Love In Action: Meals on Wheels in Mason County

Last week, like each week, seniors across the country and those in Mason County, WV waited with scheduled anticipation for the Meals on Wheels hot/cold truck, the driver, and most importantly their meal delivery.

While March is nationally recognized as March for Meals month, the need for services to an ever increasing, aging population continues. It is estimated that over 10,000 Baby Boomers reach the age of 65 every day. In addition, approximately one-quarter of today's 65 year olds will live past the age of 90, with daily chores becoming insurmountable everyday challenges.*

As with each of the 55 counties in West Virginia, senior service provider agencies work diligently to anticipate and assist with the growing needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

As one example, Mason County Action Group provides home delivered meals to 107 clients each week day. With a monthly delivery on average of 22 days, Mason County delivers 2,354 meals per month. This is accomplished on a 5 day per week delivery schedule (Monday–Friday), utilizing two hot/cold trucks, and two meal route delivery drivers, Richard Holland and Sherry Brinker, both of Mason County. Along with the meal, the driver is also providing a daily check on the client. If a client does not answer their door when the driver arrives, the driver will call them at their contact number. If there is still no response, we call their emergency contact person. Sometimes they forget to let the driver know that they will not be home due to a doctor's appoint or for other reasons. At times, it has been necessary to contact 911 for a wellness check by law enforcement, who can enter the home, if deemed necessary. There have been past situations where someone has fallen or is ill and in need of medical care.

Beyond the numbers, there are real people with real needs who would be in great jeopardy if not for this service. One of those individuals is Faye Holmes. Mrs. Holmes at 87 is a bit hard of hearing, a widow, and can't stand for long periods of time. She looks forward to Richard's weekly arrival

and a little conversation. As a homemaker, Faye was married at seventeen to the love of her life, Lloyd, for fifty-three years until his passing in 1999. Mrs. Holmes started participating in congregate meals at the Gene Salem Senior Center, located in Point Pleasant in 2000. By 2013 at the age of 84, getting to the senior center was becoming a real physical challenge and she soon became a participant of the local Meals on Wheels Program. “If Richard could not come, I couldn’t eat,” said Faye. “I liked coming to the center, but can’t drive anymore. I am glad to have Mason County Action Group.” Even though she has less opportunity to get around, Mrs. Holmes keeps busy. She specifically reads the bible before reading the daily newspaper. She also enjoys the crosswords.

Renae Riffle, Executive Director of MCAG and Missie Wolfe, Nutrition Supervisor, both know how very important the home delivered meals program is to the seniors of Mason County. They deliver 5 shelf stable meals to each client in the winter and 5 shelf stable meals to each client in the summer for emergency situations such as severe weather, flooding, power outages or other unforeseeable disasters.

In addition, a frozen meal is provided to each client prior to a holiday, when the office will be closed, so that the senior program participants will have a meal for that non-delivery day. On non-delivery days, Missie takes time from her holiday to place a call to each client for a check-in on their general wellness. The client’s well-being is our priority.

At the end of the day, Meals on Wheels is more than just a food drop-off. Senior service provider agencies and their Senior Centers across our state realize that it is part of the fabric of what makes a community safe, secure and considerate of all its citizens. We appreciate not only what they and Mason County Action Group do, but also what they accomplish each and every day.

*source: Mealsonwheelsamerica.org