

Building Bonds - Terri and Gloria



Volunteer Terri (left) and client Gloria (right)

In the heart of Missoula, a newfound and important connection has flourished within the Caring Companions Program. This connection, between volunteer Terri and community member Gloria, has grown steadily since they were paired together in January. Caring Companions are Missoula Aging Services volunteers who make regular visits to older adults in the Missoula area and help with daily living tasks and provide social connections. Activities may include helping with simple tasks in the home, assisting with shopping and appointments, going for walks or out to lunch, visiting or playing games together. For Terri, volunteering was a simple decision born out of a desire to

make a difference. Little did she know that it would lead to a genuine friendship that brightens both of their lives. “It’s become a great friendship,” Terri says. “I look forward to our time together every week.”

Gloria, who had started feeling the post-COVID weight of isolation, found unexpected comfort in a new-found friend through the program. “One of the surprises for me was meeting someone with similar interests and connecting on things we like to do,” she shares.

Their weekly outings, though diverse in activity, are united by the simple pleasure of companionship. From seemingly mundane tasks like trips to the dentist to walks through Caras Nursery to smell all the new flowers of the season, Terri and Gloria find joy in each other’s company.

“The time goes by so fast when we get together,” Gloria notes. “I just feel we’re very blessed.”

Their friendship isn’t confined to planned activities; it’s rooted in mutual respect and understanding. “We’re friends. We just clicked,” Terri says with a smile. Gloria echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the value of shared experiences with someone compassionate and non-judgmental.

Their time together has been especially meaningful for Gloria, who found herself navigating the challenges of aging amidst the pandemic. “After COVID, especially because I didn’t go out and do a lot of shopping and things, it builds my self-esteem to think, you know, that after being cloistered for so long that I still can function as a thinking, rational person,” she reflects.

(Continued on page 3)

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Planning Ahead



In the last issue of Connections, I introduced MAS' new Strategic Plan, which was developed with input from many stakeholders, and which serves as a blueprint for what our community could look like if we were all able to age with confidence and without fear. At the heart of the Plan is our transformative impact statement: **When we**

shift how we see and value older adults and understand aging as a vital part of living that we all experience, we are empowered to improve the well-being of everyone as we age. In asking what would make the impact statement a reality, the Board and staff identified and defined five pathways for achieving change, each with long-term goals: **Accessibility, Autonomy, Culture, Security, and Well-being.**

Since the Plan was finalized in January, we've been busy formulating specific strategies and determining key tasks and activities to move us forward over the next four years. After numerous work sessions and hundreds of sticky notes, we came away with an operational map that will begin to bring our transformative impact statement to life.

We are profoundly grateful to everyone who has been involved in the strategic planning process along the way. Their thoughtfulness, creativity, and sincere desire to effect lasting change for older adults in our community shine through in every idea and in every word of the Plan.

I look forward to continuing to share updates on our progress, and to partnering with all of you to create a community where people are truly valued and supported to age with independence, dignity, and health.

Thank you for joining us on this journey!

Lisa Sheppard

Chief Executive Officer

Members of the MAS Leadership
Team at a strategic plan
brainstorming session in April.



(Continued from cover)



Their drives around Missoula are more than just sightseeing; they're opportunities to bond over shared memories and stories. Terri's familiarity with the city adds depth to their outings, allowing Gloria to see Missoula through her eyes and learn more about its history.

Terri and Gloria's story is a reminder of the profound impact of companionship and the importance of programs like Caring Companions. Through their friendship, they've found solace, strength, and a sense of belonging in each other's company. In a world often filled with noise, their connection stands as a beacon of quiet but profound joy.

Medicare Fraud Prevention Week



Fraud costs Medicare an estimated \$60 billion per year. It also costs Medicare beneficiaries time, stress, their medical identities, and potentially even their health. Montana beneficiaries have reported Medicare fraud in the form of urinary catheters, genetic test kits, and durable medical equipment they didn't receive showing up on their Medicare statements. They also receive phone calls asking them to confirm their Medicare number, which gives the scammer free reign to bill Medicare. Help yourself and others and learn how to protect against scams by joining the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) for Medicare Fraud Prevention Week, June 3rd - 9th.

Everyone plays a part in the fight against fraud. Each day of the week will be targeted to a group of people who can help to prevent, detect, and report Medicare fraud. They are:

- Medicare beneficiaries
- Caregivers
- Families
- Partners and professionals
- Health care providers
- Community members

Watch Facebook for information shared throughout the week, or find out about outreach events near you, sign up to volunteer, and call if you have any questions about Medicare fraud today. MT SMP can be reached at 1-800-551-3191 across Montana.

Renee Labrie-Shanks

Statewide SMP Director

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January - April 2024

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January - April 2024

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 Barbara Riley & Collin Bevins
 Gary Brown
 Claudia Brown
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 Michael Carlson
 LaRaine Claar
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 Wayne Pritchett
 Rosemary Lynch & Robert Lee
 Larry Renman
 Carolyn Renman

GIFTS IN MEMORY OF INDIVIDUALS (CONT)

January - April 2024

Michel Salisbury

Anonymous

David & Diane Curry

Marla Scharfe

Rondo Scharfe

Bill Schwaderer

Richard Meisinger

Marilyn Schwaderer

Richard Meisinger

Laura Thiel

Marc Steinberg

Debra Steinberg

Mary Lou Tobias-Hunter

Mary Houlihan

Anne Wodrich

William Wodrich

Bobby Woomer

Nonda Beardsley

In Memoriam

In honor and remembrance of these dedicated individuals whose volunteering enhanced the lives of those they served.

- Judy Allen -

MAS Staff News

Our team at Missoula Aging Services continues to grow to provide the best service possible to our community. This spring we welcomed four new staff members and celebrated four Years of Services Milestones.

Krystle Downing joined the Administrative Support team with Missoula Aging Services in April. Originally from Oregon, Krystle has worked in medical administration for nearly 20 years. Krystle loves working in a busy office, surrounded by clients and coworkers alike, and is thrilled to now serve older adults in our community.

Stefni Gurr joined the Administrative Support team with Missoula Aging Services in April. Before working for our organization, Stefni was an Administrative Assistant with the Frenchtown School District for nearly five years. Stefni's caring nature and passion for helping those in need make her a wonderful addition to the team.

Christina Hands was a stipend volunteer in 2021 before joining MAS staff as a Caring Companion on the In-Home Services team in February. Christina is thoughtful and dedicated to helping older adults live comfortably in their homes, and MAS is thankful to have her as a member of our staff.

Marion Yates first joined Missoula Aging Services as a stipend volunteer in 2021 before joining the MAS staff as a Caring Companion on the In-Home Services team in February. As a former surgery nurse for over 25 years, caregiving has always come naturally to Marion, and her passion for helping people remains today.

Celebrating Years of Service

At Missoula Aging Services, we appreciate the incredible work our staff does every day. We simply couldn't do it without them!

This past spring, we proudly celebrated the following Years of Service Milestones.

Congratulations!

Nancy Kral	In-Home Services Supervisor	10 Years
Shelli Fortune	In-Home Services Director	10 Years
Kate Cotnoir	Information and Assistance Director	10 Years
Theresa Ragsdale	Complex Case Resource Coordinator	15 Years

Truly Saving Lives - Meals on Wheels



On weekday mornings year-round, hundreds of older adults across Missoula County are greeted by a comforting knock on their doors. On the other side of those doors stands a Meals on Wheels volunteer, offering not just a nutritious meal but also a warm smile. In a time where many feel a growing sense of isolation, Meals on Wheels volunteers are emphasizing the importance of human connection. While the pandemic led to many meals being left at doors to limit virus exposure, our volunteers yearned for the joy of personal interaction—sharing smiles, friendly greetings, and perhaps a few stories.

To ensure every client feels seen and supported, our volunteers have launched an ambitious campaign to engage at every door. Despite the time-consuming nature of this effort, their dedication is proving rewarding. Whether it's calling ahead, navigating tricky paths to accessible doors, or circling back to ensure no one is missed, their perseverance is yielding results.

Beyond the joy and laughter shared, there have been numerous reports of volunteers discovering clients in need of urgent assistance. Take Jay, a substitute driver, for instance. While navigating his route, he spotted through a window a woman in her 90s lying on the floor. It turned out she had fallen during the night and couldn't call for help. Thanks to Jay's swift action, she received the care she needed and returned home a few days later, grateful for both the assistance and the timely meal delivery.

Another driver, Jim, relied on his intuition to assess a concerning situation involving one of his clients. Incorporating insights from a vigilant neighbor, as well as notable indicators such as accumulating mail, Jim took proactive measures by alerting authorities. Later that day, we received a call from a deputy sheriff providing an update. The client, who resided alone, was discovered in a critical state, teetering on the brink of death. The deputy, conveying a hint of emotion in his voice, emphatically stated, "*Without question, your driver saved that man's life.*"

These stories underscore the invaluable impact of Meals on Wheels, not just in providing meals but also in fostering a sense of community and support for those in need.

Ria Overholt

Nutrition Services Program Manager



Meals on Wheels driver, Ted, gets ready for his route.

SAVE THE DATE!

Our Jewelry Sale Returns on Saturday, June 8

We're accepting donations of your costume and fine jewelry for our WEAR IT AGAIN Jewelry Sale, happening on June 8th from 8am-3:30pm. All proceeds will benefit programs and services at Missoula Aging Services. Bring your donations to our office at 337 Stephens Ave., or call us at 728-7682 and we will be happy to pick them up.

Watch our website for more information!



New Location! Missoula County Fairgrounds - Home Arts Building

MAS

Here for You.



- Aging in Place
- Caregiver Support
- Education
- Information & Assistance
- Nutrition & Meals on Wheels
- Safety & Advocacy
- Veterans Programs
- Volunteer Opportunities

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for more
information!

Empowering Clients

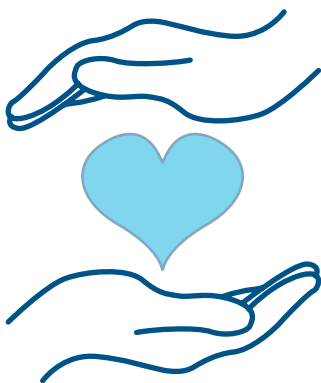
As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting older adults in our community, MAS recently had the privilege of assisting a newer client, Sheila, navigate the complex landscape of healthcare and benefits. Sheila, who recently relocated to Missoula, found herself facing significant challenges as she transitioned to a new state and began the process of reestablishing essential resources such as SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare Savings Program, and Extra Help for prescription drugs. After reaching out to MAS, she was connected with Resource Specialist Lucian, who worked tirelessly to help her submit applications for all the programs she qualified for, recognizing the vital support she needed during this transition. However, due to her emerging memory difficulties, Lucian referred her to Care Management to ensure she received the comprehensive assistance she required.

Their efforts culminated in successfully securing the Sheila's benefits, providing her with much-needed financial relief. However, the challenges did not end there. She let Lucian know that she was having difficulty affording her medications, which were priced at over \$200 per month. With her limited income from Social Security, she struggled to cover her basic needs, relying solely on meals from the Missoula Food Bank and her daily Meals on Wheels.

MAS continued to advocate for her, closely reviewing her Medicare Part D plan information which revealed a discrepancy between the actual cost of her medications and what she was being charged. Through advocacy and coordination with her pharmacy, MAS was able to rectify the situation, significantly reducing the cost of her medications to a mere \$8 for a 90-day supply.

The impact of this intervention has been profound. Sheila's elation upon learning of the cost reduction underscores the importance of advocacy and collaboration in ensuring access to essential healthcare services. With the support of MAS, she can now afford her medications and maintain her health without financial strain.

This success story exemplifies MAS's commitment to empowering older adults in our community, advocating for their rights, and ensuring access to vital resources to make a tangible difference in their lives and foster a more inclusive and supportive community for all.



"If it weren't for MAS being here,
I wouldn't have the help that I'm getting now.
I don't know what I would do or where I'd be without you!"

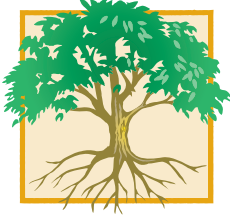
-Sheila

Thank You, Missoula!



MAS extends a heartfelt thanks to our 2024 March for Meals sponsors and community. Thanks to everyone's collective efforts, we are thrilled to announce that we raised just over \$180,000 to support Meals on Wheels. This support is critical as we continue to meet the demand in the community, delivering an average of 2,460 meals each week to older adults throughout Missoula County.

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Thanks to all for your support of MAS during Missoula Gives! We are grateful to be part of such a caring community.

Make-a-Will Month

August is Make-a-Will Month: Secure Your Legacy with Missoula Aging Services

August brings a special opportunity to reflect on our future and the legacy we wish to leave behind. MAS is excited to promote “*Make-a-Will Month*,” a nationwide initiative encouraging individuals to plan for their futures by creating or updating their wills.

Why Make a Will?

Creating a will is an essential step in ensuring your wishes are respected and your loved ones are cared for. A will allows you to:

- **Specify How Your Assets Are Distributed:** Ensure your possessions go to the people and causes you care about most.
- **Appoint Guardians for Minor Children:** Provide for the care of your children by selecting their guardians.
- **Support Charitable Causes:** Leave a lasting impact on the community by including charitable donations to organizations like MAS.
- **Reduce Stress for Your Loved Ones:** Make the process smoother for your family during a difficult time by having your affairs in order.

Join Us for Make-a-Will Month

Throughout August, we invite you to take part in Make-a-Will Month and ensure your legacy is secure. For more information about our upcoming workshops and resources, visit our website or contact our office. By making a will, you are taking a proactive step toward securing your future and protecting those you care about most. At Missoula Aging Services, we are here to support you every step of the way.



Make a Lasting Impact

Consider including a gift to Missoula Aging Services in your will. Your support enables us to continue our mission of promoting the independence, dignity, and health of older adults in our community.

For more information, visit our website at missoulaagingservices.org or call us at (406) 728-7682.

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MAS Events

VIRTUAL NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP

Wednesday, July 10 from 6-7:30 pm
Wednesday, September 11 from 6-7:30 pm
Register online: virtualnewtomedicaremas.eventbrite.com

IN-PERSON NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP

Wednesday, June 12 from 12-1:30 pm
Wednesday, August 14 from 12-1:30 pm
Missoula Aging Services Offices
337 Stephens Ave, Missoula, MT 59801
Register online: https://medicaremas_.eventbrite.com

IN-PERSON MATTER OF BALANCE

Tuesdays at 1 pm, July 9-August 27
Missoula Manor
909 W Central Ave, Missoula, MT 59801
Register online: MatterofBalance-MAS-2024.eventbrite.com

VIRTUAL MEMORY LOSS CONVERSATIONS

Thursdays from 10-11 am. New attendees welcome!
Participate online using Zoom. No cost.
Facilitated by Dementia Friendly Missoula.
Register online: <https://bit.ly/3ITnAsY>

VIRTUAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Participate online using Zoom. No cost.
Third Tuesday of each month from 1-2 pm
Register online: <https://bit.ly/2YkyVPU>

IN-PERSON CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Participate in person at Missoula Aging Services. No cost.
Fourth Wednesday of each month from 2-3 pm
Check-in at the front desk when you arrive.

VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUP FOR RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN (MT KINSHIP NAVIGATOR)

Third Wednesday of each month from 12:30-1:30 pm
Participate online using Zoom. No cost.
Register online: <https://bit.ly/3fb2EjU>

IN-PERSON TECH CAFE

Missoula Aging Services. No cost.
First Monday of each month from 1-3 pm
Check-in at the front desk when you arrive.

View a full list of events at
MISSOULAAGINGSERVICES.ORG