

## Meals on Wheels Delivers Critical Nutrition – and Helps Neighbors Discover Common Ground

Leonard Wuori (79) has always been a “car guy.” Realistic models line his living room walls, and he has hundreds of Matchbox cars and unassembled kits tucked away in storage. Leonard’s stories often involve cars too—from the green 1970 Chevelle with white racing stripes to his 18 years as a mechanic at the Chevy dealership in Missoula. He still laughs that his mother swore his first word was “Chevy.”

Leonard’s life also holds hard chapters. He contracted polio at age 3 and, at 8, spent more than six months in the hospital after surgery on his legs—learning to walk all over again. The disease shaped his childhood in other ways, too. “All through my life, I was always getting picked on because of my handicap,” he recalls. Later, he faced discrimination in the job market—an interviewer at Boeing bluntly told him, “We cannot hire you,” and refused to explain why.



Lance, Leonard, and Karen.

Leonard lives with long-term effects from polio on top of other health challenges. A heart valve replacement and pacemaker made everyday tasks like grocery shopping draining. Leonard began Meals on Wheels and describes immediate relief, “It makes it a lot easier for me . . . Just easier on me—the whole process.” Reliable, ready-to-eat meals mean Leonard can worry less about logistics and rebuild strength.

In addition to solving a practical problem, the meal deliveries opened the door to a friendship with volunteer drivers Karen and Lance. The three bonded quickly, and Karen found herself swapping stories with Leonard about complicated families, life in Missoula, and, of course, cars. “We’re kind of chatterboxes,” Karen laughs.

Karen is adaptable, committed to helping others, and she loves Missoula. She started out as a microbiologist and ended up working as a judge. After retiring, she turned to volunteering and soon enlisted Lance. “We make it an event—I get a pastry for myself and coffee and Lance gets a special chocolate,” Karen says. “We drive around and listen to the radio. It’s like a little date.” Lance has the mind of an inventor, sings in the

Symphony Chorale, and survived cancer. He shows up for neighbors to help keep Missoula the community he discovered in the 1970s: “When I first came here, walking down the street, people would say hello. They were friendly, sincere, kind, honest. I’ve traveled the world, and it’s always good to come back to Montana.”

When neighbors support neighbors, days are brighter and the future is more hopeful. As Karen says, “The news can be pretty overwhelming right now. But doing this renews us—makes us realize what’s really important in life are the people that you know and love and help, because that’s what life is. . . . I just hope this program is in place when I age, because it’s going to be an important part of my life as I get older.”

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## The Future We Share



In each issue of *Connections*, I'm struck by the way that different stories point us toward a shared hope: that Missoulians will live well, on their own terms, throughout every stage of life.

In these pages, you'll meet Leonard Wuori, who receives Meals on Wheels. A lifelong "car guy" and polio survivor, his good humor and openness have sparked new friendships. You'll also read about Ted Nyquest, whose story reflects a deep desire to keep contributing—

he's been delivering Meals on Wheels to neighbors for 25 years. Their lives look different, but both stories remind us that independence is rarely something we achieve alone.

When neighbors show up for each other and we find solutions side by side, communities become more vibrant and can lift up every member. Every day, I see that collective effort in action.

A belief in the strength of human connection guides one of our most exciting efforts: the launch of a new neighbor-powered network. Designed and shaped by older Missoulians themselves—alongside Missoula Aging Services and a growing group of community partners—Missoula Villages makes it easier for people to support one another in everyday ways. A ride to an appointment. Help with a small household task. A trusted referral. Sometimes, simply a reason to gather and belong.

What makes this work especially meaningful is the collaboration behind it. Individuals, local nonprofits, businesses, and city partners are coming together with a shared commitment to help older neighbors remain safe and rooted right here in Missoula. We're all recognizing something essential: aging well depends on reciprocity and shared responsibility.

I hope that when you read these stories you feel encouraged. The future of aging in Missoula will be shaped by many voices, many hands, and many acts of care.

Thank you for helping us build a Missoula where everyone belongs.

*Lisa Sheppard*

**Lisa Sheppard**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Committed to Community

John O'Connor is one of the new members who joined the Missoula Aging Services Governing Board in 2025. Visit [missoulaagingservices.org/about-us/board](https://missoulaagingservices.org/about-us/board) to learn about the leaders guiding our work.



*What inspires me most is MAS's commitment to keeping older Missoulians engaged and valued. No one should feel they've aged out of community life. In a town that prides itself on caring and connection, making sure our older neighbors remain visible, heard, and supported feels essential. I'm grateful to be part of this work.*

*In my work in healthcare, I regularly see how expensive and complex the system can be. Many people don't know there are resources available or how to ask for help. That's one reason I was drawn to Missoula Aging Services. The organization doesn't wait until someone is in crisis—it meets people where they are.*

*I've always felt a deep connection to older adults. When I was young, my family cared for my grandmother in our home, and that experience stayed with me. Over the years, I've helped my grandparents—and now my parents—navigate the realities of aging. I've seen firsthand how quickly medical bills, home repairs, or even simple safety concerns can become overwhelming, especially for people who are proud and fiercely independent.*

**Missoula works best when the tent is big—when we make space for every generation and ensure no one is left out.**



*John O'Connor*

**John O'Connor**

# From Forests and Firelines to Front Doors

## Ted Nyquist's Montana Values—Independence, Community, and Reciprocity



Ted Nyquist and MAS Community Services Director Ria Overholt.

For more than 25 years, Charles “Ted” Nyquist has scheduled his weeks around a steadfast commitment to Meals on Wheels. He currently delivers twice a week on routes that stretch to the edge of Missoula County around Rock Creek.

For Nyquist, Meals on Wheels is fundamentally about helping people remain where they feel most grounded. “I think it’s a great thing for people that want to stay where they are,” he says, “and not move into assisted living or something—and this gives them that opportunity.”

Nyquist, 91, soon to turn 92, grew up in Boulder, MT. As a high school student, he served on a fire lookout and watched smokejumpers respond to a blaze he reported. Nyquist moved to Missoula in 1953 to attend the University of Montana, but the experience stayed with him. “I watched the whole thing from the lookout tower,” he says, remembering the moment that set his future in motion.

That first impression became a career, and Nyquist worked for nearly 20 years as a smokejumper with the U.S. Forest Service, stepping away only for military

service. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps and later spent several years with the Central Intelligence Agency during the period surrounding the Bay of Pigs. His professional life was defined by demanding, high-risk work and close teamwork—an ethic of showing up for others that still shapes his days.

Today, Nyquist stays connected with his Forest Service community, meeting several times a week with other retired smokejumpers, pilots, and fire professionals for hikes, coffee, and regular get-togethers around Missoula.

Nyquist and his wife, Gloria, raised three sons and built a life rooted in Montana’s outdoors.

*(continued on the next page)*



The Nyquist family: (front) Gloria, Ted, and Leif; (back) Erick and David.



(L-R) Gary Graham and Elizabeth Johnson; Bev Beck Glueckert teaches printmaking; My Glacier Village’s Jenn Prunty, Linda Torma, Molly Blair, Kristie Scheel, and MAS’s Corey Bressler.



**Village founders have gathered with the public for a film, First Friday, and artmaking, with more events to come. Thanks to local businesses and organizations for generous support: Biga Pizza Co., Black Coffee Roasters, Cool Earth Creamery, Open AIR, the Roxy Theater, and Western Cider. Learn more about membership and upcoming events at: [missoulaagingservices.org/get-involved/missoula-villages](https://missoulaagingservices.org/get-involved/missoula-villages).**

*(Continued from page 4)*

The couple hiked roughly 200 miles of the Continental Divide, all within the state.

After Gloria’s death in 1999, Ted began volunteering with Meals on Wheels and he’s still a stalwart in the program.

Missoula Aging Services Nutrition Program Manager Dean Thompson says, “When I think of Ted Nyquist and his more than a quarter of a century delivering Meals on Wheels, the first thing that comes to mind is how steady and calm he is, and how many lives he has touched. His dependability and commitment as a volunteer for Meals on Wheels is only outmatched by his decency, integrity, and kindness. Ted quietly gives of himself, exemplifying those cornerstones of hope and light that define community.”

That sense of continuity—staying rooted in familiar places, routines, and relationships—matters to Nyquist, who also values the reciprocity of everyday interactions built into his delivery days. He says, “The people are very appreciative of it. Some like to chat a little bit when you get there, and I enjoy that.”

After decades spent serving in demanding roles, Nyquist continues to make a difference by being a reliable presence for neighbors who depend on a knock at the door and someone who knows their name.

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Members of the Resource Team include (L-R): Noah Paulson, Chris Hightower, Melani Best, Rachel Ammons, Joan Bartkowski, Ayana Peterson, Theresa Ragsdale, and Lori Markovich.

## Spring Updates From the Resource Center

Interested in saving money? Make an appointment for a [Resource Benefit Screening!](#) MAS specialists determine eligibility for programs and savings.

**Medicare Advantage (MA) Enrollment Period, Jan. 1 - Mar. 31:** New coverage begins the first of the month following enrollment. MA beneficiaries can:

- Make changes to their coverage.
- Switch to another MA plan.
- Switch back to Original Medicare and standalone Part D.

**Medicare General Enrollment Period, Jan. 1 - Mar. 31:** May enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B. Coverage starts the month after you sign up. This period is for those who missed their initial enrollment period. If you don't qualify for a special enrollment period, you may have to pay a late enrollment penalty.

**Montana Elderly Homeowner/Renter Tax Credit:** May receive a refundable credit up to \$1,150.00 for paying rent/property taxes. Homeowners or renters may qualify even if not required to file an income tax return. Eligibility:

- 62 years of age or older as of December 31, 2025.
- Lived in Montana for at least nine months.
- Rented, owned, or leased a home in Montana for at least six months.
- Have a total household income of less than \$45,000.

Our resource specialists are happy to help you navigate these systems!

## MAS Staff News

Missoula Aging Services celebrates the heart, dedication, and talent of our team. These moments of growth remind us of the hard work that makes our mission come alive.

**RACHEL AMMONS** joined Missoula Aging Services in December as a Resource Specialist. A fourth-generation Montanan and Missoula native, she holds a BA in Psychology from the University of Montana. She brings a background in customer service and a people-centered approach to her work. Rachel is passionate about helping and advocating for people of all ages.

**ANNA GREEN** joined the Accounting team in December to support the Veteran Directed Care program. She holds a BA in International Studies with a concentration in development from Colby College and brings diverse experience in finance, billing, and budgeting to her role. Anna is driven to use her analytical, detail-oriented nature in mission-driven work.

**AYANA PETERSON** joined Missoula Aging Services as a Resource Specialist in January. She earned her BA in Anthropology from the University of Montana and brings a strong people-centered approach to her work. Ayana values connection and enjoys helping individuals and families access the resources they need.

### YEARS OF SERVICE MILESTONE

**JILL ZIESSLER**

Care Manager

5 years

As a valued member of the Care Management team, Jill supports clients with memory impairment with compassion, patience, and dedication. She also facilitates the caregiver support group and serves as a Veteran Directed Care Manager. Jill's thoughtful advocacy helps clients stay safe, supported, and independent. We are truly grateful!

### PROMOTIONS & POSITION CHANGES

**THERESA RAGSDALE** was promoted to **Statewide Senior Medicare Patrol Director**.

Theresa has served the community in several roles in our Resource Center. She brings deep knowledge and experience to this new role, where she will support beneficiaries and partners across Montana to prevent, detect, and report Medicare waste, fraud, and abuse.



EST. 1982

# MISSOULA *aging* SERVICES

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## MAS Events

### **IN-PERSON NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP**

Wednesday, March 25, from 12 to 1:30 pm.

Wednesday, May 27, from 12 to 1:30 pm.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Register online: <https://medicaremas.eventbrite.com>

### **VIRTUAL NEW TO MEDICARE WORKSHOP**

Saturday, April 29, from 6 to 7:30 pm.

Register online: [virtualnewtomedicaremas.eventbrite.com](http://virtualnewtomedicaremas.eventbrite.com)

### **IN-PERSON MATTER OF BALANCE**

Mondays from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm, March 9 - April 27.

Missoula Public Library

301 E. Main St., Missoula, MT 59802

Register online: [MatterofBalance-Library.eventbrite.com](http://MatterofBalance-Library.eventbrite.com)

### **IN-PERSON POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CAREGIVERS**

Tuesdays from 12 to 1:30 pm, April 14 - May 10.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Register online: [Powerful-Tools-Spring-26.eventbrite.com](http://Powerful-Tools-Spring-26.eventbrite.com)

### **VIRTUAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS**

Second Monday of each month from 4 to 5 pm.

Third Tuesday of each month from 1 to 2 pm.

Participate online using Zoom. No cost.

Register online: <https://bit.ly/2YkyVPU>

### **IN-PERSON CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS**

Fourth Wednesday of each month from 2 to 3 pm.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Check in at the front desk when you arrive. No cost.

### **VIRTUAL MEMORY LOSS CONVERSATIONS**

Thursdays from 10 to 11 am. New attendees welcome!

Participate online using Zoom. No cost.

Facilitated by Dementia Friendly Missoula.

Register online: <https://bit.ly/3ITnAsY>

### **IN-PERSON TECH CAFE**

First Monday of each month from 1 to 3 pm.

Missoula Aging Services

337 Stephens Ave., Missoula, MT 59801

Check in at the front desk when you arrive. No cost.

View a full list of events at [MISSOULAAGINGSERVICES.ORG](http://MISSOULAAGINGSERVICES.ORG)