

## Meals on Wheels Keeping Seniors Fed During Pandemic and Phone Calls Let Them Know They Are Not Alone



"Meals on Wheels blesses my life. I get a great meal each day and the volunteers that deliver it are so nice, and they care about me."

— Del Woodward

For years Del Woodward, who will celebrate his 100th birthday in July, has been a part of the noon congregate meal program at Heartland Senior Services. Not only does Del enjoy the stimulating conversation and nutritious meals, but he also serves as a volunteer, setting up tables and chairs.

"Coming to Heartland every morning at 9 a.m. sharp provides me with a sense purpose and a sense of belonging," Del said recently. "These people are my second family."

However, due to COVID-19, all senior citizen centers in Iowa were directed on March 17 to close. This closure had a big impact on Del and other seniors that visit the center each day. Those who attended to play Bingo or cards or enjoy the evening dances or Adult Day Center now had to stay home.

### Meals on Wheels is More than a Meal

When Bonnie Hawbaker saw the open garage door, the open car trunk and the open side door, she knew something was wrong.

Bonnie had just arrived at the home of a senior citizen who was receiving his Meals on Wheels delivery. She knocked on the door and heard her client cry for help: He had fallen the previous night and was still unable to get up.

Bonnie immediately called 911. Her client was shaken from laying on the floor all night, but he was ultimately uninjured.

It's a perfect example of how the Meals on Wheels program at Heartland doesn't provide just a hot meal, but a safety and welfare check for each of our participants.

"Though people were going to be isolated, we did not want them to feel alone," Heartland's Executive Director Nancy Carroll said.

First, staff contacted everyone who attends the noon congregate meal program to see if they wanted to begin receiving Meals on Wheels. Then, we began calling those who attend other programs at the center to provide reassurance phone calls. The calls might be the one of the most important things we can do to support seniors during this time of upheaval.

"We get to visit with them and laugh together, and we find out if there is anything they need," Carroll said. "Seniors are the most vulnerable population in society, and we want them to know Heartland is here for them. We ask if they need someone to go to the store and pick up medications for them, and we let them know we'll deliver these items to their door."

### Meals on Wheels Deliveries Increase 40%

The number of Meals on Wheels participants has skyrocketed since March 17. Deliveries increased by 40% in just a few days after the COVID-19 shutdown began, from 125 deliveries each day to 175.

We're so thankful for our partnership with Mary Greeley Medical Center to feed our seniors. When we asked if they could immediately increase meal production by 40%, the center's dietary department director Matt Hart told us, "We can do whatever it takes. No senior will be turned away."

In all, thanks to Mary Greeley Medical Center and all the volunteers involved in Meals on Wheels, Heartland will feed 190 people a grand total of more than 34,000 meals this year.



Bonnie Hawbaker loves the contact she has with the MOW participants. She said, "Some of our folks don't see anyone else during the day...for others, it is their only meal the entire day."

# Volunteers are the Key to Success

In response to COVID-19, our volunteers were ready, too, to meet the new demand in service. Daily, it takes 16 drivers to cover all of Story County's Meals on Wheels deliveries. In addition to delivering the meals, drivers provide safety checks on our seniors.

Other volunteers coordinate handing out the meal bags each day when drivers pick up their meals from Mary Greeley Medical Center. Ed and Marge Kannel meet drivers Mondays through Fridays and pass out the route bags. In fact, the medical center named the Kannels 2020's volunteers of the year for their long-standing commitment to Meals on Wheels.



Ed and Marge Kannel — MGMC's Volunteers of the Year!



Bill and Deb Fennelly deliver meals together during COVID-19. Deb has delivered meals each Wednesday for seven years!

## Have a Heart for Heartland

Like so many other small, non-profit agencies, Heartland Senior Services has been financially impacted by COVID-19. As we continue to serve the most impacted, vulnerable population—senior citizens—please consider donating to Heartland.

It's easy to donate: Simply visit [HeartlandSeniorServices.com](http://HeartlandSeniorServices.com), and click on the red "Donate" button at the top of the page. You can also use the enclosed envelop and mail a check made out to "Heartland Senior Services."

If you know a senior in need right now, please call us at 515-233-2906. We're here to help.

We appreciate all your support for the seniors of Ames and Story County during this difficult and unprecedented time. Thank you!

"During this time of crisis, seniors are the most vulnerable population in society, and we want them to know Heartland is here for them."

— Nancy Carroll,  
HSS Executive Director

 **EACH YEAR**

DONATIONS ACCOUNT FOR  
**\$200,000**

or APPROXIMATELY

**20%** of Heartland's budget.

**Thank You**

for your support in meeting this annual goal. Your generosity enables Heartland to continue its important work.

## Thank You for Your Support!

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**HEARTLAND**  
Senior Services

*Have a heart for Heartland.*

*Your support is needed and appreciated.*