

# THE MEAL TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF MEALS ON WHEELS CENTRAL TEXAS



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## “Meals on Wheels Changed My Life Completely”

“If people don’t know what Meals on Wheels does, have them come to my house, I’ll show them.”

Verna Bennett doesn’t mince words when describing the positive impact our wide array of services has on her life.

Ms. Bennett, a 70-year-old Army veteran, depends on that assistance in order to live independently in the house she bought many years ago while working for Texas Instruments. A few years after that purchase, chronic arthritis crippled her body, leaving her homebound, unemployed, and alone.

That’s when Meals on Wheels Central Texas began providing her with our nutritious lunches delivered by caring volunteers. She soon became friends with several of the folks delivering her meals. “They are like my family and I trust them,” she says.

When the volunteers go to her

door these days, they walk up a concrete ramp our Home Repair program built recently. Now, on the rare occasions when Ms. Bennett leaves home, it’s much safer and easier for her to maneuver her walker.



*MOWCTX client Verna Bennett with her dog, Farley*

Things are safer inside the house as well. MOWCTX Home Repair installed a walk-in shower with safety bars, and ripped out old

carpet and replaced it with laminate flooring. “The walker runs smoothly over the new floors. I don’t have to worry about tipping over or falling,” she says.

MOWCTX also helps Ms. Bennett care for her dog, Farley. Because she’s homebound, most days the only people she sees are our volunteers when they deliver her lunch. So she and Farley spend a lot of quality time together. Our PALS program provides free pet food and basic veterinary care for the little guy. Ms. Bennett appreciates the assistance: “Taking care of him means a lot to me. I need him and he needs me. I need to be needed. Just to have someone to care for, even if it’s a little dog, it makes my world.”

Ms. Bennett says that world of hers has vastly expanded in recent months thanks to our Connecting Seniors with Technology (CST) pilot program. “Meals on Wheels called me and said they had

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## Austin Police Deliver Hot Meals and Warm Smiles

Meals on Wheels Central Texas client Ferlie Mackey worried a bit recently when she saw a police officer walking up her sidewalk.

“I thought ‘oh what did I do wrong’. But I don’t walk that well, so I couldn’t do too much wrong,” she recalls with a chuckle. It



*MOWCTX client Ferlie Mackey and Cpl. Chris Cato from the Austin Police Department*

turns out there was no cause for alarm; Corporal Chris Cato from the Austin Police Department was there to deliver one of our hot, nutritious lunches to Ms. Mackey.

The corporal and several of his fellow officers take time out of their busy schedules to serve as substitute Meals on Wheels volunteers. Substitutes fill in when regularly scheduled volunteers are unable to deliver their assigned route.

Cpl. Cato came up with the concept of cops carrying cuisine last year. “We (police officers) were getting a lot of negative attention in the media,” he says. So he floated an idea past his

chain of command: allow one officer to be a substitute Meals on Wheels volunteer at lunchtime every Friday. His superiors agreed to the plan.

Cpl. Cato currently shares the duty with eight other officers but he’s hoping to add ten more in the next year. “Doing this is just another way that (police) can actually talk to people – especially the ones we know are most vulnerable,” he says.

He and his fellow officers have certainly found a fan in Ferlie Mackey: “It’s good to see that they’re out in the community helping those that really need help.”

## Urge Congress to #SaveLunch!

Thousands of homebound older adults in Central Texas rely on MOWCTX for nutritious food and other life-sustaining services.

But federal funding for our agency and other MOW programs will be cut if the White House’s budget proposal is approved by Congress.

Help us rally support and call on Congress to fully fund Meals on Wheels before the September 30th deadline:

- Contact lawmakers who represent you in Congress and urge them to protect Meals on Wheels funding. Find their names and contact info by visiting: <http://bit.ly/FederalReps>
- Share a photo of an empty plate on social media and tag it “#SaveLunch” to show solidarity with millions of hungry seniors.



Please act now! Reduced federal funding will mean even more homebound seniors will go hungry.

**With your help, we can #SaveLunch!**

## “Meals on Wheels Changed My Life Completely” *(cont.)*

received a grant from the City of Austin and would I like to have one to use, and I said sure,” she recalls. We then provided her with weekly tutoring sessions on how to use the computer and access the internet. “It’s opened up a whole new world because I’m not confined here per se. I can go to the computer and go

places I’d never go,” she says. The computer and her newfound skills also allow her to Skype on a regular basis with her daughter and grandson who live in Odessa. “It’s just a tremendous thing for me, it’s just wow,” she says with excitement in her voice.

She uses the same tone when

talking about the many ways in which MOWCTX helps her maintain her independence: “Meals on Wheels stepped in and saw the need and took care of that for me. I wouldn’t have the quality of life without them helping me. Meals on Wheels changed my life completely.”