



Meals on Wheels
Southern Highlands

Newsletter

Spring 2020

There's a Spring in our step, turning challenges into positives!

Our volunteers never missed a beat

After all that's happened during 2020 we feel we're finally turning the corner. Out of adversity has come some amazing changes for the better and a few exciting initiatives. You could say there's a bit of a spring in our step.

But first, we'd like to once again thank all our volunteers, the very heart of the community and Meals on Wheels Southern Highlands. Thank for your help and assistance with meeting the COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions so we were able to continue providing our vital service. We've seen an increase in the demand for our service and consequently the number of clients we've been serving. We're now in the process of working out how our much missed over 70s volunteers can safely join us again. We'd like to thank all our new volunteers for bridging the gap, and also for following our COVID-19 plan, undergoing temperature checks on your arrival, sanitising and using gloves for each different client and continuing to maintain your social distance. We're pleased to be a COVID Safe registered business and are continuing to review and update our safety plans.

New phones with CareApp – granted!

We're very appreciative of the over \$5,000 Council Community Grant we received. This enabled us to purchase six iPhones specifically for volunteers to use on the six different daily delivery runs. The main benefit of these phones is we can install the CareApp, which helps us monitor and record the wellbeing of each of our clients when volunteers make a delivery. The phones also make it easier to communicate with the office, get directions to clients' homes (very important!) and thanks to 'messaging' missed calls are a thing of the past. This grant enables us and our volunteers, our most valuable assets, to once again deliver much more than just a meal.



CareApp – more than just an app

CareApp is a powerful communication and engagement platform for aged care providers. It brings providers, residents, carers and families together to build a wonderful care community and support seniors to love the way they live.

Safety & wellbeing checks

Just like a friend or neighbour, a Meals on Wheels volunteer is able to keep an eye on and occasionally help out vulnerable people within the community. Often our

**More
than just
a meal**

volunteers are the only daily point of contact for meal recipients, so they're well placed to help monitor an individual's wellbeing.

Quick & easy solution

When a volunteer delivers a meal, they can quickly and easily do a wellbeing check using the CareApp. Ten seconds is all it takes. This information is then available in real time for Meals on Wheels service staff and families or other key members of a person's support network, all via the CareApp mobile application. In a very short space of time it can alert if someone needs help, or reassure us and families that a loved one is ok.

Powerful storytelling through data

In today's competitive environment for attracting customers and gaining funding, it's no longer enough to rely on observation, anecdotal stories or informed guesswork. Having evidenced based data, such as that collected from the CareApp, can provide powerful and compelling stories and deeper insights into helping us improve our service for our clients and better support them, their family, friends and the community. Participants can all rest assured CareApp observes all the privacy rules governing people's personal information.

The value of our observant volunteers

Preventing hip fractures begins with preventing falls. The positive news is, as many as one third of falls are preventable. A visiting Meals on Wheels volunteer may notice things such as a blown light globe creating poor visibility, a person unsteady on their feet or they may even report dizziness. These simple but powerful casual observations could very easily prevent a fall. With the CareApp, these issues can be reported immediately so the appropriate action can be taken sooner rather than later.

CareApp bridges the communications gap between families and aged care providers. It provides a personalised and reassuring window into the care and wellbeing of loved ones, all in a secure and private online community. It also provides a great social benefit to the person being cared for, in supporting their wellbeing and quality of life. Another significant benefit is it can result in substantial savings for the health care system.



National Meals on Wheels Day

On 26 August we recognised our dedicated volunteers for National Meals on Wheels Day. They truly stepped up to help protect the health and wellbeing of vulnerable Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the first COVID-19 diagnoses came to light, many Meals on Wheels volunteers aged 70 and over were recommended to self-isolate for their own safety, while younger volunteers stood up to support their communities.

Meals on Wheels NSW CEO, Les MacDonald says "National Meals on Wheels Day recognises the outstanding contribution of our wonderful volunteers, who ensure older Australians remain nourished and safe at home every day. It has been an uncertain last 12 months, with bushfire devastation and now COVID-19. We offer gratitude and thanks to all of our 35,000 volunteers in NSW, and the growing band of individuals and organisations that have come on board who continue to support us. Their efforts have made us stronger and more focussed than ever, and today we celebrate their contribution to our service".

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal Government provided vital additional funding which allowed Meals on Wheels services to continue delivering nutritious meals to an increased number of vulnerable members of the community.

"We are so thankful to the Government for supporting us during this uncertain time through the increase in funding... They recognised and reinforced the essential role our service plays in ensuring food security for people in our community," Meals on Wheels Southern Highlands Manager Debbie Smith said.

Locally, the number of our clients has nearly doubled. We felt very blessed that a great number of additional volunteers helped us during this much needed time. Since March we delivered over 14,000 main meals, more than 3,500 desserts, nearly 700 soups, over 100 sandwiches and 350 salads as well as 88 shopping services. The need is still great and additional volunteers are always welcome.

"Thank you so much for continuing to deliver our meals through this challenging time. It's so nice to see people come to the door with meals, a smile and a chat. It has been the highlight of the pandemic for us. Not sure what we would have done without you," Client Don.

"Thank you to all the lovely volunteers, for always making sure we are ok and not letting us go without. Also, a big thanks for the special extra fruit and things we have been getting," Client David.

Meals on Wheels Australia President, Sharyn Broer says Meals on Wheels Southern Highlands and their volunteers have demonstrated immense resilience through the pandemic, however, the ongoing sustainability of the service is so important.

Recently the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck MP acknowledged the inequitable distribution of funding and advised Meals on Wheels Australia of an upcoming funding review for meal service providers within the next 12 months.

"We are pleased the Government has recognised the problem, however, our concerns remain about the timing of the review and the impact this will have on services that are already struggling to remain financially viable," Mrs Broer said

Volunteering, much more than you think.

Our wonderful volunteer Faye is using her great writing skills and experience to assist with adding blogs to our website. This is her first instalment and it's great to have the inside scoop on volunteering and what a great experience it is to do something new, different and valuable.

"So after about six months of volunteering in the Meals on Wheels production kitchen, I had to conclude that my arthritic hands and ageing back were not conducive to a 5-hour shift of energetic cooking.

But Debbie, manager extraordinaire of the Southern Highlands Meals on Wheels, wouldn't let me stop there. She immediately started offering me delivery shifts. Eager to help, I signed up for a shift one fine autumn morning. When I pulled up to the delivery station, all I saw was a row of large blue freezer boxes, each accompanied by a clipboard and pen. On the clipboard was a list of names, addresses, phone numbers and specific delivery notes for the clients on my run.

Very different from the production kitchen which has an extraordinary array of fresh food, frozen food, dried food, packaged food staples, etcetera.

Same challenge though... can you find it? Enough eggs to make 100 Yorkshire puddings, number 47 on the street that only goes to 40... I reviewed the list and wondered if the addresses were in any kind of organised route. Okay, I loaded my box and my clipboard, set the GPS for the first address and off I went. Oh, is this what's on the other side of the high school! That was my first

delivery discovery, that I would go into corners of the highlands I never knew existed. Excellent!

Triple check the address, triple check the name, grab (after triple checking) the appropriate bag from within the blue freezer box, and knock on the door. My second delivery discovery was that the client never ever fails to smile when they receive their bag of goodies, deserts, salads, main meals, or the special customised combo. As autumn progressed to winter, those smiles became more welcoming to keep me warm.

The morning went on as my first three clients were in the same block of flats, then out to the other



side of town, then out to one of the furthestmost parts of the Southern Highlands, and then back to base. Gave back the bag, gave back the clipboard with its list of clients annotated with comments ranging from all good to requires yarn for knitting

Interested in becoming a Volunteer?

Contact Debbie on Tel: 4869 4032

beanies to didn't answer phone, didn't answer knock on the door, no car in the driveway... (all followed up by the beautiful MOW staff).

Discovery three was that the variety of clients is almost as wide as the variety of dishes prepared in the kitchen. Old, young, healthy, infirm, couples, singles, with dog or cat, without...

Then Covid came along. Each clipboard came with a hygiene control protocol, a box of plastic gloves and a bottle of sanitiser. Remember when sanitiser was impossible to find? Thankfully Meals on Wheels did not run out. The number of clients grew not only by the vulnerable people who didn't want to go out but by the number of volunteers who had become vulnerable and now needed the service they had formerly helped to provide. I started doing different days and different shifts in different locations, meeting different people. One client asked me to put her delivery on the table on her small patio so we could have contactless delivery. One other invited me to come in and have a coffee before I continued on my way. Once again, the variety of responses to Covid was endless.

And I'd say that's been a key to my volunteering so far. Variety, which is not surprising when you're dealing with both food and people. And, as a person who thrives on variety, I hope to be helping Meals on Wheels Southern Highlands for a long time to come."

Dietician, the thumbs up and a few tips

As mentioned previously, our recipes and meals have been reviewed by a dietician, double checking our meals are in line with the National Meals Guidelines. It's great knowing that not only do the meals taste great but they're good for you too. As we look to change to our Summer menu

we're inviting our clients to select their type and number of meals, desserts, salads, sandwiches, freshly made biscuit boxes and pies. Here are some other tips from the dietician about nutrition, ensuring we're eating the right foods and enough of them.

"Older people have different nutritional needs, especially higher requirements of protein, calcium and Vitamin D than younger adults. Eating a wide variety of foods, with regular meals and snacks will help ensure you're getting all the nutrients your body needs for good health. Did you know that weight loss is not a normal part of getting older? In fact, carrying a few extra kilograms is actually beneficial as you get older, it means your body has some reserves to draw from if you get sick. If you're losing weight it could mean you're not eating enough. For most older people weight loss is not recommended (unless done with professional supervision) ..." From the 'Living healthily beyond 65 years of age' brochure.



More
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ACT - A Collaborative Toolkit – preparing older people for emergencies

A Meals on Wheels community initiative

NSW Meals on Wheels has been working with first responders, such as the RFS, Council, Red Cross and other emergency services, to see how the community and individuals within our community can be better prepared for emergencies and disasters, such as fires, floods and weather events.

What we've jointly come up with is 'ACT', which stands for 'A Collaborative Toolkit – preparing older people for emergencies'. It's a discussion tool that's full of simple and easy to use tips, tools, thought starters and strategies to help older people think about and create their own individual plan in an emergency. It also provides referral pathways to emergency services.

As this is a new initiative, over the next few weeks we'll be working out the best way to deliver and have a conversation about the toolkit to interested recipients. So be prepared for a phone call or a knock on the door, we'd love to chat and see how the toolkit can help you. The more you're prepared for an emergency, the less stress when an emergency approaches; the quicker, easier and safer you can move through the event; and the more manageable the journey of recovery.

If you'd like a sneak peak, visit <https://mealsonwheels.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ACT-Collaborative-Toolkit.pdf>.

Good food news – spread the word!

Keep an eye out for our promotions on taxis and an ear out on the radio. We want everyone in the community to know our meals are different to what they've been in the past and what they might expect. What's on offer is fresh, delicious food that can be ordered and delivered in a flexible manner. Everything's cooked locally in our commercial class kitchen. So much more than just a meal. We offer social interaction, a friendly chat and a catch up, wellbeing monitoring, and generally checking in to see how the clients are feeling and dealing with things. We'd love to spread the word, so if you know of any opportunities for us to tell others about our great service please let us know. As always, sharing our menus and recommending us to others is always appreciated.

Message from the Manager



Well Spring has sprung and the sense of new life and flowers bursting into sight and the beautiful warmer days give a real sense of joy and hope. It's been a challenging few months for lots of people in many different ways. I'm really pleased to say we've managed to consistently cook and deliver meals each week to each and every client who's needed them. A big thankyou to our staff who've been very flexible in adapting to changing situations and requirements. Also, a huge shout out to our volunteers, those who've been responsive to the call to step down for a period of time and those who've risen to the challenge taking on more runs or joining us for the first time. I'm proud to be part of such a great community who are so caring and supportive of the need of our clients.

During this time we've farewelled Jeanette. We thank her for all she's done with Meals on Wheels Southern Highlands over the last 7 years and are sorry to see her go. We wish her all the best with her recovery from the injury caused by her accident.

We have a number of exciting projects coming up. The new iPhone with the CareApp and the ACT toolkits will both be excellent additions to our offering. We have new solar panels, plus some internal and external areas have been painted. Anyone who visited us recently would have seen the big hole in the ground. We had to replace our failed grease trap, which caused a few issues in our kitchen, not the least of which was not being able to use our sinks for four weeks! A whole hearted thankyou to the Wingecarribee Adult Day Centre for enabling us to continue operating our kitchen by using their laundry sinks to prewash dishes before they went through the dish washer. Again, thanks to our staff and amazing kitchen volunteers for their flexibility at this time and always maintaining the highest food safety standards throughout our changes and challenges.

Speaking of amazing volunteers, we thank Rod and Merril for taking on the volunteer role of collecting donations in the mornings from the Aldi supermarkets, bringing them back for us to distribute in hampers to our clients and to use in the kitchen. It's great to know we're reducing the amount of food going into landfill and also helping others around us. If this is something you might be interested in helping us achieve, we're looking for a few more volunteers in this role. The donations need to be collected from Aldi from 7 to 8.15am each morning with some lifting involved. It's a very rewarding way to reduce waste and help with food security for vulnerable people in our community. What's also fantastic is anything we're unable to utilise within our organisation we can share with a number of other groups and individuals, so nothing is wasted. Working together with our community is at the heart of what this is all about.

Our board have been adapting to all the changes as well. With the use of Zoom and other technology, we were fortunate to receive some additional funding as the government recognised the importance and need for Meals on Wheels and the challenges we're facing. With this and other factors it was decided to forgo a price increase this year and absorb the rising food and productions costs in other ways. We may not be able to do this in the future but we're very pleased we don't have to adjust costs this financial year. Our Annual General Meeting is on 16 October, please let us know if you would like to

attend as we need to ensure we have a COVID Safe meeting.

We look forward to our new Summer menu starting in October and are being positive about what lies ahead. We really feel we've turned a corner and are pleased we've been able to use this year's challenges as a springboard for improving our service. As always, if you have any suggestions, concerns or ideas please don't hesitate to get in touch with us. You know we love to hear from you.

Kind Regard's



Debbie Smith

