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WestMass Connects

Greetings!



As we welcome the vibrant days of spring and embark on the commemoration of our 50th anniversary year at WestMass ElderCare, I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering support of our community. This April, as we recognize National Volunteer Month, I am reminded of the indispensable role volunteers play in our mission, particularly within our Nutrition, Ombudsman and Money Management Programs. Read more about our volunteers' impact on p.3.

One of the ways that our volunteers help us enhance the lives of our community members is by delivering meals for our Meals on Wheels program. For half a century, WestMass ElderCare's Nutrition Program has provided essential meals and crucial wellness checks to tens of thousands of individuals in need. However, despite our best efforts, the challenges we face in sustaining this critical program are very significant.

One such challenge is the stark reality that funding for our Nutrition Program has not kept pace with inflation. As the cost of living has continued to rise, the resources available to support our Nutrition Program have remained flat. This discrepancy presents a significant obstacle in our ability to meet the growing needs of our community.

To help us sustain this critical programming, in honor of WMEC's 50th anniversary, I ask you to join us in supporting our Nutrition Program in whatever way you can. Whether through volunteerism, advocacy, or philanthropy, your contribution will make a tangible difference in the lives of older adults and individuals with disabilities throughout our community. Please include your gift in the enclosed envelope or give online today at wmeldercare.org/donate.

With your help, we can ensure that every individual in our community will continue to receive the care and support they deserve for the next 50 years and beyond.

Roseann
Roseann Martoccia
Executive Director



During National Nutrition Month this March, we launched the #SaveLunch campaign to raise awareness and support for Senior Nutrition programs like ours. Our local leaders and state legislators took part by delivering meals to their constituents.



Left: Representative Dan Carey with Driver Joe Rzeszutek



Right: Senator Peter Durant helps deliver meals with Driver Ernie Daigle



Left: Lisa Wong, South Hadley Town Administrator, helps Driver Monique La Riviere with packing meals



Right: Chicopee Mayor John Vieau with Meals on Wheels consumer Eugene Smith



From left: Representative Shirley Arriaga, Senator Jake Oliveira, Representative Pat Duffy, Meals on Wheels Driver Rafael Jorge, Ludlow Town Administrator Marc Strange, and Holyoke City Councilor Juan Anderson-Burgos

WestMass ElderCare is a private, nonprofit agency founded in 1974 and funded in part by grants and contracts from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. We are part of a network of Aging Services Access Points and Area Agencies on Aging.



OUR NUTRITION PROGRAM: MAKING AN IMPACT

359K

Our 43 drivers delivered over 359,500 meals to older adults and individuals with disabilities in 2023.

2,122

Number of consumers served by WMEC Meals on Wheels in 2023.

38%

of WMEC nutrition consumers live alone, relying solely on their Home Delivered Meals drivers for crucial wellness checks.

85%

of consumers credit receiving meals with helping them live independently



In May, we honor Older Americans Month (OAM), established in 1963 by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). This year's theme, "Powered by Connection," underscores the vital role of meaningful social connections in promoting the well-being of older adults.

Here's how you can get involved:

- Invite more connection into your life by finding a new passion, joining a social club, taking a class, or trying new activities in your community.
- Join WestMass ElderCare's Community Table at Granby and South Hadley Senior Centers for lunch, or visit Taino Restaurant as part of our Latino Elder Dining Program. Call our Nutrition Department at 413-538-9020 for details.
- Stay engaged in your community by giving back through volunteering, working, teaching, or mentoring. WMEC has several volunteer opportunities available - ask us about them!
- Invest time with people to build new relationships and discover deeper connections with your family, friends, colleagues, or neighbors.

Let's celebrate the wisdom, experience, and vitality of our older adults by fostering connections this May and throughout the year!

Make a Difference: Become a Personal Care Assistant Today!

The current shortage of Personal Care Assistants (PCAs) is a pressing issue affecting countless individuals in need of essential care and support. Whether you're seeking a fulfilling career path or simply wish to make a meaningful difference in someone's life, we urge you to consider becoming a PCA. As a PCA, you'll have the opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives every day, offering compassionate support, building meaningful relationships, and empowering independence. Remember, PCAs can be family members (excluding spouses or parents), extending the circle of care and support. Take the first step towards this rewarding journey by visiting www.masspcadirectory.org for more information and to sign up. Your kindness and dedication can truly change lives!

CAREGIVERS ARE OUR PRIORITY

You could earn up to \$22,000 per year for caring for someone in your home with our Adult Family Care Program.

- > Trusted care partner for 50 years
- > Experienced, dedicated staff
- > We work and live in your community

Contact Us Today!
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Kyla Morrissey, WMEC Volunteer

OUR VOLUNTEERS MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE

In the heart of National Volunteer Month, we shine a spotlight on Kyla Morrissey, a dedicated volunteer with WestMass ElderCare's Money Management Program.

Kyla's journey as a volunteer began in October 2022, when she first joined WMEC to aid older adults with tasks like bill payments, checkbook balancing, and resolving discrepancies. It wasn't just happenstance that led her to this path; she was drawn to it through her former employer, PeoplesBank. The moment she heard about the opportunity, her interest was piqued. Eager to learn more, she attended an information meeting and promptly signed up.

"I cherish our elderly," she said, "and feel they are historically underserved, so the opportunity to provide any type of support is very appealing to me."

Fast forward a year and a half, and Kyla's passion for her volunteer work has only grown. She eagerly anticipates her monthly visits, cherishing the connection she's formed with her client. The sense of fulfillment she gains from offering assistance and support is unparalleled. It's not just about the work; it's about making a tangible difference in someone's life.

What makes Kyla's experience even more rewarding is the support she receives from WestMass ElderCare. She admires the organization's commitment to supporting older adults and the community at large. And she reserves special praise for Tricia Stallman, WMEC's Money Management Director, who welcomed her with open arms and guided her through those initial visits. Tricia's expertise and genuine care for the consumers have left a lasting impression on Kyla, reaffirming her belief in the power of volunteerism. "She's wonderful," Kyla said. "Huge kudos to her for getting this volunteer effort together and giving the opportunity for this meaningful work."

As we celebrate National Volunteer Month, let's take a moment to appreciate volunteers like Kyla, whose dedication and compassion enrich the lives of those they serve.

GOT TIME?
CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!
WE NEED YOUR HELP!



COME JOIN OUR TEAM TO SUPPORT OUR MONEY MANAGEMENT, NURSING HOME OMBUDSMAN AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS!

Contact Us: 413-538-9020
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wmeldercare.org/volunteer