

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

A Publication of Meals On Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County



Maria and her 97-year-old mother, Nereyda, have been delivering meals together for the past five years!

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As we turn the page on the calendar to 2024, we find ourselves at a crucial juncture in the remarkable history of our organization. Having just celebrated our 50th anniversary of dedicated service to those in need, we now eagerly embark on the next chapter of our journey. This 2023 annual report serves as a reminder of our enduring commitment to compassion and care, values that define our organization as we navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Last year we announced the groundbreaking of a significant facility expansion, a testament to our dedicat-

ion to meeting the growing demand for our services in Tarrant County. Anticipated for completion by August of this year, this expansion will increase our capacity to serve the community well into the future.

As we set our sights on the horizon, we are not oblivious to the financial challenges that loom large. The escalating cost of food has increased our budget to unprecedented heights, exacerbated by the elimination of COVID-relief funding totaling nearly \$2 million. Yet, we face these challenges with unwavering optimism, knowing that there is nothing we cannot overcome with you by our side.

In 2023, our impact has been substantial, with 6,996 unduplicated clients receiving 1,352,492 life-saving meals. A dedicated corps of over 4,400 volunteers drove nearly 1.3 million miles, delivering not just meals but also a safety check and friendly hello to those we have the privilege to serve. These statistics, while impressive, only scratch the surface of the profound impact made in the lives of our clients.

While this report will certainly present financial metrics, it is more fundamentally a narrative of people in need and the selfless contributions made by individuals like you to improve lives. Our focus extends beyond the numbers to the human connections that are evident in a service organization like ours.

As we embark on this journey into the future, let us celebrate the milestones of the past while remaining steadfast in our dedication to serving those in need. Together, let's usher in a new era of hope, resilience, and boundless compassion as we make Tarrant County a caring place to grow old.

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

First and foremost, I want to thank you, our volunteers, donors, clients, board members, and staff of Meals On Wheels of Tarrant County. 2023 was an outstanding year for our organization as a whole. We celebrated 50 years of serving our homebound neighbors right here in Tarrant County. We've seen the organization grow from serving lunches to dozens of clients, to delivering nutritious, hot meals to approximately 7,000 clients annually over these past 50 years.

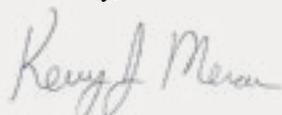
We have grown from preparing meals in a church kitchen to our wonderful facility in Haltom City, and throughout our history, we've never had a waiting list for our services. Over the years, we have expanded our services to add our HomeMeds program, Companion Pet Meals program, nutrition and wellness education, and continue to work with organizations throughout Tarrant County to ensure our clients have services that enhance their ability to remain in their homes.

We're making progress on our \$9.8 million building expansion, thanks to an ARPA grant from Tarrant County, and we're approximately 25% complete. We continue to review progress bi-weekly with our project team and are proud to report that we are still on budget with little time lost due to weather.

We continue to see explosive growth in requests for services and we are diligent in making certain that only those who meet our qualification requirements receive our services and that referrals are made to other organizations where they can get assistance if they don't meet our requirements. As stewards of your generous donations, we make every effort to ensure your money is spent wisely.

In closing, we want to thank all of our supporters in our community for your continued trust and belief in our mission to serve those in need in Tarrant County. I also want to thank our Board of Directors, volunteers and staff for their unwavering commitment to our mission and our clients.

Sincerely,



Kerry J. Mercer  
Chairman of the Board



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- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
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## DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

- |                                     |                   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
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# Two Guys Find Brotherly Love

*By Philip Gonzalez*

We all need a friend who we can call and talk to, maybe send a funny text or visit with when we're in need of company. While we would all like to have a special friend in our life, many people do not. Whether it's because we lost touch, they moved away, or maybe they're no longer with us, some of us are lonely.

Paul, a 68-year-old Meals On Wheels client, lost his wife in 2013 and has lived alone ever since. He suffers from various health issues that make him unable to drive, so he now relies on friends for rides to the doctor or church. After the death of his wife, Paul recalls coming home to an empty house and thinking to himself, "How am I going to make it?"

Paul has been receiving meals since March 2012 when his health declined and he could no longer drive or cook for himself. "Meals On Wheels has been a God send," he said, "but the Friend to Friend program has been an entirely new experience." Like many of our clients, Paul had grown accustomed to being alone and was admittedly nervous about meeting a new friend.



When people retire, they often look for ways to stay busy. Many join a church group, partake in social events or take up a new hobby. In the case of Dave Friant, he was called to volunteer. Five years ago, Dave decided to check out the Meals On Wheels Friend to Friend program and signed up as a volunteer friend. As fate would have it, Dave was paired with Paul. Every Monday morning at 10:30, Dave pays a visit to Paul's mother-in-law apartment in West Fort Worth. The two love to talk about the Philadelphia Eagles and Phillies (they're both from Philly).

Social isolation among seniors is a big problem. Many seniors live alone with little or no connection to the outside world. Like Paul, many are unable to drive, thus depriving them of social interactions. "Life without Dave would be so boring," Paul added. "Our visits take away the monotony of everyday life. I'm so thankful to have him in my life!"

Dave and his wife have been married over 50 years and even belong to a bowling league, but he can't imagine not having his weekly visits with Paul. "I get as much, if not more, out of the program. It means a lot to have that connection with Paul," he said.

The Friend to Friend program is designed to help combat the loneliness and isolation of our homebound clients. Volunteers are encouraged to build friendships with lonely clients by making weekly in-home visits. To ensure the safety of our clients, each Friend to Friend volunteer must pass a background check. After that, we will schedule you for an orientation class, match you with one of our clients needing a friend, and when the time comes, go with you to introduce you to your new friend. We require a 6-month commitment for this program, but the great news is you can do this on your own timeline.

If you would like more information about the program, please visit our website at [mealsonwheels.org/friend](http://mealsonwheels.org/friend) or call 817-258-6475.

**Based on the UCLA Loneliness Scale, 62% of program participants report an improvement in how often they feel they lack companionship.**

# PEBBLES STILL HAS A LOT OF LOVE TO GIVE

Meals On Wheels clients Janis and her 93-year-old mother think our agency is a “God send,” and they’re not the only ones in their household who sing our praises. Pebbles, a 9-year-old chihuahua that Janis rescued from the animal shelter, wags her tail when the volunteer arrives with dog food available through our Companion Pet Meals program. “Despite her age, Pebbles still has a lot of love to give,” Janis said. “I would be so lonely without her.”



Loneliness and isolation are big problems among older adults. Many of our clients have no visitors aside from the volunteers who deliver their meals, so they rely on a beloved pet for companionship. Through our Companion Pet Meals program, we supply dog and cat food to any client who lacks the financial resources to adequately provide for their pets.

Through a collaboration with the Texas Veterinary Medical Foundation, Pebbles was also able to get all her vaccinations as well as her preventative medications. “What a blessing,” Janis beamed. “I am so thankful for the care that Mom and I and my little Pebbles receive!”

In 2023, 476 unduplicated pets received assistance with 23,014 lbs. of dog food and 9,448 lbs. of cat food!

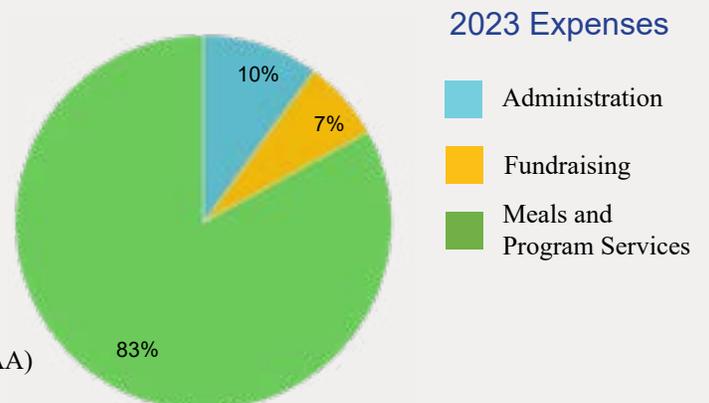
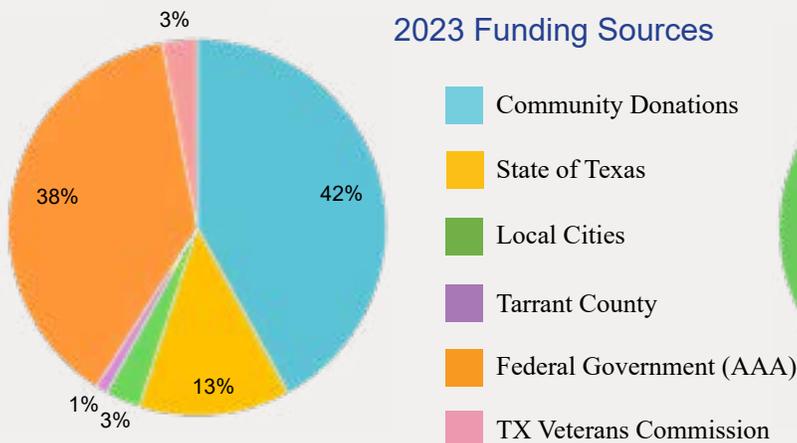
## FUNDING SOURCES AND EXPENSES

Meals On Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County operates as an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization, relying on diverse funding sources to deliver nourishing meals and essential services to individuals in need.

Our funding strategy embraces a range of channels to ensure comprehensive support for our mission. In 2023, 42% of our funding was from community contributions, including generous donations from individuals, civic and faith-based organizations, corporations, and foundations. Additionally, we receive support from government grants at the federal, state and local levels.

For fiscal year 2023, our total expenses were \$13,325,044 and we are pleased to affirm that all of the money raised was used locally to support the needs of our community.

As stewards of valuable resources, we are committed to responsible management. We recognize that our impactful work is made possible through the financial and volunteer backing of compassionate community members. Regardless of your role, your generous support is greatly appreciated. Together, we are making Tarrant County a caring place to grow old.



# DREAM TEAM

Our team of dedicated case managers thoroughly assesses every referral to ensure eligibility and tailor a service plan to meet the unique needs of those who qualify for services. They routinely monitor client progress, coordinate various non-nutrition, wrap-around services and advocate for our clients with other agencies and service providers.



In 2023, our case managers made 11,657 home visits, processed an average of 502 new client intakes per month, conducted 9,114 wellness checks, and facilitated 24,678 referrals for additional community services. This dream team of passionate individuals is dedicated to providing support to those in need.

# SENIORS ON THE MOVE

Mobile adults age 60 and over can enjoy nutritious meals and planned activities at 21 centers located throughout Tarrant County. If an individual lacks transportation, he or she may qualify for limited transportation assistance. Providing transportation for older adults allows them to have access to community resources, a nutritious meal, planned social activities, and trips to community outings. As a benefit to receiving transportation, older adults often see a reduction in social isolation.

Through our Adult Activity Center program, we provided 76,758 meals to 1,495 clients in 2023. Plus, we provided transportation to 328 unduplicated passengers who received 32,144 one-way trips. 82% of passengers surveyed stated access to transportation helped to improve their mental well-being.

For more information about adult activity centers, including their locations, email [AAC@mealsonwheels.org](mailto:AAC@mealsonwheels.org) or call us at **817-258-6482**.

We offer several meal options to meet the individual needs of our clients:

- **Hot Meals** — Hot noontime meals are delivered each week-day by caring volunteers.
- **Weekend Meals** — Clients who need additional nutritional support may qualify for weekend meals.
- **Breakfast Meals**—Many clients need a greater level of care and qualify for breakfast meals in addition to our noontime meals.
- **Frozen Meals** — Some clients cannot be home for a hot-meal delivery and will receive a weekly delivery of frozen meals. This option is designed to offer flexibility for clients who have regularly-scheduled dialysis or other medical procedures.

You'll be glad to know that clients report the following improvements since receiving meals:

- 97% improved nutritional status
- 71% improvement in physical functioning
- 79% improvement in mental functioning

# How You CAN HELP

The cost of preparing, packaging and delivering nutritious meals to one client is only \$2,080 per year. With your help, we can be a lifeline for the thousands of homebound, elderly and disabled residents of Tarrant County.

- \$8 provides a meal for one day
- \$40 provides meals for one week
- \$160 provides meals for a month
- \$2,080 provides meals for a year!

**Donate securely online at [mealsonwheels.org/donate](https://mealsonwheels.org/donate)**



# FOCUS ON NUTRITION

Did you know that all our meals are planned by registered and licensed dietitians to meet all of the daily dietary standards established by the U.S. Government for older adults?

Plus, our dietitians meet one-on-one with clients to educate them on ways they can manage chronic illnesses like diabetes, hypertension and congestive heart failure by modifying their diet.

They give clients the information they need to make healthy food choices that improve their overall health, leading to fewer ER visits and hospital stays.

To learn more about our nutrition education initiatives, contact Melissa Pratt at **817-258-6476** or **Melissa.Pratt@mealsonwheels.org**.

# VOLUNTEERING

At the heart of our mission lies a community of individuals who extend kindness beyond the plate of food they deliver. Their commitment goes beyond the immediate act of delivering meals, transforming our service into a comprehensive support system. In addition to delivering a nourishing meal, these caring individuals are trained for safety checks, alerting our office if a client doesn't answer the door or if anything seems amiss.

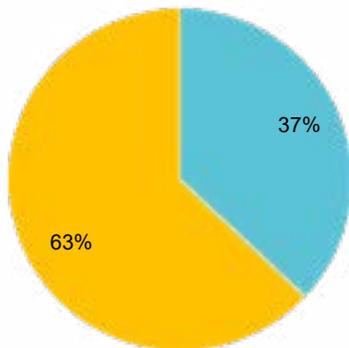
In 2023, 78% of clients reported that the daily safety check offers them an added peace of mind. Our volunteers go beyond the call of duty, embodying the spirit of service by creating a supportive network that extends beyond providing meals. In every visit, they bring not just nourishment but also a vital connection and a sense of security for those we serve.

Last year, over 4,400 unduplicated volunteers logged over 250,000 hours of volunteer service and drove nearly 1.3 million miles delivering meals!

# CLIENT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

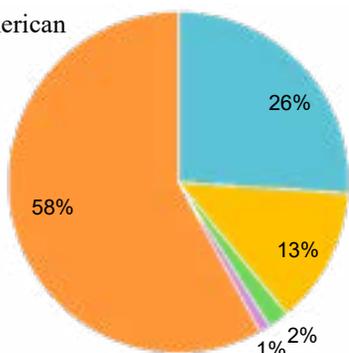
## Gender

- Male
- Female



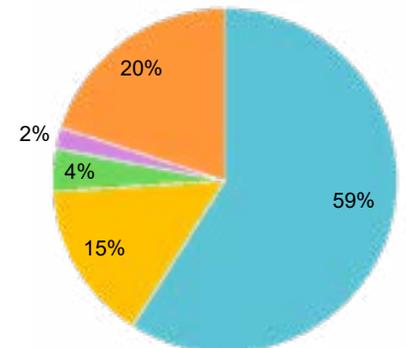
## Ethnicity

- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other
- Caucasian



## Client Monthly Income

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Not Reported



## Client Age

- Median client age: 75
- Clients over age 60: 92%
- Oldest client: 105
- Youngest client: 23



# CLIENT ASSISTANCE

Meals On Wheels client Charlie found himself on the receiving end of an unexpected and heartwarming gift. Charlie, a Marine veteran, lives alone in his cherished home of nearly 60 years. Unfortunately, the passage of time had taken a toll on his house, causing the roof to deteriorate and leak during rainstorms. Through our Client Assistance program and with the help of our friends at Lon Smith Roofing, Charlie received a much-needed new roof, entirely free of charge.

On the day of the surprise, Charlie was met not only with the joy of a revitalized roof but also with the presence of two fellow Marines stationed at the NAS JRB. His eyes sparkled with delight, expressing the profound impact of this unexpected reunion. Charlie, a man whose emotions are evident, often became teary-eyed when reflecting on his time in the Corps.



Beyond the roof, Charlie expressed his deep appreciation for the meals he receives, emphasizing their essential role in his daily survival. At 83 years old, he never imagined seeing a brand-new roof over his head. Overwhelmed with gratitude, Charlie tearfully expressed that he didn't feel deserving of such a gift. His enduring faith in God, love for family, and patriotism shine through in the way he lives his life, making this unexpected gift even more meaningful.

In 2023, we completed over 2,219 projects with more than \$289,400 in donor-designated and grant funding for our Client Assistance program. These projects, large and small, immediately improve the lives of our clients because they address specific needs. While the nutritional health of our clients is always our first priority, creating a safe and healthy environment can significantly help our clients maintain their independence and dignity.

To learn more about our Client Assistance program, visit [mealsonwheels.org/client-assistance](https://mealsonwheels.org/client-assistance).

*By Philip Gonzalez*

## HOME MEDS

Medication-reconciliation Program

Adults 65 years or older are twice as likely to go to the ER for adverse drug events and nearly seven times more likely to be hospitalized after an ER visit. Meals On Wheels of Tarrant County is the largest implementor of HomeMeds in the nation. HomeMeds is an evidence-based medication review and intervention program that includes a computerized risk assessment and alert tool to help us identify adverse drug interactions, which are then reviewed by a pharmacist who makes recommendations to resolve the issue.

In 2023, 74% of the 1,711 clients who participated in this program had medication alerts. In addition, clients self-reported 4,235 falls and 695 episodes of dizziness, and we know that problems with medications are the number one reason for dizziness and falls for older adults.

Keeping our clients safe and healthy also saves Tarrant County taxpayers millions of dollars by reducing taxpayer-funded hospital ER visits and admissions. Now that's something to celebrate!

Meals On Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County  
5740 Airport Freeway  
Fort Worth, TX 76117-6005

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## Do you know someone in need?

If you or someone you know needs assistance with home-delivered meals to be able to remain living independently, call us at **817-336-0912** or visit **mealsonwheels.org**. We are here to help you.

This 2023 Annual Report is a publication of Meals On Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County



Donate online at  
[mealsonwheels.org/donate](https://mealsonwheels.org/donate)

Editor: Philip Gonzalez. For information about this publication, please contact the editor at 817-258-6441 or send an email to [philip@mealsonwheels.org](mailto:philip@mealsonwheels.org).

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Board of Directors