



NEWS ON WHEELS

The Annual Newsletter for Meals On Wheels of Ridgefield

SPRING 2010

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

In the letter I wrote for the first issue of "NEWS ON WHEELS" last fall, I made a point of the fact that we have no government affiliations and receive no state or federal monies. As a result, we are free to serve any resident of Ridgefield we determine is in need of our service, but we in turn are responsible for raising all the monies necessary to fund our program. The town of Ridgefield gives us a small annual donation and we benefit from a generous lease agreement with the Ridgefield Housing Authority. Beyond that we depend on three primary sources of funds to finance our program.

First, Meals on Wheels clients are billed for the food they receive. Since the majority of our clients are senior citizens living on fixed and limited incomes we keep these charges well below our actual cost. As low as these prices are we always have a few clients who can't afford to pay anything or perhaps just a portion of their total bill. In 2009 approximately 27% of our income came from client fees.

A second source of funds are foundations and trusts. Many of these were established by well-to-do Ridgefielders of the past who wanted to leave something of lasting value available to various local non-profit agencies. Last year this category accounted for 17% of our income. While we have been fortunate to receive grants from many of the same foundations year-over-year, the size of the gifts have decreased as their investments have been eroded by the economic downturn.

Third, and most important, are financial donations from local businesses, service clubs, individuals and the many generous residents of Ridgefield who respond to our Annual Appeal campaign. In total these donors contributed 53% of our income during 2009. Thanks to an excellent response from the community we managed to finish a very challenging 2009 with a minimum of red ink. Unfortunately, our forecast for 2010 projects a widening gap between income and expenses.

We are also indebted to the many wonderful volunteers who staff our kitchen and deliver the excellent meals prepared there. There are just five part-time paid employees – our Operations Manager, three Kitchen Supervisors (one for each day the kitchen is open) and a cleaning person. Volunteers fill all of the other kitchen positions and handle all of the meal delivery activities. Nearly 150 regulars and substitutes are included on the full volunteer list at any given time.

Not only are the people of Ridgefield generous with their financial contributions but also very giving of their time and talents in volunteer activities. A Meals on Wheels program operating as we do would have a very difficult time surviving without the outstanding support we receive from the community. Thank you for your interest and continued support – it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Darwin Yoran
President

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Thank you Ridgefield
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Kitchen Chat

In our last issue of “News on Wheels”, Kitchen Chat was devoted to an interview with Caroll Bancel, our kitchen Operations Manager. For this issue, we thought we’d take our readers deeper into the daily operation of our kitchen. To help with this, we spoke with **Fran McConnell** (Kitchen Staffing and Friday ‘Captain of the Day’/COD), **Linda Almira** (Monday COD) and **John Bengston** (Driver Coordinator).



Fran was working and living in Florida when her daughter moved to Ridgefield. She decided to join her and help with her three grandchildren. She soon found a part-time job but also wanted to volunteer in the community. That led her to MOW and her current role.



Linda retired from administrative work in 1984 to raise her young family. In 1991 she began working in the MOW kitchen after dropping her youngest child at school. She’s been volunteering for MOW ever since and truly loves working with the great crew of people.



John retired from Unilever in 2003 and the next year joined MOW as a substitute driver. Three years later he became Driver Coordinator and joined the Board. John got to know his community very well by driving for MOW and finds his work with our clients very heartening.

Each Monday, Wednesday and Friday the Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield (MOW) kitchen comes to life around 7:00am and continues to bustle with activity until noontime. For these five hours, approximately 13 volunteers, Caroll and a kitchen supervisor work together to create, package and deliver 60 - 70 hot meals (dinners) and 50 - 55 cold meals (lunches). The menu will have been determined by Caroll a week or so in advance.

All of the hot food will be prepared by three to four cooks and will include a starch, protein and vegetable. The cold food, all managed by volunteers, will include sandwiches, salad, bread of the day, fruit cup and dessert. Each person works at preparing and packaging their designated item while the kitchen supervisor oversees all of the kitchen activity.

In addition to preparing the meal of the day, our kitchen staff also works hard to accommodate clients with special dietary needs including allergies and dietary restrictions - clients we refer to as “specials.” The Captain of the Day’s (COD) first priority is to identify the specials for that given day and work with a cook to prepare a substitute food item where needed. The COD will also take note of whether it

might be the client’s birthday. If so, s/he will ensure a cake and small gift bag are included in the day’s delivery.

Actual meal preparation will be completed by 9:30am when the COD and his or her assistant turn their attention to ensuring the right meals go into the right bags and coolers. All of the cold food will go into bags that were set out and labeled with client names and driver route numbers the prior day the kitchen was open. It has also most likely been decorated by a local school child. Each container of hot food is also labeled with the client name as well as the meal name and its expiration date. The bags and hot containers go into their respective coolers both designated with the client’s route number. The work of getting our meals to our clients is then transferred to the driver corp.

John oversees a group of 40 - 45 drivers - some that have been with us for many years, others for a few months. We also get tremendous help from the local National Charity Leagues (NCL) on holidays and during the summer - when our need for substitute drivers is the highest. There are six delivery routes including a walking route through Ballard Green. We divide the town into quadrants to maximize the

efficiency of our delivery and each driver has around 7 - 8 stops per route. Most drivers choose to drive the same day of the week, preferring either the continuity of seeing the same clients or covering the same geographical area. John knows all six routes, sets the schedules each month, finds substitutes when needed and makes sure he does at least one route himself each month. All meals are delivered and the coolers are back in the kitchen by noon most days.

All in all, it’s an impressive symphony of many hands creating, packaging and delivering delicious, nutritionally balanced meals that taste home made.

KITCHEN HOURS

MON, WED, FRI 8AM - NOON
203.438.8788

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



Ridgefielders Benefitting from Meals on Wheels



BILL WALTON



PHYLLIS FRANCESCHINI



MR. & MRS. CARROLL

Our clients come to us for a variety of reasons, stay with us for short or long durations and need meals a few days a week or every day. Whatever their reasons, we are here to help and glad they found us. Meet three of our clients who chose to share their stories.

William "Bill" Walton started receiving meals just over six years ago. He contacted us when his wife fell ill and could no longer do the cooking. Sadly, Bill lost his wife recently and has suffered illness himself; that's why he's stayed a MOW client for so many years. Bill is a talented musician and artist. When in the Navy his artwork appeared in the *South Atlantic News*; in his civilian career he was the art director for IBM and shared his talents with many organizations. Bill is still surrounded by his music and instruments - he plays

the banjo, ukelale, guitar, keyboard and harmonica! He also coached the Ridgefield Little League and Pop Warner football for many years. Bill enjoys seeing and saying "hello" to our drivers and confirms, "MOW never misses a meal!"

1995 was a tough year for Phyllis Franceschini; she lost her husband and soon thereafter suffered a serious illness that put her in the hospital. When she returned home she realized she would be unable to shop for or prepare her own meals and thought to call Meals on Wheels.

Phyllis began receiving meals 7 days a week. Over time her health improved and she found she didn't need meal service quite so frequently and reduced her meal service to three days a week, which is what she currently re-

ceives. Phyllis prepares meals on the weekends and one of her sons, who lives with her, helps during the week. Meals on Wheels fills the gaps. Phyllis is a Ridgefield native and worked for 20+ years at the old Genovese pharmacy. She tells us Meals on Wheels is the best service in town - we meet her needs and are very reliable!

Mr. and Mrs. Carroll moved to Ridgefield in 1958 and started receiving meals in February of this year. Twenty-five years ago Mrs. Carroll distinctly remembers meeting a woman in the A&P grocery store who was having difficulty doing her own shopping. She offered to help and soon began driving her to and from the grocery store. As time passed, the woman began receiving Meals on Wheels and Mrs. Carroll noticed how

wonderful the meals looked when she visited her in her home. And now, 25 years later, when Mrs. Carroll realized she could no longer cook for she and her husband, her memory of those delicious meals prompted her to call Meals on Wheels. Mr. Carroll does some of the cooking today and they have children in the area who help out when they can. Meals on Wheels fills the gap so no one family member gets overburdened. Mr. and Mrs. Carroll particularly like our ham and cheese sandwiches, meat loaf entree and cakes. They also really enjoy the occasional gifts we pass along that were made by local school children.

Meals on Wheels never misses a meal!



Our Invaluable Volunteers

Just as in our previous newsletter, we are proud to profile two of our dedicated and ever so valuable volunteers. We couldn't do what we do without them and the 150+ others who lend their time, energy, ideas and enthusiasm to Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield. Meet *Ken Coleburn* and *Ann Schmitter* who are valuable members of our team and eager to help whenever we give them a call.



Ken Coleburn began driving for the Rye and Port Chester Meals on Wheels in 1992. A friend suggested it after he retired. In 2000 he and his wife down-sized their home and moved to Ridgefield. He knew he wanted to continue the volunteer work he had started in New York. Ken also realized there would be no better way to gain a firsthand introduction to the town of Ridgefield than driving its streets. To that point, Ken is unique in that he

knows all of our 6 routes; if a regular driver can't make it, we know we can call on Ken to get the job done. When asked why he's such a dedicated driver for Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield, Ken says, "In addition to knowing the value of providing quality hot meals to those who cannot prepare their own, we also help our clients stay in their own home. I've always believed there's nothing like having your own front door!"



Back in 2006 a friend of Ann Schmitter's daughter suggested she might like to get involved with Meals on Wheels. Four years later Ann is our resident queen of desserts, slicing, decorating and packing up to 100 servings of whatever the dessert of the day may be. Most days it's pie as Friday is pie day and Friday is Ann's MOW day. But she's an expert in pudding, poundcake, chocolate cake or any other dessert she

might be asked to prepare. Ann is another one of our volunteers who is eager to help whenever the call goes out. Ann says, "The people are great and I try to pitch in wherever needed. I'm doing something worthy and it gets me out of the house." By the way, did we mention Ann is a young 87 and that Friday is the busiest day in the kitchen (due to weekend meal preparation)?



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

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



Thank You Ridgefield Businesses . . .

We are very grateful to all the local Ridgefield businesses who generously support Meals on Wheels. We'd like to recognize four who have been particularly kind in their support of our organization.

RIDGEFIELD ORGANICS & SPECIALTY MARKET

It seems barely a week goes by without owners Lisa Schmidt and Sal Sabatino donating fresh organic fruit and/or vegetables to Meals on Wheels. In fact, we receive donations 2 - 3 times per week. What a wonderful treat for our clients and a welcomed savings for our budget. Thank you!

RIDGEFIELD HARDWARE When we have needed small gifts for our clients during the holidays and for their birthday gift bags Ridgefield Hardware has helped us find useful and fun products from their inventory. All of us have appreciated their kindness and generosity.

NO. 109 CHEESE MARKET has also thought of Meals on Wheels and donated some of their specialty food items for our clients. It has all been greatly appreciated and much enjoyed. Thank you to them as well.

STOP & SHOP Just this year Stop & Shop has begun donating breads to Meals on Wheels. Each of our dinners includes a bread product of some sort so this donation also helps us reduce the quantity of supplies we need to order with no impact to our meal service. Thank you for thinking of us Stop & Shop.



A gift that gives back

I/We would like to support **Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield** through the following donation:

- \$50.00 \$100.00 \$250.00
- \$500.00 Other _____
- I would like to to make this gift
- In honor of: In memory of:

Print name clearly.

My Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

I would like information about becoming a volunteer.

MAIL TO: Meals on Wheels of Ridgefield
25 Gilbert Street, Ballard Green
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Thank you!