

Newsletter

Winter 2020

Challenge brings out the best in you

Thank you for taking care of one another

We'd like to thank everyone for their understanding and support during this challenging time. We're constantly checking with government guidelines and our Aged Care Quality Review best practice, we thank you all for heeding the guidelines and implementing our new processes. We thank our staff for their continued training and increased hygiene measures, and working staggered shifts so we'd be able to continue our important service if there was ever an issue or a case of the virus within our organisation. Great effort and commitment.

We thank the volunteers for the same increased measures including hand sanitiser and gloves. Also, a big thank you to our wonderful clients, you've adapted beautifully to our new non-contact delivery service. Working together like this will see us all come through this stronger and 'closer' together in the future.

Wheels for Meals are rolling!

I'm so very pleased to announce we finally have got our refrigerated vehicle. Many thanks go to Stephen Jones MP for Whitlam and the Stronger Community Builders Grant, Pru Goward and Wendy Tuckerman MP for Goulburn from the Community Building Partnership Program. Thanks also to many local sponsors as well, including Southern Highlands Physio, Highlands Electrical Services, Moss Vale Community Pharmacy, Allan McKay Auto, BDCU Alliance Bank, Pie Fest, Bundanoon Good Yarn, Ashcroft Supa IGA, Richard Cox Pty Ltd, Bowral Lions Club, plus a few lovely individuals who also contributed. All your contributions paid off, and our very much needed refrigerated van is already and rolling.

The van has proved itself invaluable. It's been busy daily picking up donated items, enabling us to provide a few extra goodies, when we can, with deliveries. It's been a godsend for catering and other deliveries too. In fact, after Stephen Jones our very own MP used our van to make some deliveries to some of our clients he made a Facebook video praising our service and new van.

To give our van a proper Meals on Wheels identity, we're currently working with the fantastic Spartan Creative sign writers who'll weave their artistic magic over the van. Keep an eye out for it all around the shire and give us a wave if you spot us.



More
than just
a meal

Seniors Directory delivered

We're pleased to have received copies of the senior's directory and have distributed them to all our clients. We still have a number in stock, so if you missed out or if you need additional copies for friends or family, please get in touch and we'll deliver them for you.

Donations – thank you, thank you, thank you!

We've so many people to thank for donations over the last few months, we can't say thank you enough. Our most sort after donation was the toilet rolls (no surprises there)! If you told us 6 months ago how excited people would be to receive toilet paper no one would have believed you. Woolworths gave us 4 roll packs of toilet paper for each of our clients. Not only that, they actually donated to every Meals on Wheels service across NSW, so a huge thanks to Woolworths.

We also received food items from a number of businesses that were themselves adversely affected by closures and restrictions. A massive thanks to Mittagong RSL, the outdoor education group, The Hermitage, Aldi and others. We've recently received Dettol hand sanitiser and Glen 20 from their parent company Reckitt Benckiser Group of Companies who are donating a million dollars' worth of stock to Meals on Wheels across the country. This is such a generous donation; thank you seems hardly adequate. It's so encouraging to see big companies are recognising the importance of Meals on Wheels and supporting us.

A big thank you to a number of local pharmacies and their staff who assisted us when getting sanitiser was really tough. Thanks Moss Vale Community Pharmacy, Capital Chemist and Bowral Amcal Chemist Bowral.

To everyone, we really hope you know how much we appreciate everything you've done.

Extra at your service

We've had to change our service delivery method quite drastically with some organisations, like the Wingecarribee Adult Day Care Centre (WADCC). Due to restrictions, they can't hold their social groups which means they don't need any meals. However, in conjunction with WADCC staff we're now offering a complimentary shopping service, access to books, and even an activity packs with puzzles and crosswords. If you, or someone you know, may be interested in receiving this service, please give us a call.





Valued volunteers, of all ages

Firstly, we want to acknowledge the dedication and support of our long-term volunteers and let you know we recognise your heart to serve and commitment to our clients. I think the most challenging part of the last few weeks for me personally has been needing to uphold the government guidelines and advise all our volunteers over 70 to stay home at this time. I know a few have jokingly said they've been retrenched. I want to reiterate this is just a temporary measure. We need you all back as soon as it's in the best interests of everybody and falls in line with the government guidelines. Please hang in there!



We've been fortunate a number of younger people have appreciated the situation with our older volunteers and have taken up the charge to be our relief volunteers in the kitchen and on delivery runs. Welcome to the team. I love that we have a mix of uni students, teachers, and even a P plater delivering meals. This is such a testament to our amazing local community. Those permitted to help have really rallied and supported the community, including the older volunteers, at this time.



Thank you to each and every one of you for putting others first by either actively

volunteering or actively staying home. Some of our volunteers who are at home have been calling clients to check in with them, which has been a mutually beneficial experience for both parties. If this is something you, as a client or a volunteer, would like to be part of please call us at the office. Going forward, thank you to BDCU for your corporate volunteering about to begin again and for offers from NRMA and Peppers as well.

Additional government funding

Another thing I'm really pleased to announce is we're receiving some additional government funding. Meals have now been identified as a high priority, especially with the impact of restrictions and panic buying, which has challenged meal services across the country. It's wonderful to know our services have been identified as essential and important. We'd have to agree!

New Winter Menu

I'm pleased to announce we'll be starting our Winter menu on 1st June. We're sorry for the delay, but our priority has been to maintain our current service in these trying times. We were also busy catering for the additional 50 new clients we have gained in just a short 3-week period. So, if our lovely clients could return their menu preferences as soon as possible, we'll update your individual meals plans and start delivering in June. Thank you once again for your patience and understanding.



Interviews with our Volunteers

Lucy Donkin is one of Meals on Wheels Southern Highlands' most seasoned volunteers. At 86, Lucy tells how volunteering helps her live a fulfilled life, and why she feels giving back is so important.

"I've been volunteering since I was a 12 year old schoolgirl so you could say it's in my genes. During World War II, my family belonged to the Methodist Church and every Friday after school, I would go with a friend to collect money for war bonds for the Australian Government. The houses had a sticker on their windows saying, 'this is a war bond house'. My father was away at the war so it was my family's way of helping out.

I started volunteering at Meals on Wheels in 1995, about 12 months after I moved to Moss Vale from Sydney. Tony, my late husband, and I moved here because our daughter and our two young grandchildren were already here and we wanted to be closer to them.

When I first started out with Meals on Wheels, I was one of the people who went around to collect the payment for the meals, when we still did it that way and then I went on to delivering meals. I didn't know many people when I first arrived in the area but I soon got to know lots of people and visited lots of homes, and over the 30 years I've made some terrific friends, although it's funny because sometimes people don't recognise you out of context.

We used to deliver meals to a lovely gentleman called Mr Lockwood and he always loved to have a cup of tea and a chat with us whenever we arrived to deliver his meals. I don't think he ever had many visitors. One day I went into the post office and he came in so I said, 'hello Jack, how are you today?' Well, he looked at me and said, 'I don't know you, do I?' And I said, 'yes you do Jack. I deliver your meals every week!' And then we both laughed because it was pretty funny but he wasn't used to seeing me out of his house, and in the post office instead.

I am 86 and although I haven't been delivering during Covid-19, I hope to get back to it soon. I know I'll have to give it up one day but not for a bit I hope. I am in good health, and I really think volunteering has helped keep me fit. I also volunteer with the Bowral Hospital Auxiliary and the Uniting Church and I think giving back to your community helps with everything really. It helps your outlook, it helps you keep an open mind and hopefully it does you, and the people you help, a lot of good too."

Written by Alex Speed

Interested in becoming a Volunteer?

Contact Debbie on Tel: 4869 4032

High school teacher Fiona McEvoy is enjoying a break from the classroom by repaying the help Meals on Wheels' gave to her Mum.

When Fiona McEvoy applied for six months long service leave from her career as an English teacher at Chevalier College, she had plans to travel to Europe.

But the Covid-19 pandemic swiftly put paid to those ideas. With free time on her hands, Fiona looked closer to home to do something new.

"When my mother was ill a few years ago, she used Meals on Wheels and she found it fantastic, and my sisters and I always said if we had a chance we'd like to pay the kindness back."

Understanding the Covid-19 crisis may leave charities short of its older volunteers, Fiona got in touch with an application and started with Meals on Wheels after Easter.

"It was around the time that Meals on Wheels was asking its over 70 volunteers to stay at home due to the lockdown so I think I volunteered at the right time."

Fiona, who is happily at home in classrooms full of teenagers, says it makes a nice change of pace to be meeting more older residents of our community.

"I live in Colo Vale so I go into the Meals on Wheels office in Moss Vale on a Monday morning and then come back out my way and deliver to Welby, Hill Top and Colo Vale," says Fiona. "Then on a Friday I go back in and help Jacqui in the kitchen."

Jacqui Abbott is the head cook at Meals on Wheels where she works three days a week with up to 60 volunteers. Together, Jacqui and her team, which now includes Fiona, cook in the state of the art kitchen making nutritious, homemade meals to deliver to up to 150 elderly and disabled clients across the Highlands.

"We try extremely hard not to use anything ever from a bottle so even all our sauces are made from scratch," says Jacqui, "and all dietary requirements and food preferences are catered for."

Fiona says her recent time in the Meals on Wheels kitchen has been a happy one, learning new cooking skills and meeting new people.

"There is always so much going on in the kitchen that it's been very interesting and I've met some other lovely people volunteering," says Fiona.

"It's also very impressive the way Jacqui and her team work to tailor the meals to their clients request, like those with food allergies, and I never knew Meals on Wheels does great catering for local businesses and events. When I get back into the class, I'm going to suggest Chevalier starts ordering Meal on Wheels' platters and the like for its staff meetings."

* View and order Meals on Wheels meals online as well as Meals on Wheels Community Catering for sit down lunches with hot three course meals as well as lunch, morning and/or afternoon tea. Prices start from \$4 a head. www.mealssouthernhighlands.org.au

Written by Alex Speed



When retired schoolteacher Margaret Hyde became ill, her loving son found a much needed helping hand in Meals on Wheels Southern Highlands.

When Margaret Hyde became ill recently with a nasty mouth infection, cooking, or even eating was the last thing on her mind.

“I had thought at first that maybe I would be able to eat vegies but it just hurt too much to even put the spoon in my mouth,” says Margaret, 85.

“And I really didn’t feel up to cooking either so in the end I didn’t eat for about three or four days.”

Thankfully Margaret’s son, who lives in Murwillumbah in north-eastern NSW, is in constant contact with his mum and soon realised all was not well in Moss Vale.

“He usually flies down and visits every month or so but because we are all in lockdown and the borders are closed, he wasn’t able to come. But we speak three times a week, and when he realised I hadn’t been eating, he got in touch with Meals on Wheels,” explains Margaret. “And everything changed for me after that.”

Meals on Wheels immediately started delivering Margaret’s home cooked meals, each one pureed to make eating possible. Margaret says she was totally gobsmacked.

“They pureed everything for me and I really couldn’t believe they would go to so much trouble. It was just so kind and I simply cannot thank them enough for the delicious meals and going the extra mile for me. I don’t think I could have been better looked after anywhere.”

Margaret is now well on her way to a full recovery and is looking forward to returning to life again, post illness and Covid-19.

“I love living in Moss Vale. I’ve been here for 30 years and have taught in primary schools all around the area including St. Paul’s, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Michael’s. Today I spend a lot of time volunteering with Vinnies in Moss Vale and I am friends with a lot of wonderful ladies who work there too.’

For the moment though, Margaret is enjoying chatting to her friends and neighbours, speaking to her son on the phone and taking walks around her town.

‘I think we are so lucky to live in the Southern Highlands. We have wonderful services such as doctors, ambulances, hospitals and of course, Meals on Wheels. It is simply wonderful.’

Written by Alex Speed



Message from the Manager

Well, what a year it's been so far. I hope you're coping and adapting as best as you can. Please remember, we're here if you need any assistance. If we can't help directly we can usually refer or assist with others who can, so please don't hesitate to get in touch.

I want to start by mentioning the wonderful staff we have here at Southern Highlands Meals on Wheels. They've adapted and adjusted with their hours, roles and all sorts of changes that have happened at a moment's notice. In all that, they have been incredibly supportive. I really couldn't do without them. They're always willing to do more and go above and beyond. From me to you, I thank you.

I also want to thank you all for the encouraging calls, notes and comments about how we're handling things and continuing our service. It's so nice to hear. I guess it feeds us and really helps us keep going, especially in these busy and challenging times.

As you can probably tell, I'm super pleased with our new van. We've worked so hard and for such a long time to get this vehicle. It's rather satisfying and the timing's great as we're receiving even more donations, which are so easy to pick up in the van. It's really helped with the day to day running, so thanks to everyone for your support and interest in our Wheels for Meals.

We're looking forward to creating a new normal and are taking the time to work through what that will look like. We have our strategic plan, but we've now experienced a new way of doing things, which we may continue to do if they have merit. If you have any suggestions or recommendations, we are always happy to hear from you.

As we get into the cooler months, remember you can order soups and pies as well as the meals. Just call us to start receiving meals or to add or change your order.

It's important to stay in touch with friends and relatives for positive mental health, we encourage you to call someone each day. If you have an issue with access or technology or if we can help please let us know.



Counselling options/support

Relationships Australia, a counselling service has specifically set up TIME 2 TALK, which offers free counselling/support for those impacted by Covid-19 right across NSW. If you feel isolated, anxious, or stressed in your household due to Covid-19 they're there to help. If abuse is happening, they can also offer strategies and prioritise your needs according to your individual situation. Feel free to contact them on 1300 022 966

CRANA Bush Support Services offers 24/7 free counselling service for Meals on Wheels staff/ volunteers and their families. Visit <https://crana.org.au/workforce-support/bush-support-services> for more details. Remember, help is there if you need it.

Usually at this point I'd be highlighting our next event. As we know events and gathering are not really possible at this time, however, I'd like to acknowledge National Volunteer Week. Although we can't gather our volunteers together I want to take the opportunity to thank them for all they do and what they bring to our service. We'll be looking at some creative ways to make this happen. So, if you want to write a note to our volunteers or assist us in some way to acknowledge them, please get in contact.

In wrapping up I encourage you to stay safe and well, to look after yourselves and others. Remember it's all about social distancing, not social isolating. So keep in touch, wash your hands well and often, and we look forward to restrictions lifting. Here's to a new normal we can all enjoy.

Kind Regards



Debbie Smith

