

MEALS **on** WHEELS®

WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA

QUARTERLY



SEEDS OF HOPE

COMMUNITY GARDEN
OFFERS HEALING TO
VETERANS

HEART OF THE NORTHERN HILLS

JAMIE HELMS: AREA
MANAGER

CAPITOL GAINS

LEADERS IN WASHINGTON
LISTEN UP

SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM



**FOUR EXCEPTIONAL MEALS ON WHEELS
STAR VOLUNTEERS WERE SHOWCASED
THIS SPRING AT THE SPIRIT OF
VOLUNTEERISM AWARDS!**

“The Spirit of Volunteerism recognizes outstanding volunteers across the Sioux Empire and Black Hills for over 35 years. We are thrilled to celebrate the individuals and groups who go the extra mile to serve their communities. This year, we’re shining a spotlight on our **“Rock Stars”** – those who inspire others with their dedication, service and passion to making a difference.”

-211 Helpline Center



PAM & JAN

Pam May and Jan Frank have been delivering a route every Monday since September 2022. Whenever we are short volunteers, they are willing to help. In 2024 they delivered their route 57 times!

JESSICA POTTER

Jessica Potter has been a substitute volunteer since November 2022. Jessica graciously volunteers whenever she has an open Friday and is always happy and willing to deliver any route that is asked of her. The seniors always enjoy Jessica delivering their meals with a friendly smile.



BRAD HOVLAND

Brad Hovland began volunteering in March 2022. Brad is always willing to help when we are short delivery drivers and deliver an extra day when needed. Brad volunteered an impressive 134 hours in 2024!



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., joined by President and CEO of Meals on Wheels America Ellie Hollander and Executive Director and CEO of Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland Stephanie Archer-Smith at Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland headquarters on Monday, June 9, 2025, in Baltimore, Maryland. (Official HHS Photo by Amy Rossetti)

“History will judge the humanity of our civilization by how we care for our elderly. Meals on Wheels does not just provide nutrition for the malnourished; it combats the epidemic of loneliness through daily acts of care and compassion.”

-Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.



George Larson II, Meals on Wheels Western SD Executive Director and Dusty Johnson, South Dakota State Representative



George Larson II, Meals on Wheels Western SD Executive Director and Ellie Hollander, President and CEO of Meals on Wheels America

SEEDS OF HOPE



In the heart of Hot Springs, something beautiful is taking root. The Brookside Garden project is blossoming into a vibrant community hub where residents can nurture plants, relationships, and personal growth all at once. Under

the thoughtful guidance of the Brookside site manager Caren, the garden features attractive raised beds that will yield a bountiful harvest this fall. But this garden grows far more than just vegetables—it cultivates healing, connection, and empowerment for the Brookside community!

"It's not just about growing plants," shares one resident.

"It's about having a quiet place to sit, reflect, and watch something beautiful grow because of your care."

For residents of Brookside's low-income housing, the garden offers a practical supplement to food budgets. But perhaps more importantly, it provides the pride and confidence that comes from growing your own food and contributing to a community effort.

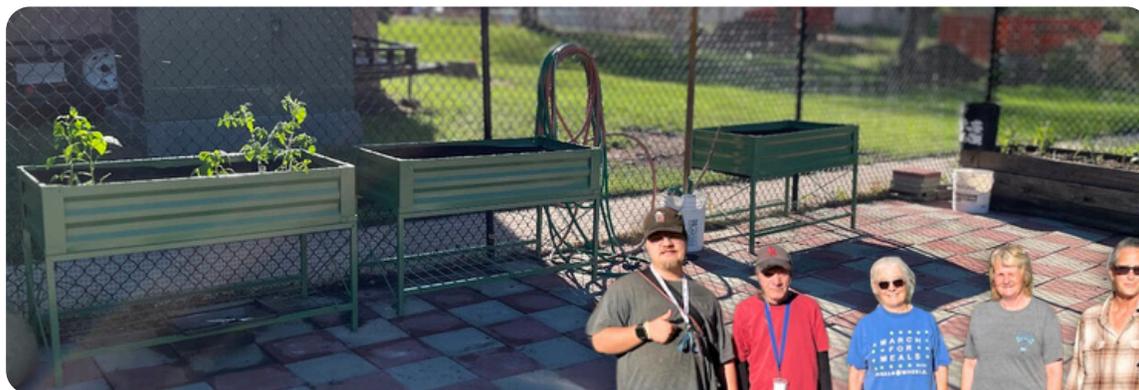
The garden has quickly become a social hub where neighbors connect, share gardening tips, and build meaningful relationships while tending their plots.



Generous volunteers rolled up their sleeves to help construct boxes, fill them with soil, and assist residents in preparing their garden plots.

This collaboration benefits everyone involved:

- MOW will maintain and harvest a dedicated garden box, using the fresh produce to enhance summer meals for their clients
- Residents gain access to MOW's expertise on food preservation, cooking techniques, and storage solutions
- The partnership culminates in a festive harvest celebration where gardeners will share recipes and sample the delicious fruits of their labor



The Brookside Garden represents the perfect partnership between Hot Springs Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Hot Springs MOW— two organizations

committed to community wellbeing. This natural collaboration opens doors for future food security initiatives throughout our community.

As the garden takes root, it promises environmental benefits through sustainable growing practices while fostering community cohesion and individual empowerment. From seed to harvest, the Brookside Garden is growing something truly special!

Stay tuned or join us this fall for our community harvest celebration— where we'll gather to enjoy the bounty of our garden and the richness of our growing community!

SUMMER MEALS

The Summer Feeding Program for 2025 is in full swing, expanding its partnerships with the Black Hills Area Community Foundation, RCAS, YMCA, YFS, and Meals on Wheels to address growing food insecurity in the region.

The Summer Feeding Program will run from June 2 through August 8, offering free breakfast and lunch to anyone over 60 or under 18, and while funds last, their respective guardians age 18-59.

Food insecurity in Pennington County has risen dramatically in recent years according to Feeding South Dakota. In response, these organizations have united to provide nutritional support to vulnerable populations, particularly children and seniors.

These collective efforts are funded and coordinated through the Friends of Food Security Group, facilitated by the Black Hills Area Community Foundation.

Nichole Schlabach, Strategic Communications Manager with the Foundation, shared this statement,



Rapid City's unique approach to the summer meal program—where elders and guardians are also fed—is an innovative collaboration between a wide variety of nonprofit organizations. It offers a vital lifeline to guardians and grandparents struggling to provide for their children over summer break. Not only does the program meet a basic need, but it also introduces many families to nonprofit services that can help them year-round.

As food insecurity continues to challenge the region, this partnership demonstrates how organizations can combine strengths to create meaningful solutions for community members of all ages.



IMPACT REPORT

This report is courtesy of Kristi Nelson, a MOWWSD Home Delivery Coordinator....

4/17/2025 11:15am - A volunteer arrived at Dan's* apartment. Dan had fallen and was not able to get back into his wheelchair and could not open the door to let her in. The volunteer called 911 and then the office where I grabbed his file and left to meet the volunteer to see if I could help.

When I arrived, the volunteer met me and let me know that the paramedics were able to get Dan back into his wheelchair and he appeared to be doing well. The paramedics reported there was luckily no need for the ER. The volunteer shared a detailed recount before leaving to finish her route. The paramedics didn't need any additional information, so I met with Dan before heading back to the office.

After Dan fell, his calls for help were not heard. If not for the Meals on Wheels volunteer, Dan would most likely still be on the floor, alone.

*Name changed for privacy.

HEART OF THE NORTHERN HILLS

Jamie Helms, Area Manager

In the shadow of the Black Hills, a small kitchen in Sturgis serves as the heart of an operation that delivers more than just meals—it delivers hope, independence, and human connection to hundreds of seniors. What began as a modest program serving 60 meals a day has blossomed into a vital lifeline delivering over 240 meals daily across multiple communities. Behind this remarkable growth stands **Jamie Helms**, Northern Hills Area Manager, whose seven-year journey with the organization reveals the profound impact of passion.



"It quickly became something that was important to my heart,"

Jamie shares, reflecting on what began as a part-time position. **"Having the ability to serve the people who are most vulnerable in our community quickly became part of who I was, and within the first three months of working at MOW, I switched to full time to make sure that I was personally doing my part to make sure every senior in Sturgis that needed meals had access to them."**

From the Sturgis kitchen alone, Jamie's loyal team of seven now prepares and distributes an impressive 5,450+ meals every month. This remarkable expansion includes the addition of weekend meals, a breakfast program, and has extended its reach to Lead, Deadwood, Belle Fourche, and Newell.



"Sturgis has a large and ever-growing population of seniors," Jamie explains.

"I have had many conversations with people who have stated that because of this program they have been able to live independently in their homes, afford prescription medications, and other food items."



For Jamie and her team, delivering meals is just the beginning. The human connection they provide is equally nourishing.

"I have quite a few people who have become special to me, like an extended family,"

She speaks fondly of one woman who lives far outside town, whom she personally visits weekly.

"If not for this program I would not have gotten to know her at all, and because of her location, she does not get to see people very regularly, so I have made it a priority to make sure that I get to spend a little extra time with her each week."



Continue this story on the following page



The program has served extraordinary individuals whose stories might otherwise be lost to time.

"Just this last year we lost one of our very dear, daily meal participants. She was 101 years young at the time of her death," Jamie recalls with emotion. **"I had the privilege of knowing both her and her husband. The couple was on their honeymoon in December of '41 during the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was a pilot during WW2. The two of them were a strong inspiration to others."**

What distinguishes this program is attention to individual needs.

"I have made it a point to know our participants' needs by heart." she says. **"I can tell you which people have allergies to certain foods, and what their intolerances are."**



The team also values thoughtful gestures, pitching in their own funds to pay for flowers or desserts to celebrate participants birthdays.

The Northern Hills mission is only possible through the partnerships with local churches, businesses, and dedicated volunteers. **"We have a very dedicated, yet small pool of volunteers that continue to deliver regularly,"** notes the Area Manager. **"It is through these people that we are able to continue to provide daily meals, and we will never be able to express our gratitude fully."**

When Jamie was asked what she would tell supporters, her answer was simple but profound:

"The only thing to say is Thank you. Thank you for supporting us, thank you for praying for us, and thank you for blessing us with your time. It's local community support that carries this program."



The Sturgis and Lead/Deadwood sites are always seeking volunteers, particularly delivery drivers who can help ensure meals reach seniors'
.....



doorsteps. Your support—whether through donations, time, or advocacy—directly translates into independence, dignity, and connection for hundreds of seniors across Western South Dakota.

As for the Northern Hills, the question isn't whether we can afford to support such programs—it's whether we can afford not to.



KIBBLES OF KINDNESS

This year, birthday-pup Norman donated a record 530lbs of pet food for seniors and their companions! Kim, owner of Slip-Knits hosts this annual kibble drive to honor Normans big day. Visit them at Slip-Knits on West Omaha in Rapid City.

To support the Kibbles of Kindness program, visit: givebutter.com/kibblesofkindness , scan the QR code, or add a note to your regular donation.



SPIRIT OF THE SCOUTS



The sweetest time of year - cookie season! Thank you to Girl Scouts Dakota Horizons for donating nearly 500 boxes of cookies and treats for the seniors this year!



girl scouts 
dakota horizons

NEW CLUB IN TOWN?



Maybe you've heard,
maybe you haven't -

Meals on Wheels Western SD has
officially launched a monthly
giving club - the **Full Plate Club**.

In March of 2025, Meals on Wheels Western SD launched their announcement of the Full Plate Club - a designated identity for valuable monthly supporters. This came with a unique logo, website, clear deliverables, and fresh opportunities for appreciation towards the loyal base, as well as a platform to build and expand the club and its members.

New opportunities included personal and customized correspondence, unique communication topics such as insider news and updates, as well as exclusive access to club meetings, merchandise, and other deliverables.

Check it out!

To learn more about Full Plate Club, visit fullplateclub.com or reach out for details!



CAPITOL GAINS



George Larson, Executive Director of Meals on Wheels Western South Dakota, recently traveled to Washington DC to advocate for senior nutrition services and secure vital funding for our community's older adults. As part of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP), George joined forces with nutrition service leaders from across the country to amplify the voice of senior nutrition programs at the federal level.

During his visit, George participated in several strategic meetings with congressional offices to discuss the reauthorization and increased funding of the Older Americans Act—the federal legislation that funds Title 3C programs like Meals on Wheels. With over 5,000 providers nationwide serving communities like ours in Western South Dakota, this funding is critical to meeting the growing needs of our aging population.

George met with Senator Thune's office, where staff expressed interest in delivering meals alongside our volunteers during their August recess. The senator's team, which includes Caitlyn Graves, a Black Hills State University graduate familiar with our region, was particularly receptive to understanding the unique challenges of serving seniors in rural and frontier areas of South Dakota.

A key focus of George's advocacy was preparing for what experts call the "silver tsunami"—the significant wave of baby boomers who will soon require nutrition services. As NANASP points out, every day 11,400 Americans turn 65, the fastest rate in a century. **Despite rising costs for food, labor, utilities, and facilities, federal reimbursement rates have remained largely stagnant, currently covering only about 52% of actual program costs for our organization.**



The nutrition programs under the Older Americans Act served 261.8 million meals in FY22 and are estimated to serve 286.8 million meals in FY25. **However, senior nutrition programs nationwide experienced a double setback—a direct cut in funding for the OAA Nutrition Program in FY24 (the first such cut in over 10 years) and flat funding in FY25, which effectively amounts to a reduction when considering inflation and growing need.**

During his meetings, George emphasized that Meals on Wheels provides far more than just food. Our home-delivered meals are often the only daily wellness check some participants receive, while our congregate meal sites help combat social isolation for seniors who might otherwise have limited social interaction. **More than 60% of meal participants report living alone.**

George shared the compelling economic case for our services: **we can serve an older adult for an entire year for roughly the same cost as one day in the hospital or ten days in a nursing home.** Studies show that six months of home-delivered meals is associated with savings of up to \$1,300 in hospital costs per older adult, representing more than a \$2 return on federal investment.

One of the most pressing concerns George addressed was recent changes to provider agreements that limit flexibility in meal delivery. **The new requirements restrict providers to exactly five meals per week per person, eliminating the ability to customize service for those who might need breakfast options, weekend meals, or evening deliveries.**



This approach contradicts the "person first, not programs first" philosophy that has guided the Older Americans Act for years. George advocates for returning to a model where funding follows the person's needs rather than rigid program requirements.

Beyond congressional meetings, George met with leadership from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the federal agency responsible for distributing funds to states. These discussions provided valuable insights into federal priorities and opportunities for strengthening our program's impact.

NANASP and Meals on Wheels America are supporting \$1.6 billion for the Older Americans Act Title III-C Nutrition Program in the FY 2026 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill, including \$160 million for the Nutrition Services Incentive Program, \$670 million for the Congregate Meal Program, and \$774.6 million for the Home-Delivered Meal Program.



"We don't have the infrastructure to care for people outside their homes," George explained.

"Hospitals and nursing homes are often full. We've got to find ways to keep seniors in their homes as healthy and well-cared-for as possible, and that's exactly what Meals on Wheels does."

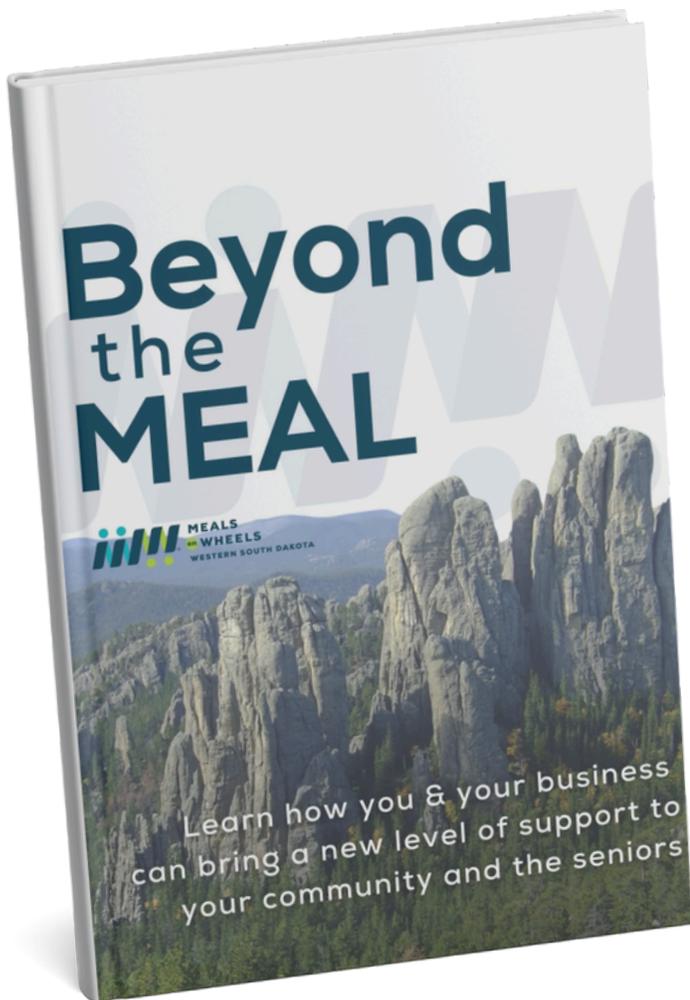
The need is substantial and growing. Older adult food insecurity has increased over 20% from 10 million to 12 million seniors. An estimated 8 out of 10, or 2.5 million low-income, food insecure older adults who would benefit from meals aren't receiving them. Additionally, an estimated 1 in 2 older adults are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition, and nearly 95% of older adults report at least one chronic condition.

Through ongoing advocacy efforts, Meals on Wheels continues to ensure that the voices and needs of our community's seniors are heard at the highest levels of government, working tirelessly to maintain and strengthen the vital services that help our neighbors age with dignity in their own homes.

NEW Sponsorship Opportunities



REACH OUT TO
RECEIVE A COPY OF
THE **NEW** SPONSORSHIP
CATALOG FOR **2025 AND 2026**
“**BEYOND THE MEAL**”



605-718-2368

jonah.baier@mealsprogram.com

MARCH FOR MEALS

Throughout the month of March, Meals on Wheels hosts outreach initiatives featuring local businesses and community champions who help make the mission possible. Partners are invited to participate in exclusive sponsorship and volunteer opportunities to showcase their support and raise awareness for the mission.

MARCHING MAMMOTH | \$10,000

Sponsor and deliver meals for seniors on your route for the month. Your company name/logo will be added to all sponsored meals and be featured prominently on our website. This recognition includes:

- Logo on over 500 meals
- Prominent logo placement on over 150 tablets
- Featured article on your company's partnership in MOWSD's Quarterly Newsletter (500+ print copies, 3 months of website featuring)
- Full page ad per route in the MOWSD Quarterly Newsletter
- A weekly social media shoutout during the event (2,400+ followers)
- A feature and press post about your business and partnership in the month of March

During the month your company is invited to:

- Distribute promotional materials with all Rapid City meals for the month (25,000+ meals)

Monthly Newsletter submission open to sponsors 11-15 (submitting 1000 per week the route to the seniors on the route (510.0000) - 320.0000, M - F, 10)

COMMUNITY HERO | \$2,000 / ROUTE

Sponsor a route and provide all meals for seniors on your route. Your company name/logo will be added to all sponsored meals and all Meals on Wheels sponsored materials promoting the event. This recognition includes:

- Logo on over 100 meals
- Logo on over 100 tablets
- Business highlight with Quarter page ad in MOWSD Quarterly Newsletter (500+ print copies, 3 months of website featuring)
- A social media shoutout during the event (2,400+ followers)

During the month your company is invited to:

- Distribute promotional materials with your sponsored meals
- Volunteer to deliver the meals to the seniors on the route (minimum once)

NEIGHBORHOOD CHAMPION | \$500 / ROUTE

Sponsor a route for a week and provide all meals for seniors on your route. Your company name/logo will be added to all sponsored meals and all Meals on Wheels materials promoting the event. This recognition includes:

- Logo on over 100 meals
- Logo on over 100 tablets
- Logo in MOWSD Quarterly Newsletter (500+ print copies, 3 months of website featuring)
- A social media shoutout during your sponsored week (2,400+ followers)

During the month your company is invited to:

- Distribute promotional materials with your sponsored meals
- Volunteer to deliver the meals to the seniors on the route (minimum once)

MOWSD

YOUR
BUSINESS
HERE!

1/2 PAGE AD EXAMPLE

YOUR
BUSINESS
HERE!

1/4 PAGE AD EXAMPLE

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FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

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