

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF MISSOULA AGING SERVICES

2021 CONNECTIONS

SPRING

A Season for Resilience



In Montana, spring doesn't come quickly. Gradually, the days get longer, the snow softens in the sun, and we can start to look forward to being back out on the river, or at our favorite campsite. In the meantime, though, we will keep bundling up and shoveling our sidewalks for a little longer.

As I sit back and look at the months ahead, our fight against COVID-19 feels similar. Vaccination efforts are underway, and I know that spring and summer warmth is getting closer. Right now, though, our job is to be resilient. We must continue working hard to keep each other safe and prioritize being there for the members of our community who are most vulnerable.

This March we will once again be rallying the community in support of Meals on Wheels through our annual March for Meals campaign. Throughout the year, your support has given Meals on Wheels the resources to expand services to meet the increased need in our community. Though the campaign will be more virtual this year, we are looking forward to sharing stories about the work Meals on Wheels has been doing, the people you are helping, and the volunteer drivers who have stepped up to meet this moment.

As we continue into spring, I am thankful for the resilience of our community, our volunteers, donors, clients and community partners. I know that we have the tools and resources, because of your support, to finish this fight.

With gratitude,

Susan Kohler

Chief Executive Officer

WE'RE PROUD *of* OUR YEARS



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Community Services

- Medicare & Medicaid Consultations
- Referrals, Assistance & Onsite Library
- Transportation Options
- Educational Opportunities & Classes
- Long-term Care Ombudsman Program
- Montana Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)
- Volunteer Programs

In-Home Services

- Care Management
- Family Caregiver Support
- In-Home Support Services
 - Respite, Homemaking & Personal Care
- Veteran Directed Care
- Farmers' Market Coupon Program
- Liquid Nutrition (Ensure®)
- Meals on Wheels
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In Perspective



It would be a vast understatement to say that this past year has been a challenge. We have been universally impacted by a pandemic that has taken hundreds of thousands of American lives, shattered the economy, and left people feeling fearful and uncertain. Of course, hope is on the horizon as the availability of the coronavirus vaccine increases. With this new light shining on a healthier future down the road, we continue the work of serving Missoula County to ensure its most vulnerable members consistently receive nutritious food. As Covid-19 so devastatingly hit last March, the Missoula Aging Services Meals on Wheels program restructured its delivery process to mitigate concerns about personal contact and social distancing. Volunteer delivery drivers very capably adapted to our initial alternate Meals on Wheels delivery method. We have since returned to a more normal delivery schedule, but at no time throughout this pandemic did we stop delivering meals to people in need.

This work has only been possible—especially during the worst of times—thanks to the dedication and sacrifice of over 80 Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers, and to all the members of our community who financially support Missoula Aging Services each year. A large part of that support comes during the month of March each year through our March for Meals fundraising efforts. Now, more than ever, Meals on Wheels needs your support. Due to Covid-19, our client numbers rose by 40-percent, and drivers delivered nearly 96,000 meals in the first ten months of this pandemic. People face additional concerns which have only been complicated by the coronavirus. Besides the health issues many Meals on Wheels clients already face, the pandemic has created food security risks, heightened depression and anxiety, and increased social isolation. March for Meals spotlights these experiences, strengthens efforts to deliver food to people and allows clients to engage with caring, compassionate volunteers. Please consider giving to Meals on Wheels this March during the March for Meals campaign. You hold an opportunity in your sights, to make a big difference in the life of a person who may be your neighbor, your friend, your parent, or a stranger.

With gratitude and wishes for good health,
Dean Thompson, Nutrition Program Manager

Two Volunteers Who Are Helping Feed Missoula's Most Vulnerable

While most Meals on Wheels (MOW) volunteer drivers hop into their car and complete their routes solo, Richard and Elisabeth keep each other company during their weekly shifts. Married for 56 years, the couple started delivering meals together in October 2019. They were moved to volunteer at MOW and at the hospital after Richard experienced a significant health issue. Giving back became part of his healing process.

“To have this kind of contact with healthy people who are about our age, doing something that has a meaning to our community is so important,” Richard said.

In fall of 2019, Elisabeth and Richard were quickly welcomed into the MOW family and joined in on the routine: each weekday morning drivers would gather at dispatch, enjoy good coffee and chat before it was time to get on the road.

When COVID-19 hit, that changed.

In order to protect both volunteers and clients, drivers began social distancing. Some drivers, for their own safety, had to stop volunteering altogether. Instead of meeting in the Dispatch office, volunteers now stay outside, waiting to load up meals and start their routes.

Even though they missed the social aspect of volunteering, Richard and Elisabeth still looked forward to doing their weekly Friday route.

“We’ll both tell you: we get as much if not more out of it than [the clients] do. There aren’t a whole lot of things anybody can do right now like we used to do so this is one of our really joyful mornings,” Elisabeth said after a Friday route.



“It became even more important for me to do the route because the other things that we enjoy doing we could not do,” such as volunteering at the hospital, Richard said.

While Meals on Wheels has had to adjust some things in the interest of safety, the dedication of the drivers hasn’t changed. Richard and Elisabeth go above and beyond, waiting in their car or outside at a safe distance to make sure that clients are able to access their contactless deliveries. And while Richard no longer stops inside to chat with clients, he’s found safe ways to still give them that important check-in, such as chatting and joking through the front door.

“With the virus, it really made it absolutely essential for me to have something to get up for and feel that when I’ve done something, I’ve done something that has meaning.”

In the past year, MOW has experienced a 40-percent increase in need for services. It is the dedication and compassion of volunteers like Richard and Elisabeth that has made it possible to meet the demand. Thank you!

When you give to Meals on Wheels, your gift is delivered with kindness.

Montana's Legislative Session Has Begun

The 67th Montana Legislative Session is underway in Helena and though the session looks a little bit different this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, there are plenty of ways to advocate for your older neighbors.

For session information including legislator lookup, legislative agendas and calendars, and the status of bills, visit the Montana Legislature website at <https://leg.mt.gov/>. Legislators have also made it possible to provide testimony remotely which you can do at <https://leg.mt.gov/public-testimony/>.

Missoula Aging Services will be advocating for older Montanans by ensuring the state budget adequately funds aging programs and home and community-based services that support older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers.

We will be sending advocacy alerts throughout the session to keep advocates engaged. Go to the MAS website advocacy page located under the Get Involved tab to sign up for MAS advocacy alerts or forward the link to a friend. You can also check the advocacy page for the most recent advocacy alerts and other updates. For more information about how you can get more involved, please reach out to Erin Nuzzo at enuzzo@missoulaagingservices.org.

We have much work to do between now and the end of April and we hope you will join us in advocating for older Montanans!

Words of Gratitude: The Impact of Your Support

“

I have experienced nothing but the highest levels of competency, kindness, and assistance from Missoula Aging Services over the last 5 years. I have and will continue to recommend their services to everyone... An incredibly important lifeline for all Missoulians, MAS far exceeds expectations across the board. Keep up the good work - especially in this challenging time. I cannot think of a better resource. – *MAS Client*

March for Meals Kicks Off in 2021

Throughout the pandemic, Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers have continued to bring nutritious food right to local, homebound residents. Over the last year, the number of clients has increased by 40-percent, with approximately 3,000 meals delivered per week.

Now, more than ever, your support is needed. You can help us continue expanded services for the most vulnerable by joining the March for Meals. During the month of March, Missoula Aging Services collaborates with community leaders to raise awareness of senior isolation and hunger along with vital funds, and we invite you to join us!



Missoula Aging Services would like to thank in advance all of the donors, sponsors, volunteers, and community leaders who make March for Meals possible. Because of you, homebound older adults and people with disabilities in your community will continue to receive regular nutritious meals, will be able to stay safe in their homes, and know that they have people around them who care.

Please consider donating via the card attached to your physical copy of *Connections* or online at MissoulaAgingServices.org.



96,000 Meals
in first 10 months
of the pandemic



Over 80
Volunteer
Drivers



—Thank You—

to the MISSOULA POLICE DEPARTMENT
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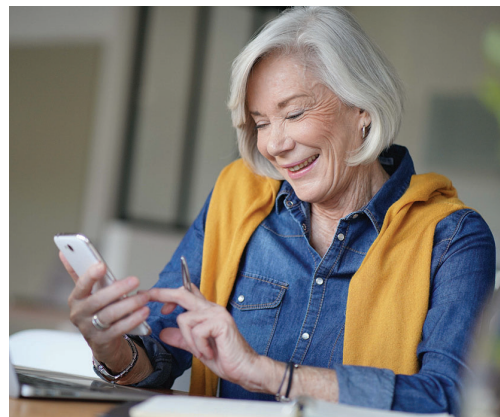
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Master Aging in This New Program

MAS is thrilled to offer the National Council on Aging's evidence-informed Aging Mastery Program (AMP). The program offers a comprehensive and fun approach to mastering the aging process. AMP aims to help participants navigate longer lives and take advantage of today's longevity bonus.



Individuals age 55 or older are encouraged to create their own playbook for aging well by identifying and setting goals for positive actions in ten dimensions. Central to the AMP philosophy is the belief that modest lifestyle changes can produce big results.

"I loved, loved, loved the Aging Mastery Program," said Penny, after completing the program. "It was motivating, fun, informative and I am still working on projects brought forth. I hope to be able to continue with the people I met there. A perfect way to spend my time during the pandemic."

AMP launched Fall 2020 with generous support from AARP Montana. Fourteen individuals graduated and are now distinguished members of the AMP Alumni group. In post-course satisfaction surveys, 92-percent of rated the program "Excellent" and 100-percent of respondents would recommend AMP to friends.

"The class was filled with interesting information, the participants became friends," said participant Sandy. "We looked forward to meeting each week, and the teachers were awesome! It was so nice to be involved in a positive direction! The knowledge we gained will serve us for a long time. We learned where to look for truthful information. Thank you, MAS and AARP."

Registration is open for the spring session, Mondays, April 5 - June 21 from 10 am - 12 pm (MST). The program is provided at no cost for Montana residents through generous support from the Jane S. Heman Foundation. For non-Montana residents, the cost is \$60. Register online at AgingMasteryMAS.eventbrite.com or call MAS at (406) 728-7682, Monday through Friday from 8 am - 5 pm. Pre-registration required to mail course materials to participant's home.

Staff News at MAS

Missoula Aging Services is pleased to share numerous staffing updates.

We have no doubt that many of you will recognize this smiling face from the front office. Stephen T. Millhouse has worked at MAS for four years, most recently as a Customer Service Representative. Stephen brings this experience and dedication to his new position as the Veteran Directed Care (VDC) Coordinator. The previous VDC Coordinator, Lois Mandelko-Steinberg, has worked at MAS for six years. Lois will bring her knowledge and personability to her new position as a Family Caregiver Support Specialist.

In January, Laura Degele started her new job as the Volunteer Services Supervisor. Over the last five years, Laura has worked diligently as the Volunteer Coordinator at MAS for AmeriCorps Seniors (formerly Senior Corps). Laura's familiarity with the program and passion for volunteerism are just a few of the many wonderful attributes she brings to the position. We are also pleased to have Nancy Kral joining the AmeriCorps Seniors team. Nancy has

worked at MAS for seven years. As the former Senior Companion Volunteer Supervisor, Nancy's experience will be invaluable as the team works to redefine volunteerism during the pandemic.

Just in time for March for Meals, the Nutrition department welcomes a familiar face as the Nutrition Program Manager. For seven years Dean Thompson has served MAS clients with compassion and grace. He formerly worked as the Nutrition Program Specialist.

Last but not least, Kyle Broeckel has been promoted to Development and Communications Team Lead. He will be coordinating the activities of the Development and Communications team to ensure smooth operations. Kyle has expertly served as the Development Coordinator for three years. He's been instrumental in managing campaigns and donor information.

MAS is grateful to have these staff members continue to share their knowledge and experience in their new roles.

In Memoriam

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

Senior Companions

Elaine Brorson

Foster Grandparents

Ericka Trusty

RSVP

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Nyla Sterner

EST. 1982

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MAS Events

VIRTUAL FALLS PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Wednesday, March 3

11 am - 12 pm

Participate online using Zoom. No cost. Register online at preventfallsmas.eventbrite.com

VIRTUAL AGING MASTERY PROGRAM® (11-WEEKS)

Mondays, April 5 - June 21 (No class May 31)

10 am - 12 pm

No cost for Montana residents thanks to the Jane S. Heman Foundation.

Register online at agingmasterymas.eventbrite.com

VIRTUAL POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CAREGIVERS® (6-WEEK CLASS)

Thursdays, March 18 - April 22

3 - 5 pm

Participate online using Zoom. No cost for Montana residents thanks to the Jane S. Heman Foundation and UM-MTGECC.

Register online at powerfultoolsmas.eventbrite.com

VIRTUAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Every Second Monday of the Month

4 - 5 pm

Participate online using Zoom. No cost. Register online at caregiversupportmas.eventbrite.com

Every Third Tuesday of the Month

1 - 2 pm

Participate online using Zoom. No cost. Register online at caregiversupportmas2.eventbrite.com

VIRTUAL SOCIAL SECURITY WORKSHOP

Thursday, March 18

Wednesday, April 28

Wednesday, May 26

11:30 am - 1:30 pm

Participate online using Zoom. \$10 or 2 for \$15. No cost and reduce cost tickets available. Register online at socialsecuritymas.eventbrite.com

MARCH FOR MEALS

All of March!

MissoulaAgingServices.org

For a full event listing please visit: MissoulaAgingServices.org