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WESTMASS CONNECTS

NEWS, SUPPORT & STORIES

SPRING 2023 EDITION



In Gratitude

As we do every spring, WestMass ElderCare (WMEC) celebrated "March for Meals" last month with local and state elected officials. Community leaders toured our nutrition operation and delivered meals to older adults in their communities. In doing so, these leaders witnessed first-hand how our Meals on Wheels program offers so much more than nutrition!

- The daily check-in with their meal driver provides vital social contact to our consumers and peace of mind to their caregivers every day.
- The variety of meals and specialized menus we offer meet specific medical needs as well as cultural and dietary preferences like Latino and vegetarian options.
- Our caterer provides fresh and nutritionally balanced meals which are prepared daily with seasonal ingredients.
- Our Nutrition Staff connect recipients to other services and help them navigate care in the community when needed.

Will you join us in supporting this vital program which delivers over 1,200 meals each day to bring nutrition and security to older adults and individuals with disabilities in our community? You can make a tax-deductible gift to our Nutrition Program using the enclosed envelope or online anytime at wmeldercare.org/donate-now.

Thank you for celebrating this key community resource with us!

Roseann Martoccia

Roseann Martoccia
Executive Director

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

JOHN KEIZER



John Keizer is a retired Claim Adjuster and Manager of three insurance companies. John has volunteered through our Meals on Wheels Nutrition Program and now our Money Management Program. John helps

those in need pay bills, balance checkbooks, sort through health insurance issues, apply for fuel assistance, and learn the dangers of scammers.

ROBERT ZUKAUSKAS



Robert "Bob" Zukauskas is a volunteer driver for our Meals on Wheels Nutrition Program. Bob is a native of Windsor Locks, Connecticut, and an honorable

United States Air Force veteran.

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

In honor of National Volunteer Month, we're spotlighting some of WMEC's most dedicated volunteers. These individuals help support elder adults in the community through several of our essential programs and services.

Are you interested in making a difference and getting involved with WMEC? Learn more about our volunteer opportunities by visiting us at wmeldercare.org/volunteer.

OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS

One of WMEC's long-serving Ombudsman Volunteers, Valerie Sawka of Chicopee, has described her work as an Ombudsman as a life-changing experience.

"Advocating for residents and their families is incredibly important and satisfying work. Understanding the rights of nursing home residents, the laws that protect them, and the knowledge gained through the Ombudsman Volunteer training helps so much in not only advocating for the residents but also enabling them to advocate for themselves, which can be so empowering."



HEALTHY EATING IN A TIME OF INFLATION

By: Katie Defoe-Raymond, MS, RDN, CSG, LDN

In the past year, after seeing eggs reach a high of almost \$8 a dozen, a shortage of turkey at Thanksgiving, and ground beef over \$6 a pound, increasing prices and issues with availability have some people confused about how to afford groceries while paying other bills like fuel, housing and medical expenses. The ability to provide balanced meals may feel like it is slipping away. The WestMass ElderCare Nutrition Department has therefore teamed up to share ways to cut costs to help you stretch your dollar while eating well. But first, a little background information:

From December 2021 to December 2022, Consumer Price Index (CPI) for at home food increased by **11.8%**, including **59.9%** for eggs and **12.2%** for poultry, **2%** average increase in all meat, **8.4%** increase in fruit and vegetables, and **16.1%** of cereals and bakery products. The CPI for food is a measurement by the Bureau of Labor Statistics tracking the average change over time of the retail prices of food items paid by urban consumers.



TIPS FROM WESTMASS ELDERCARE'S NUTRITION TEAM FOR EATING WELL ON A BUDGET:

1. Plan ahead
2. Buy in bulk
3. Use leftovers
4. Experiment with new recipes
5. Try new markets
6. Consider generic brands
7. Save on produce
8. Save on protein
9. Compare unit prices

There are several resources available to help those struggling with inflation and food insecurity. These include:

1. SNAP
2. Massachusetts Healthy Incentives Program
3. Farmer's Market Coupon Program
4. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
5. Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline
6. Fuel Assistance
7. WestMass ElderCare's Meals on Wheels Program
8. 413Cares.org



Katie Defoe-Raymond, MS, RDN, CSG, LDN

For more in-depth tips and resources, please visit our website at wmeldercare.org/healthy

MARCH FOR MEALS

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESSES OF WMEC'S NUTRITION PROGRAM

Every person deserves to enjoy a healthy, nutritious meal in the comfort of their home. WestMass ElderCare's **Meals on Wheels** program is individualized to meet unique needs, delivering lunch, dinner, and weekend meals on a daily or as-needed basis.

For over 50 years, the **Older Americans Act Nutrition Program**, the same federal legislation that helps fund community-based programs like Meals on Wheels, has helped millions of older adults stay safely independent in their homes and the community. As we do every spring, WMEC celebrated the far-reaching impact of this legislation nationwide.

Last month, with our March for Meals Community Champions Celebration, we invited local legislators and elected officials to deliver meals to WMEC consumers. **March for Meals** offers a safe, interactive way for the community and state leaders to see first-hand how food insecurity impacts their consumers who are older and living with disabilities.

Hunger and isolation are serious issues that have only been exacerbated by impacts of the



COVID-19 pandemic – such as escalating food, fuel, and labor costs, and decreased opportunities for older adults to connect in-person. Eight out of ten local Meals on Wheels programs are still delivering meals to more adults than before the pandemic, with operational and food prices continuing to soar.

WMEC's annual March for Meals celebration gives us a cherished opportunity to celebrate our team of dedicated Meals on Wheels drivers who deliver so much more than nutrition, providing a friendly check-in and safety check for each person who receives home-delivered meals. We also celebrate the many ways that WMEC's nutrition program goes above and beyond to meet the unique needs of its consumers, offering therapeutic and medically tailored options like pureed, cardiac, renal, and chopped meals. Every day, we also offer an authentic Latino meal prepared with typical Latino ingredients and seasonings.

We thank our local legislators and elected officials for joining us for our March for Meals celebration again this year, and for continuing to advocate for the nutritional and social benefits of this vital programming for our community's most vulnerable residents.



Learn more about our Nutrition Services by visiting wmeldercare.org/nutrition-program.

Contact our Information & Referral Department at **413-538-9020** or info@wmeldercare.org with your questions anytime.