say, not being able to use one of her hands made it very difficult for Dottie to shop and prepare meals for her and her husband, Al. As neither she nor Al would consider him a cook, she called MOW to deliver both lunch and dinner for the two weeks it took her to get back in the kitchen. Dottie and Al have many

friends in the community as well as through their church. However, they chose not to call upon those resources for a few reasons. First, and very importantly, they wanted to retain their independence. As Dottie made clear, “This was a business decision, not charity.” Secondly, choosing MOW meant they could count on the meals being delivered each day at the same time. As a matter of fact, they called on a Monday morning and received their first lunch and dinner that very day! And finally, the service was both “reliable, convenient and friendly.”

**Robert and Dorothy Helmus** have been married for 54 years and raised

four children. In the past year and half Dorothy has suffered from dementia and Robert has become her primary care giver. He does all he can for her, but cooking is not one of his strengths. When talking about meal preparation, Robert says, “I wouldn’t know where to begin.” He was an airline pilot for American Airlines while Dorothy tended to the needs of their home. Robert heard about MOW via word-of-mouth in the community. It made a lot of sense and he ordered the service in January. He says, “It wouldn’t be practical to take Dorothy out to a restaurant for all our meals.” He also knew that if he did the cooking, he couldn’t prepare the balanced meals that MOW

**“MOW has really taken care of our problem of trying to ensure we have well-balanced, healthy meals.”**

delivers to their home three times a week. As Robert said, “MOW has really taken care of our problem of trying to ensure we have well balanced, healthy meals.”

**Lynne Ryan** moved to Ridgefield from Somers, NY after suffering a stroke and has been receiving meals twice a week since November of 2008. One of her three children lives in Ridgefield and he thought it best if she were nearby. As the stroke caused some vision and balance issues for Lynne, she cannot drive. Her family also felt it best that she not use the stove. As a result, a few days a week Lynne goes to her son’s home for meals and on the other days she depends on MOW. Lynne reports, “The meals are very good and the service very reliable” – both a comfort to her and her family.

## Our Invaluable Volunteers

Meals on Wheels of course wouldn’t be possible without the help of many volunteers who lend their time, energy, ideas and good cheer to our organization. We’d like to take a moment and shine the spotlight on two of these individuals - **Bob Lang** and **Betty Fitzgerald**.



**Bob Lang** was inspired to become a volunteer for MOW of Ridgefield by his mother, Rose Bahr who was a driver for 25+ years - until the age of 90! Bob occasionally filled in for his mother on bad weather days and when she passed away, he decided he’d become one of our regular drivers.

Bob enjoys the camaraderie that comes from working with the other volunteers. He says, “They are generally warm and compassionate people who make the

experience very worthwhile.” That same warm feeling applies to seeing our clients. While the visits are brief, they are typically delighted to see him and appreciate his words of encouragement.

Driving for MOW has become a weekly opportunity for Bob to pay tribute to his mother, gain a great deal of gratification for a job well done and bring a smile to the many faces he sees along the way.



Once **Betty Fitzgerald’s** five children left home, she decided it was time to spread her volunteer services from the school system to other parts of the community. MOW struck her as an interesting opportunity and it just so happened they needed a sandwich maker - a skill she knew she had years of experience perfecting!

Eighteen years later she’s still friends with roast

beef, chicken and egg salad, assembling about 54 sandwiches every Wednesday.

Betty says, “It has been a wonderful experience to be able to work in our professional kitchen, form great friendships and support my community. It’s really been a gift and one I could never have anticipated.”



*Meals on Wheels, it's more than just a meal.*

Meals On Wheels of Ridgefield, Inc.  
25 Gilbert Street  
Ballard Green  
Ridgefield, CT 06877  
203.438.8788



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

**MEALS ON WHEELS OF RIDGEFIELD ...** began in 1972 - 37 years ago when a small group of Ridgefield women recognized a need in the community to prepare nourishing meals of Ridgefield citizens who could not provide for themselves. Today that service is still needed and only continues to grow.

**MEALS ON WHEELS OF RIDGEFIELD ...** provided over 20,000 meals in 2008.

**MEALS ON WHEELS OF RIDGEFIELD ...** is a non-profit organization that receives no federal or state aid for operating expenses.

**MEALS ON WHEELS OF RIDGEFIELD ...** delivering dignity to your neighbors' door - neighbors helping neighbors.

## **Annual Volunteer Luncheon**

**JUNE 24 & 25 2009**

**Hosted by Leir Retreat Center, Inc., Ridgefield, CT**



**COMING THIS FALL ...**

**OUR NEW WEBSITE [WWW.MEALSONWHEELSOFRIDGEFIELD.ORG](http://WWW.MEALSONWHEELSOFRIDGEFIELD.ORG)**