

MEALS WHEELS[®]

WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



NATIONAL NUTRITION NEWS

The Older Americans Act turned 60 years old in July



- ✓ The OAA serves older adult on a local, home-based scale
- ✓ Meals on Wheels services like home delivery and congregate meals are provided under the OAA
- ✓ A pillar of support for older Americans to this day, serving 14 million people annually

The **Home Depot Foundation** reached \$21 million invested in MOWA's Helping Homebound Seniors program since 2015, **helping 4,000+ senior veterans** age in place through home accessibility improvements.



CHALLENGES PERSIST

USDA Cuts \$1 billion in funding to farmers and ranchers

- ⚠ In March the USDA cut \$1 billion to schools and foodbanks by cancelling programs that provided funds to purchase food from local farmers and ranchers.

The Older Americans Act

- ⚠ In FY2024/2025, funded **\$392 million less** than originally authorized by Congress
- ⚠ Cuts have been proposed for FY2026 **despite rising needs** of older adults

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- ★ **13 million** adults face food insecurity in the United States.
- ★ **56%** of American seniors report experiencing **loneliness**.
- ★ By 2035, **people aged 65+ will outnumber** children younger than 18 for the first time ever in the United States.

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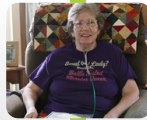
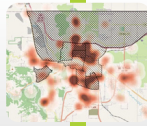
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MORE!



Several of the stories you are about to read are original interviews conducted and written by Andrew Williams III of Bespoke Agency in August of 2025.

We're deeply grateful to Meals on Wheels America for highlighting our seniors on a national stage and for our new friend, Andrew. His masterful storytelling and 605 Entertainment's footage beautifully capture the heart of our mission and the stories of our neighbors.

To read more about this experience, visit this link.

<https://fullplateclub.com/club-blog/f/national-attention-storytelling-superstar-features-mowwsd>



SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM

Every Monday, Seth Malott, a real estate agent in the Rapid City area of South Dakota, delivers meals to 14 seniors in the region.

In 2013, Seth felt a calling to serve his community in a more meaningful way.

“I was looking to do something to get more involved in the community, and they were looking for drivers, so I signed up and have loved it ever since,” Seth says.

Twelve years later, he’s more motivated than ever to stay involved.



“When we talk about people going hungry, that’s not an individual problem,” Seth says. It’s a community problem that affects individuals.”



It’s a lesson that Seth works to instill in his 11-year-old son, who helps him deliver meals during the summer.

“I always try to encourage him to be proud of doing something for someone else for one hour out of the week,” Seth says.



Seth sees the importance of community in serving others every time a smile flashes across his son’s face when he delivers a meal or spends an extra moment with Roscoe, his favorite pet on their route — and in the many hands that go into making deliveries possible.



“What makes Meals on Wheels different than other volunteering programs is that it’s just a well-run program,” Seth says. “It’s an easy thing to do. You show up, you grab your meals and you deliver.”

Then, during a chance delivery, Seth witnessed firsthand the critical role a driver can play in the lives of homebound seniors.

Upon arriving for a delivery, Seth heard a cry for help. A senior had fallen in the shower. Seth had to act quickly. He immediately dialed for help, and someone was able to come and assist her.

This was the moment he realized volunteers provide much more than nutritious meals. They are crucial safety nets during times of distress.



“[Delivering meals] is also an opportunity to check up on [seniors],” Seth says. “There’s at least someone every day during the week checking in on these folks and making sure they’re okay. It’s not just delivering meals, it’s taking care of people.”

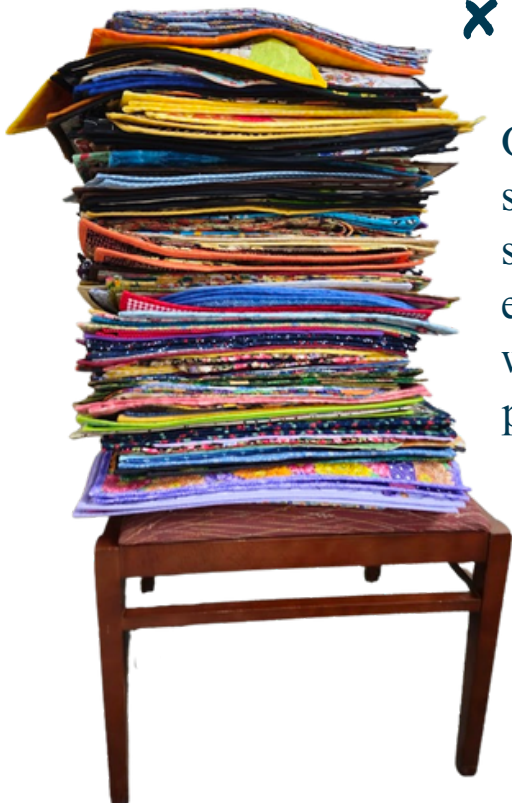
PLACE FOR GENEROSITY

In early November, Meals on Wheels received a surprise delivery from The Black Hills Quilters Guild - three large boxes containing 400 handmade placemats, each with unique design for each homebound senior in Rapid City.

These works of art were gifted to each senior and cherished for their craftsmanship, creativity, and serve as a reminder of the caring and generous neighbors of their community.

x 400!

On behalf of the seniors, we'd like to say **Thank You** to everyone involved with this wonderful project.



DIRECTOR'S YEAR IN REVIEW



2025 was a year dominated by funding delays and community resilience.

Seniors across western South Dakota were impacted by government shutdowns, program funding cuts and uncertainty brought on by factors out of their control.

But throughout all of this one thing remained certain; South Dakotans take care of their neighbors.

From the Federal Government shutdown, to the most drastic overhaul of the state program - that funds 40%+ of the costs of senior meals in South Dakota in the state's history, hundreds of seniors were impacted every day.

Meals on Wheels Western South Dakota reached out to the communities that our senior neighbors call home, and the communities answered our call. Businesses sponsored individual seniors in their community to ensure they were not alone and hungry. Families reached out and asked "What can we do to help?" Local governments rallied behind their senior neighbors and stepped up to care for them.

In 2026, Meals on Wheels' goal is to serve every senior that calls looking for help. Not next week or next month, but the next day. Hundreds of thousands of times last year, you made that possible. You immediately made a difference where they lived and provided what they needed to stay safely in their homes on their own.

2026 is looking to have even more challenges in delays in funding and a greater reduction in the number of meals that will be allowed to be funded to seniors across western South Dakota. But we have a mission.

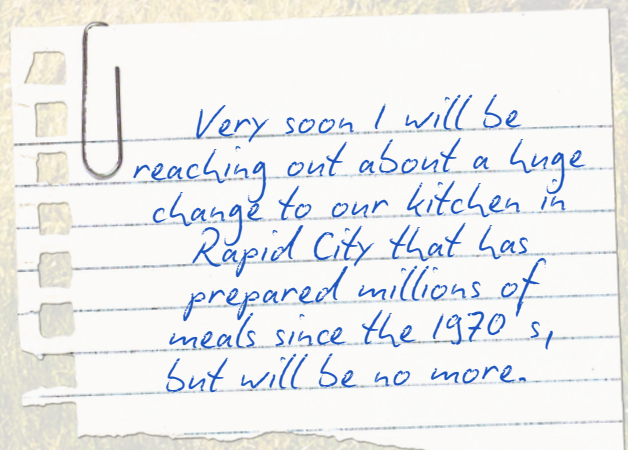
Meals on Wheels Western South Dakota's staff and volunteers are ready to serve meals, check on their neighbors every day, and keep a friend visiting their senior neighbors' homes, EVERY DAY.

I am envisioning South Dakota as a place where no senior is hungry, no senior is left alone, no senior has no one to turn to for help. Will you help ensure that vision comes true? Will you be part of the solution of senior hunger and isolation?

Join me and **Together, we can deliver!**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "George Larson II".

George Larson II
Executive Director



TRADITION, SACRIFICE + THE HEALING POWER OF A MEAL

As country boys growing up in Omaha, Nebraska, Barry Bettelyoun and his brothers learned to fish, ride horses, shoot rifles and fashion bows and arrows out of red willow.

Those early experiences cultivated a deep connection to the land. Those connections, in addition to humility, sacrifice, service and tradition, are foundational tenets of the Lakota Nation.



Barry, a proud veteran who joined the Marine Corps at the age of 18 in 1980 and served multiple tours of duty in the Middle East, recognizes these same traits in Meals on Wheels.



Barry, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's three years ago at the age of 60, knows firsthand the transformative power of a nutritious meal.

"Humility comes in droves," Barry says, of his daily fight against the disease that caused him to experience rapid weight loss — dropping 60 pounds, a diminished appetite and severe imbalance.

"It slowed me down," Barry says. "I had to learn how to tie my shoes and dress again."

Before Meals on Wheels, Barry, who lives on a fixed income and jokingly describes himself as a terrible cook, survived on a steady diet of microwaveable meals. Barry's doctor knew nutrition was crucial to managing the disease and suggested he try Meals on Wheels.

The meals were a game-changer.

“I’m doing better, I’m gaining weight and I can honestly say that Meals on Wheels had a lot to do with that, because that’s what my body needed, and I didn’t know it.”



Thanks to Meals on Wheels, which he says “makes life a lot simpler,” he’s gained 40 pounds and learned to love beets for the first time in his life.



“I found out how good [a healthy] diet is and how much of a difference it can make having extra vitamins,” Barry says of the nutritious meals his nephew, Dalton, a volunteer with Meals on Wheels, delivers to his door.

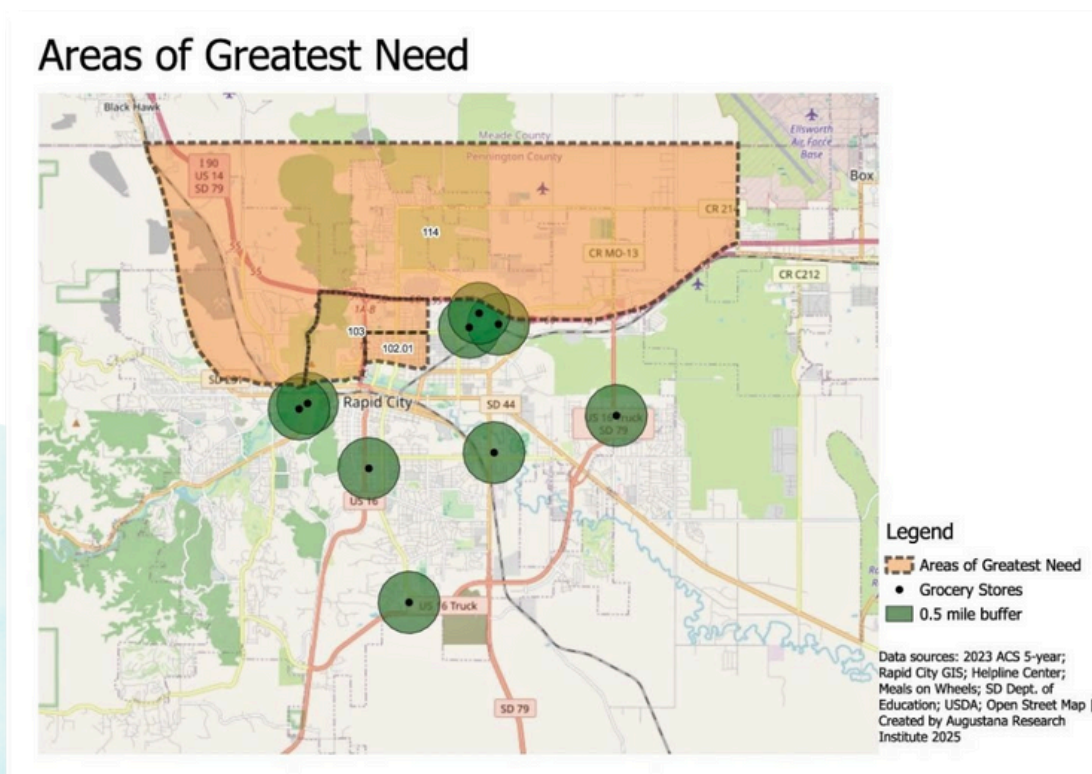
Recent cuts to the organization’s funding threaten to end Barry’s home-delivered meals. Despite this, Barry remains hopeful, though uncertain, that kindness will win out.

“Sometimes it’s hard because you don’t have [enough] meals,” Barry says. “You can’t feed everybody. But you got people that care here, and they want to help.”

That’s the Lakota Way.

NEW STUDY REVEALS...

September 2025 saw the public release of Black Hills Area Community Foundation's commissioned 2024 Augustana study outlining Rapid City's food access barriers and recommended actions.



According to the study, an estimated 33,702 Rapid City residents live in a food desert—that's over a third of people in Rapid City are living in areas with both low incomes and limited access to supermarkets.

Transportation emerged as a massive barrier exacerbating this issue. In the area between Anamosa Street and I-90—one of the city's most food-insecure areas—approximately one in five households don't have a car.

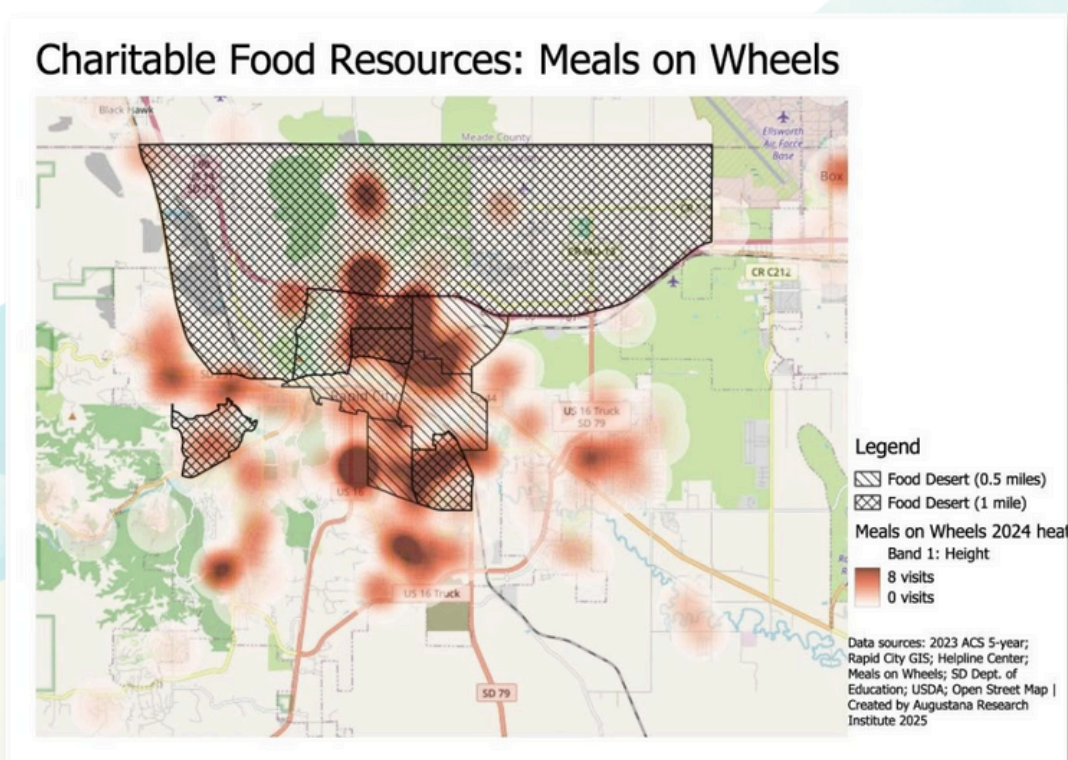
As one veteran told researchers:

"Acquiring food, it's pretty bad because it usually takes about half a day... The bus starts at six, they end at six. But the places you gotta go start at nine and they close at four, that's your window."

Stigma continues to compound these challenges. One older adult admitted,

"Just embarrassment, I guess, is the biggest thing. It's having to go like that, get help. And I'm not a person that likes to ask people for help much. I mean, I'd rather struggle sometimes than ask for help."

These stigmas are often why we hear from concerned friends, family members, doctors, or neighbors rather than the seniors themselves.



Many problems were validated through this study, while also giving much insight on how the community can address them. It's not just data—it's a roadmap for addressing real human needs in our community. And it's a reminder that behind every statistic is a neighbor making impossible choices about something as basic as food.



To read a full summary, visit this article: Key Barriers to Food Access in Rapid City Identified With Study Commissioned by BHACF

<https://bhacf.org/key-barriers-to-food-access-in-rapid-city-identified-with-study-commissioned-by-bhacf/>



MEALS THAT KEEP DAWN AT HOME + CLOSE TO NATURE

Born in 1956 in Duluth, Minnesota, Dawn Erickson lived an “idyllic life” with her family.

Dawn’s parents passed on a love of the outdoors to their children through frequent camping trips and regular adventures exploring the Great Lakes, Canada and the Western United States.



Years later, she’s settled in a quaint trailer, tucked away in the wilderness, 12 miles from the city of Lead, South Dakota. At 69, Dawn’s happy place is where she can watch the morning unfold, enjoy visits from elk, deer, and mountain lions, and spend time with her dog, Barney.

Despite her health challenges, thanks to Meals on Wheels Western South Dakota, which she calls “miracle workers,” Dawn, a stroke and lung cancer survivor, can stay in her home and eat nutritious meals — a reality that once felt like an impossibility.



“The first time they walked in with this huge crate of all these meals for one week, it was amazing,” Dawn says.

Today, she receives a weekly delivery of meals every Tuesday.

The meals are not only healthy, but also offer a wide variety of options and familiar smells that recall memories of the family meals from Dawn’s childhood.



“I’m so grateful that this has come into my life,” Dawn says.

“I can’t tell you what a difference it’s made not living out of a can or on frozen pizza.”



“Meals on Wheels makes it possible for me to stay home and still be independent and nourished,” Dawn says.

Dawn cherishes being in her home, where she can “play her music as loud as she wants,” read her mystery novels, be with Barney and take in nature.



“Everybody wants to stay in their own home, but it seems that for so many, it is impossible,” Dawn says.

“There’s nowhere in the world that I would wish to be other than right where I am, and Meals on Wheels helps make that possible.”



YOUR IMPACT

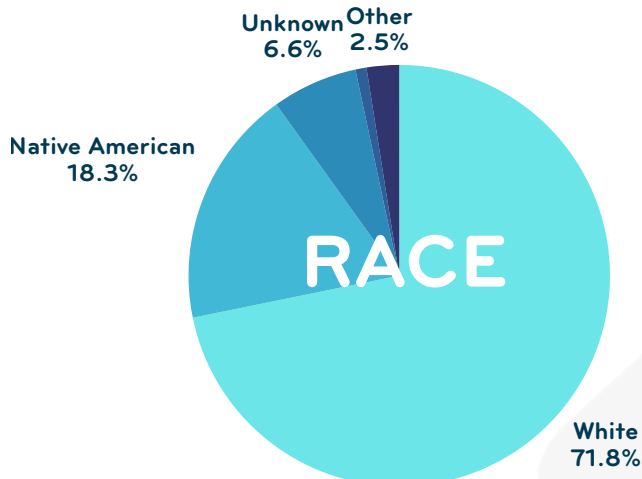
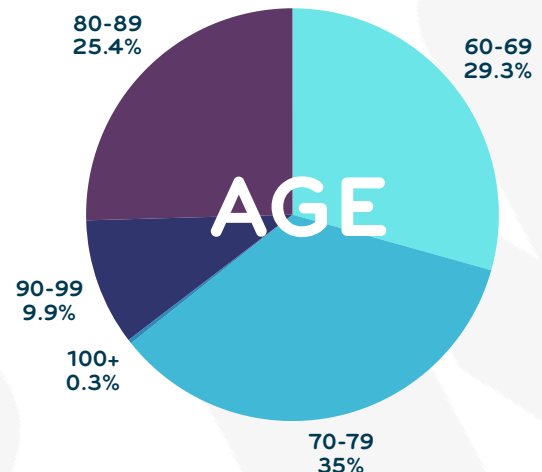


2,378

WESTERN SD SENIORS
SERVED IN 2025



1 IN 5 SENIORS SERVED
ARE VETERANS

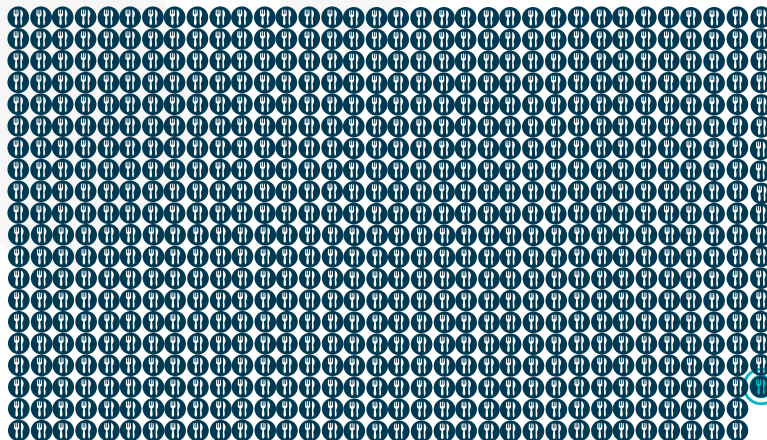


338,887

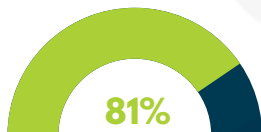
MEALS SERVED IN 2025

2.7 MIL
OZ
OF FRUITS + VEGETABLES

1.3 MIL
OZ
OF LEAN PROTEIN



OF HOME DELIVERED MEAL PARTICIPANTS:



say the meals help them
FROM GOING HUNGRY



say the meals help them
LIVE INDEPENDENTLY



say the meals help them
EAT HEALTHIER

PATRICIA MAY: HOPE + HEALING THROUGH FOOD AND COMMUNITY



For Native American Elder Patricia May, a 40-year resident of Martin, South Dakota, change (and health hardship) are constants in her life.

In 1983, after a back injury that continues to cause chronic pain, Patricia traded in her Harley-Davidson XLCR cafe racer for a walker.

Seven years later, Patricia contracted the H1N1 influenza virus, commonly known as the “swine flu,” forcing her into early retirement.

Then, three years ago, sepsis struck, resulting in a three-month hospital stay, during which her trailer was looted and burned to the ground and her car was stolen.

After being released, Patricia moved in with her daughter, but struggled with her independence.

Homebound, living on a limited budget, and struggling with the lingering effects of sepsis and kidney failure, Patricia had just enough strength to make it to the kitchen, brew coffee and use the microwave to cook.



She turned to Meals on Wheels Western South Dakota which began delivering meals to her door five days a week.

“It was receiving meals that kept me healthy,” Patricia says.

After 19 months, she received an electric scooter, and with prayer, she let go of loss and accepted “the blessing of a new beginning.”

With the help of the nutritious meals provided by her local Meals on Wheels congregate dining site, she’s finding spiritual and physical healing and valuable connection with other elders.

“When you have a cup of energy, a cup of strength and limited mobility, your microwave is almost your best friend,” Patricia says. “Having the meals delivered to me was like a blessing.”



Patricia also finds a quiet corner at the community center to engage in her favorite activities, including making jewelry out of horse hair, beading, and quill work.

Patricia offers part of a traditional Lakota saying, Čhaŋté Wašté, which translates to “good heart,” to honor the work of the Meals on Wheels community dining site.



“If it’s not from the heart, it’s not the same. And here feels like from the heart.”

PARTNERSHIP TO PROVIDE

In October of 2025, Meals on Wheels Western South Dakota partnered with Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership (ICAP) to support seniors through the largest statewide changes to senior nutrition in program history.

Starting October 1st with just a few weeks notice, the South Dakota Department of Human Services/LTSS reallocated funding for home-delivered meals in select communities—including Sturgis, Hot Springs, Edgemont, Lemmon, and Martin—to ICAP, which now provides once-per-week frozen Meal Packs in partnership with Feeding South Dakota.

Throughout the transition, we worked closely with ICAP to communicate clearly with seniors and caregivers, coordinate local outreach, and bridge any gaps with surplus meals so no senior went without food.

Thanks to sustained advocacy by legislators and community partners, nearly every community served has remained funded under Title III-C, and Meals on Wheels continued congregate and Grab & Go meals in affected areas—along with private pay options for those preferring our traditional daily delivery model.

We're grateful for ICAP's commitment to our shared mission and for the dedication of our volunteers and donors. Together, we continued feeding 63 communities while strengthening a regional network committed to senior nutrition.

Our shared promise remains unchanged: to care for our neighbors with dignity, connection, and dependable nutrition—every day, across Western South Dakota.



**TOGETHER,
WE CAN DELIVER.**

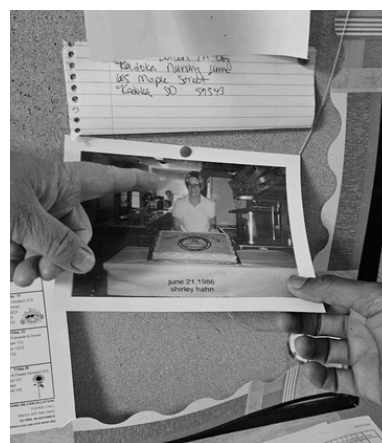


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