

# Motion

A MEALS ON WHEELS PEOPLE NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2026

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# LETTER *from the* CEO

This spring, I find myself reflecting on just how much of our work is powered by people like you, our volunteers, donors, and advocates. Every meal delivered, every friendly visit, every laugh shared at a table — none of it happens without someone choosing to show up with generosity, time, and compassion.

Because of you, older adults across our region are nourished, connected, and seen. You've helped neighbors stay independent in their homes, enjoy meals that reflect their culture and tastes, learn new technology, and feel part of a community that cares.

April is National Volunteer Month, and it's a perfect reminder that Meals on Wheels People is a community effort. Together, we create something that no single person could do alone.

This spring, we're inviting our community into an important new chapter: Together at the Table, a campaign to build the Eastside Resource Center in

Southeast Portland. It's a vision shaped by what it will take to meet growing need with dignity, sustainability, and care. This center will bring meals, services, and community partners together in one welcoming place, making it easier for older adults to get the support they need and strengthening how we serve our participants for years to come.

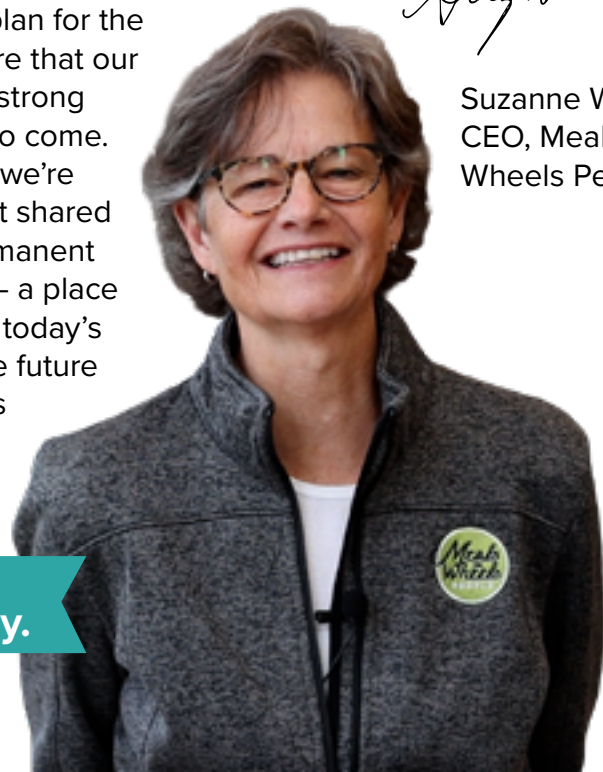
The groundwork for this moment has already been laid by supporters like you. Your belief in this mission makes it possible to think bigger, plan for the future, and ensure that our services remain strong for generations to come. Because of you, we're ready to turn that shared vision into a permanent eastside home — a place built not only for today's needs but for the future our community is growing into.



Thank you for being part of this next chapter. However you show up — as a volunteer, donor, or advocate — you power everything we do. Together we're ensuring that older adults remain nourished and connected today and for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Suzanne Washington  
CEO, Meals on  
Wheels People



Scan to give the gift of  
meals & connection today.



# Together at the Table

## **Introducing the Eastside Resource Center.**

In 2021, we purchased a 17,000-square-foot building at 4035 SE 82nd Avenue to create the purpose-built Eastside Resource Center. Currently under construction and estimated to open in late 2026, the building is the focus of the Together at the Table campaign and a milestone in how Meals on Wheels People is investing in the future of our community.

## **Why This Moment Matters**

By 2050, the number of people aged 65 and older will grow by nearly 50%. Our region is aging faster than the national average. At the same time, rising costs and funding changes are causing an increase in the need for our services. We've recently increased Central Kitchen production to 7,200 meals per day and anticipate serving more than 100,000 more meals this year than we did last year.

## **What This New Facility Makes Possible**

Centrally located in a high-need, area of Portland, the Eastside Resource Center was designed

from the ground up to reduce barriers to service, drive innovation, meet the increased need, and maximize our ability to respond in emergencies.

This Eastside Resource Center will help us:

- Increase meal access and choice for older adults, offer more opportunities for technology training and support, and allow for additional space for partner services under one roof.
- Remain flexible and efficient during emergencies by increasing meal storage and strengthening our infrastructure to keep people safe and fed.
- Grow and adapt with our community by creating space to pilot new programs, respond to emerging needs, and deepen partnerships that support older adults' health and independence.

## **Designed for Today — and for What Comes Next**

Intentionally designed to function as a resilience hub, the East-

side Resource Center is flexible, sustainable, and built to respond when it matters most. Solar power, battery storage, and a generator, funded by grants from the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund, a program of the City of Portland, and Portland General Electric's Renewable Development Fund, with Energy Trust of Oregon incentives, ensure the building can continue operating during outages, keeping meals and essential services running without interruption.

With a public gathering space, capacity for community partners to deliver services on-site, and the ability to transform into a warming or cooling center or emergency shelter when needed, this building is more than just a Meals on Wheels People building. It is food security infrastructure, emergency preparedness infrastructure, and a shared community resource.

*Take a look inside!*





A welcoming entry where participants can come for a meal and stay for support. On-site partner offices and a wellness room provide coordinated services helping older adults improve health, independence, and well-being.



A tech center where older adults stay connected to family, friends, and their community. Participants can attend AARP Senior Planet classes in multiple languages, get device support, and engage in social activities.



An innovative, flexible dining space designed for choice and connection. With fast-casual service and expanded hours, participants can decide what, how, and when they eat.



A commercial kitchen expands meal production when needed and provides a backup for emergencies, capable of producing 2,000 meals per day on the east side. The facility also stores 45,000 frozen and 30,000 shelf-stable meals.



A versatile public gathering area for MOWP programs, community rentals, and events. It can transform into a warming or cooling center or emergency shelter when needed.

## Be Part of the Next Chapter

Join us in shaping the Eastside Resource Center. Follow our progress, celebrate milestones, and see how your support is transforming lives. **Visit [mowp.org/together](http://mowp.org/together)** to learn more about the Eastside Resource Center and the Together at the Table campaign or contact Tina Libby at **503-953-8176** or **[tina.libby@mowp.org](mailto:tina.libby@mowp.org)** to sign up for a guided



tour. Together, we're building a brighter future where meals, services, and community come together — and no older adult is left behind.



# POWERED BY PEOPLE

***Celebrating volunteers who show up and make a lasting difference every day.***

At Meals on Wheels People, our volunteers are the driving force behind everything we do. Over the past year, 2,004 incredible individuals dedicated more than 95,792 hours to supporting their aging neighbors across the Portland-Vancouver metro area — an impact valued at \$3.57 million in cost savings. In honor of National Volunteer Month, we're excited to celebrate six volunteers whose generosity, creativity, and commitment bring our mission to life.



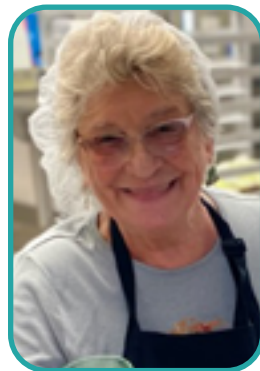
adults can be. Today, he greets volunteer drivers at the Southwest Center twice a week. “What keeps me coming back are the volunteers I work with,” he says, pictured here with fellow volunteer Ellen Goldschmidt. “For me, it’s my community. And there’s still more than ever a need.”



**Keith Salenger**

*Greeter at Southwest Center in Multnomah County*  
11 years

When Keith moved to Portland, he looked for a way to keep doing the kind of volunteering he'd done back in Minnesota — helping at food pantries and delivering meals to older adults. He found that community at Meals on Wheels People. Having cared for his own aging mother, Keith understands how vulnerable many older



**Deanna Plewik**

*Dining Center Support at Forest Grove Center in Washington County*  
10 years

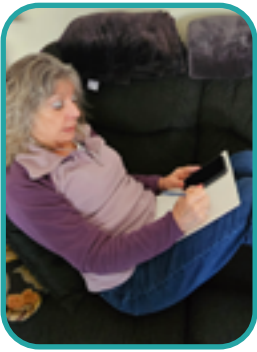
Deanna didn't set out to volunteer — she answered a call for fans to help older adults during a summer heat wave. When she dropped them off at a Meals on Wheels People center, she saw the lunch service in action. “I loved it,” she says. “I just kept coming back.” Now a regular with over 1,100 volunteer hours, Deanna starts mornings helping in the kitchen before moving into the dining room. “No matter who I run into, they're just so appreciative,” she says. “They just feel so blessed. Because they feel blessed, I feel blessed as well.”



**Pankaj Ramesh**

*Dining Center Support at Luepke Center in Clark County*  
1 year

Pankaj, or PK as he's known at the Luepke Center, moved to Southwest Washington last year to help his wife care for her mother — and quickly found his way into the kitchen at Meals on Wheels People. With 15 years running a restaurant in India, he knows his way around a commercial kitchen. Now he helps wherever needed at the Luepke Center: chopping vegetables, prepping desserts, cleaning, or serving lunch. “It's the people,” he says. “Everyone here is so kind, so thankful. There's a lot of heart.”



### Lauri Howe

*Friendly Chats Caller*  
6 years

Food has always been Lauri's "thing." She watched her dad deliver meals with Meals on Wheels People and has volunteered at her church's food pantry for more than 25 years. When she retired, she wanted to spend more time giving back. Her years in sales made her a natural for Friendly Chats. Now, she's logged more than 1,000 hours calling older adults who may not have anyone else to talk to. "They really appreciate it," she says. "They really like Meals on Wheels People. It makes it pretty easy to make these calls."

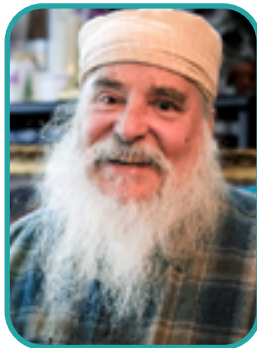
volunteer, he helps older adults navigate phones, tablets, and laptops so they can stay connected to family, health care, and the world around them. "Just having someone sit with them, it helps them a lot."



### Debi Stedron

*Meals 4 Kids Delivery Driver*  
10 years

Debi volunteered with Meals on Wheels People for six years before finding her perfect fit in Meals 4 Kids. A retired nurse and teacher, she delivers nutritious meals and grocery boxes every Thursday. "It's so rewarding to see them come to the door," she says. "The little kids are so excited to get a bag of oranges. They're just so excited."



### Guruka Singh

*Friendly Tech Visitor*  
1 year

After retiring from a decades-long career in technology, Guruka went looking for a way to help. He found it at Meals on Wheels People. As a Friendly Tech Visits

## Will You Join Us?

We rely on more than **312 volunteers every day** to deliver meals to home-bound seniors, make Friendly Chats calls, serve lunch at our dining centers, and so much more.

Visit [mowp.org/volunteer](http://mowp.org/volunteer) or reach our volunteer coordinator at [volunteer.coordinator@mowp.org](mailto:volunteer.coordinator@mowp.org) to sign up today!

*Scan here!*



*Quarterly*

### IMPACT STATS

JAN. 1 - FEB. 28, 2026



**7,450**  
individuals served



**248,955**  
meals served



**3,406**  
Friendly Chats calls made

## We're Headed Back to the Waterfront Blues Festival!

Meals on Wheels People is back at the 39th annual Waterfront Blues Festival, July 2-4 at Tom McCall Waterfront Park in downtown Portland! Our team and volunteers will be on-site across all three days, sharing our vision that no senior will go hungry or experience social isolation. Come enjoy the music — and stop by to say hi! Tickets are on sale now: [waterfrontbluesfest.com](http://waterfrontbluesfest.com).



# BITE-SIZED NEWS

## Suzanne Washington Named PBJ Woman of Influence



We're thrilled to share that our CEO, Suzanne Washington, has been named a

2026 *Portland Business Journal* Woman of Influence! This honor recognizes women across the region making a lasting impact in business and community. Since 2014, Suzanne has transformed Meals on Wheels People into a financially strong, innovative, and socially impactful organization — expanding access to over 11,400 individuals annually, pioneering our Medically Tailored Meals program, and championing programs that fight isolation and promote equity. Suzanne's visionary leadership also uplifts women — mentoring staff, promoting pay equity, and fostering opportunities across our community. Her leadership inspires us all!

## Our Medically Tailored Meals Program Is Now Accredited

We are excited to announce our Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) program has earned accreditation from the Food Is Medicine Co-alition (FIMC), providing verified credibility for the lifesaving MTM intervention



we provide. Our MTM program partners with health systems to support patients of all ages who are medically vulnerable and recovering after a hospital stay. Medically tailored meals help improve health outcomes, reduce avoidable hospital visits, and give participants the nutrition they need to manage chronic disease and live healthier lives. We're proud of the lifesaving and lifechanging work our staff, volunteers, and supporters make possible every day — and grateful to FIMC for advancing equitable access to nutrition as medicine.

## We're Making Solar-Powered Meals

We recently completed a major solar and battery project at our Westside Resource Center in Multnomah Village. New solar panels now provide nearly a quarter of the building's electricity, with energy stored in one of the largest commercial battery systems in Portland. Together with our backup generator, this system allows our kitchen to generate its own power and keep running during outages.

This investment lowers costs, reduces environmental impact, and generates enough savings and revenue to provide more than 5,500 meals for seniors each year. The combined system is supported by a grant from the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF), a program of the City of Portland, with Energy Trust of Oregon incentives. By building sustainability into our systems, we're boosting efficiency, resilience, and leadership — so every dollar goes further in caring for our community.

## Board Member David Drinkward Named PBJ Executive of the Year



Congratulations to Meals on Wheels People board member David

Drinkward, president and CEO of Hoffman Construction, on being named a 2026 *Portland Business Journal* Executive of the Year! David has served on our board since 2011 and led as board president from 2015–2017.

## Create a Free Will Online with FREEWILL

We're happy to share a free resource available to the Meals on Wheels People community. Through our partnership with FreeWill, you can create a simple will at no cost. This online tool takes about 20 minutes and can help you make your wishes clear and take care of the people you love.

Visit [freewill.com/mowp](https://freewill.com/mowp) or scan the QR code to start your free will today!

Scan here!



# EVERY WAY YOU GIVE COUNTS

Volunteers, donors, and advocates — your support powers every meal, every visit, and every connection. Here are some ways you can keep making a difference:

## Become a Monthly Donor

Keep support steady and make a lasting impact all year.

## Include MOWP in Your Legacy

Planned giving helps secure meals and services for future generations.

## Donate a Vehicle

Donations of cars, boats, RVs, and planes can be turned into meals for seniors.

## Volunteer

Deliver meals, make calls, or lend your skills — any time you have counts.

## Share this Newsletter

Help friends and family learn about the work they can power, too.

Every choice matters. Every contribution counts. **Together, we make this work possible.**



Follow us to stay up to date with events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

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Donate a meal:  
[mowp.org](http://mowp.org)



Questions? Call  
**503-953-8131**