2017: Planning for the Future, Pursuing Smart Growth and Focusing on Outcomes

In 2016, the Meals on Wheels for WNY team completed many important accomplishments that I am proud of – such as paying off the largest of our three mortgages, launching a Planned & Major Gifts effort, introducing new technology across the organization, moving to electronic timekeeping and many, many more projects and initiatives.

Our goals for 2017 continue to be focused on moving the organization forward and planning for future growth and increased sustainability. It would be impossible to include eight pages of text here, encompassing the organizational goals and each department’s goals, but I want to share a sample of our plans for the coming year.

We will:

- Work with our food vendor Bateman Community Living to ensure our respective strategic plans are aligned and that we select the growth plan that best fits both organizations’ needs.
- Explore the need for increased freezer, cooler and dry good storage space and develop a budget for implementation.
- Develop and update an equipment replacement schedule for the commissary.
- Develop and implement outcome-based and evidence-based measurements for our programs.
- Continue to advance government advocacy – with a focus at the federal, state and county levels.
- Increase awareness of our services and needs throughout the community using a wide array of communication tactics.
- Launch a safety committee to ensure we are following best practices.
- Raise $1,013,000 in total philanthropic support, including the final $16,000 needed to complete our quarter-million-dollar meal-delivery oven project.
- Develop a five-year plan for short- and long-term fundraising goals, including capital needs and programming needs to fit various grant applications.
- Rollout the new tablets and online client system for Registered Dietitians’ use in clients’ homes to track data and provide nutrition education.
- Rollout the made-without-gluten diet and explore other options, such as lactose-free, pureed, and a gourmet option (for a fee).
- Meet with medical facilities and Managed Long Term Care programs to promote MOW and various programs to help ensure people are healthy at home.
- Recruit 450 new volunteers, including 18 new “Adopt-A-Route” (businesses and organizations) partners.
- Increase the percentage of routes covered by volunteers by at least 5% over current levels (based on Q1 tracking).

As you can see, our priorities cover a wide range of areas – all with an ultimate focus on providing the best quality product and highest service levels to our clients. Meals on Wheels for WNY could not deliver “food, friendship and good health” to nearly 3,600 clients each year without the support of its employees, volunteers, board members, donors, and the community at large. Thank you so much for all you do to help Meals on Wheels for WNY thrive! If you would like to discuss any of these priorities with me, please call me at 716-822-2002 to set up an appointment.

Thank you,

Tara A. Ellis – President and CEO, Meals on Wheels for WNY
New Meal Delivery Ovens Really Deliver!

Meals on Wheels for WNY is committed to delivering safe, nutritious food and a friendly visit to our clients throughout the region. This commitment involves extensive coordination, a large number of talented and caring people, and safe and functional food preparation and delivery equipment. As an organization that has been around for nearly 50 years and continues to grow, we find ourselves constantly working to repair and replace antiquated, worn out equipment to make sure that we are operating efficiently, effectively, and most of all, safely.

For the last few years, we’ve been preparing for the replacement of our 375 portable meal delivery ovens, which are no longer repairable after 17 years of daily use. These ovens help us ensure that our hot meals are delivered to clients at the correct temperature, regardless of the weather outside. The project includes the purchase of new oven covers that further insulate and protect the ovens, as well as racks for the kitchen, where the ovens are stored, heated and loaded with meals each day.

This project has been no small task, especially since the vendor previously used was not able to produce new ovens. The oven project has involved employees from across the organization. The Foundation team has been working hard to raise the $234,332 to make this essential upgrade happen. They’ve procured several large and many smaller donations to help us reach our goal. Currently, we are only $16,000 away from raising the final funds to complete this project!

Operationally, we’ve had to select a vendor, work with them to design the new ovens, test them to make sure they would meet our needs and hold up to the daily demands placed on them, design and have produced new oven covers, and train employees and volunteers who will be using the new equipment.

In early December, our first 50 new portable ovens were officially launched for meal delivery to much excitement amongst the volunteers in the field! The next set of 100 ovens is scheduled to be delivered within the first quarter of 2017. We hope to have the full project completed as soon as possible this year.

Thank you to all of our generous donors, including The Walmart Foundation, James H. Cummings Foundation, an anonymous donor, Josephine Goodyear Foundation, Lakeshore Savings Bank, Mr. and Mrs. Ed and Esther Duetsch, and contributors to our “Spring it On” Campaign held in March 2016. We’re also grateful to our dedicated employees and local vendors (ISI and Olmstead Center for Sight) for helping to make this critical replacement project possible!

Ways to Give: Wish List

People often ask us how they can best support Meals on Wheels throughout the year. We are always looking for additional volunteers to help us with our Monday through Friday meal delivery services, and we genuinely appreciate when our supporters share the Meals on Wheels mission with others through conversation and social media.

But we realize that many prefer to give in a way that supports a specific need. Monetary donations are always much appreciated and used in various ways to help us deliver meals to the growing population of homebound individuals in Western New York.

Specific needs for 2017 include:

- **140 Quart Industrial Mixer**: replacing multiple, smaller mixers that have been around many years will enable us to make food in full batches and increase consistency and quality while also preparing for continued growth.

- **Laser Slicer**: our current slicer cannot accommodate large cuts of meat and slows down preparation time, decreasing efficiency, productivity and safety.

- **Steam Tables**: replacing the vital 25-year-old steam tables will ensure that we are meeting and exceeding stringent temperature and food safety standards for each meal we produce.

- **New HVAC**: our 16-year-old HVAC units are beginning to deteriorate. One is in immediate need of replacement and the others will need to be replaced within the next two to five years.

- **Commercial Washing Machine**: our current machine is nearly 25 years old and is in dire need of replacement to help ensure clean uniforms, aprons and other soft goods and maintain our high standards of cleanliness.

To make a designated donation to one or more of these needs, please contact Kelly Campbell at kcampbell@mealsonwheelswny.org or 716-822-2002 ext. 43.
WELCOMING SPECIAL GUESTS FOR DECEMBER MEAL DELIVERY

We love to find ways to brighten our clients’ days, whether that means delivering a birthday cake and card on their special day, sharing donated treats from local organizations to mark seasons and holidays, or bringing special visitors along on our meal deliveries occasionally. In December, we were fortunate to bring a few special guests to various homebound clients.

In the beginning of December, Assemblyman Mickey Kearns took part in delivering meals to many of our Orchard Park clients. During his visits, the approachable Assemblyman joked with each client about how good the food smelled and how hungry it was making him, and also engaged each individual with conversations about their families, homes, pets and more.

Just before Christmas, Bishop Richard J. Malone, bishop of Buffalo, and Father Ryszard Biernat joined us for their fourth year of holiday visits with Meals on Wheels. At each home, the personable Bishop took the time to chat with our clients about their family and health. In addition to meal delivery, clients shared a prayer with the Bishop. They also received hand-made cards and ornaments created by children from a local religious education program.

One client, Carol Duffie, was so excited about the visit it had her up early just like a kid on Christmas morning. “I didn’t want to miss the Bishop! I was up at 6 a.m. today.” Carol was all smiles during the visit. “I love Meals on Wheels.”

“A visit from special guests brings our clients incredible joy, and we are so honored to be a part of providing this experience. We are grateful that these public figures enjoy visiting with our homebound seniors, and we appreciate their support of the work that we do every day,” Tara A. Ellis, CEO and President, Meals on Wheels for WNY, said.

RECONNECTING WITH HER COMMUNITY IN RETIREMENT

“I wanted to retire from my job, but not from my life!” Meals on Wheels volunteer Cynthia Eaton laughs as she talks about planning for retirement. Cynthia has discovered that volunteering with Meals on Wheels can offer a flexible opportunity to do something meaningful and even provide new and renewed connections to your community.

“My inspiration for volunteering with Meals on Wheels came from some women at my church. My pastor’s wife, Mrs. Hilliard, and her sisters-in-law volunteered with the organization for years, as did another church member, Mrs. Nelson. They had a strong connection to the organization and I thought it would be a good fit for me. I even volunteer out of the Delores C. Nelson site in Buffalo, which is named after my church friend!”

Not only does Cynthia have a connection with Meals on Wheels and the site she volunteers from, she also has an incredible tie to the route and people she delivers meals to every Wednesday. “It is the neighborhood where I grew up!” proclaims Cynthia, stating that many of the people on the route are parents of her childhood friends, and that she has enjoyed reconnecting with them over the last few years that she’s been volunteering.

According to Cynthia, going in to see the people she delivers to each week is the best part of volunteering. “People think we volunteers bring sunshine to the clients’ lives, but they bring sunshine into ours as well.” She recalls a recent client’s birthday, “We brought her a piece of cake and sang ‘Happy Birthday.’ As we sang she almost started to cry. I’m still not sure if it was because she was becoming emotional or if it was because our singing was so bad, but we all had a laugh about it!”

Cynthia encourages anyone who is thinking about volunteering to do so. “I wish there were more people involved with Meals on Wheels, especially businesses. I’d like to see more companies support their employees in volunteering during their lunch hour. It’s not a big commitment, but it makes a huge impact!”

Cynthia often talks with others about volunteering with Meals on Wheels and has even recruited her sister, Elizabeth Waller. “I attended a Hunger and Hope Tour, and was talking with my sister about it. She was hesitant to volunteer because she didn’t want to be out in the weather, but when she learned that volunteers were needed in the central office at reception, she knew that was the right fit for her!”

There are various opportunities to volunteer with Meals on Wheels, whether you’re retired, available to help at special events, or want to get your workplace involved in giving back.

If you’re interested in volunteering or know someone who is, please contact Lauren Gousy at 716-822-2002 ext. 21. Learn more about our Hunger & Hope Tours on page 4.
The essential work done by Meals on Wheels for Western New York is made possible by generous financial support from community members, local foundations and corporations, as well as through grants from the New York State Office for the Aging and Erie County's Departments of Senior Services and Social Services.

Recent Sponsors & Supporters
Meals on Wheels for Western New York would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their recent donations and generous support of Meals on Wheels.

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TAKE AN EMOTIONAL TOUR OF OUR MISSION!

Do you want to learn more about Meals on Wheels?
With the Hunger & Hope Tour program, you can visit the facility and learn more about why Meals on Wheels matters through client, caregiver and volunteer stories.

One-hour emotional tours are free and offered twice per month. There is no obligation to become further involved with the organization and you will not be asked for a donation, though somebody will call you after the tour to get your feedback, see if you want to be involved and answer any questions you may have.

• Thursday, March 9 at 8 a.m.
• Tuesday, March 21 at 12 p.m.
• Thursday, April 6 at 4 p.m.
• Tuesday, April 18 at 8 a.m.

Call 822-2002 and speak with Lauren Hibit to register or to get additional tour dates.