

A Meals on Wheels of Mercer County Publication June 2025

Farmer George



George Asprocolas with one of his tractors at Asprocolas Acres.

Meals on Wheels of Mercer County (MOWMC) delivers a hot meal and a cold bag - Monday through Friday - to its 400 community neighbors. There's an additional special treat that everyone looks forward to in the summer. **From June to August, MOWMC participants will be receiving weekly produce bags, containing fresh fruits and vegetables.**

George Asprocolas, of Asprocolas Acres, has been involved with the state's WIC and Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program since 2000. He later expanded his efforts by partnering with MOWMC.

Before launching the weekly produce program, MOWMC worked closely with George for many years to provide nutritious, fresh produce to seniors who were homebound. However, at the time, access was limited to those who met specific county eligibility requirements.

In 2020, following a grant award that allowed for broader access, MOWMC launched its own

produce program with no eligibility restrictions. This opened the door for all participants to enjoy locally grown fruits and vegetables. The partnership with George deepened, and he was proud to continue supporting the aging population of Mercer County.

Who is "Farmer George?"

Farmer George wasn't always a farmer. He initially studied Industrial Education at East Stroudsburg University with plans to become a teacher, but soon realized that the classroom wasn't the right fit for him. After moving to Millstone Township, he quickly fell in *love* with farming, and the rest is history.

"I did not have a family history of farming, like a lot of guys do down here. So I had to learn everything as I went along," George said.

With his educational background, Farmer George naturally sought out opportunities to deepen his knowledge and master his craft. Over the past 30 years, he has attended conventions in Atlantic City, sat in on lectures at Rutgers University, and participated in the Mid-Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Convention in Hershey, PA, and he plans to keep learning for years to come.

"From my background - going to college and learning a lot of things - I just know that if you want to do something, you have to *learn* what to do," he explained.

In the farming community, he would pick the brains of other farmers to learn the tricks of the trade, which he noted was difficult at first. Not having the background in farming and being new to the area, it took time to gain recognition amongst his peers. Now, being the highest redeemer of the WIC and Seniors checks in the state, the farmers refer to him as "Mr. WIC."

"Now I got the respect of a lot of them because I didn't just come in and get out and be done," Farmer George said. "I'm still here, I'm still doing it."



Greenhouse at Asprocolas Acres.



Crops at Asprocolas Acres.

From the Farm to the Produce Bags...

Every meal recipient at MOWMC receives a weekly produce bag, which Farmer George assembles based on the goods at his farmers' market stands.

To fill the produce bags, Farmer George carefully considers the value of each item he includes. For example, grapes, typically sold in bunches are more costly than some other produce, so he adjusts quantities accordingly. The contents of the bags vary from week to week, based on the value of the produce selected. He also keeps in mind practical constraints: the bags must not be too bulky for Rider University to store or too heavy for volunteers to carry during deliveries.

"We tried to rotate a lot of stuff last year," Farmer George said. "They really just want to have the hand to mouth kind of things." Since most meal recipients cannot cook for themselves, this was a special consideration for MOWMC.

Mostly containing fruits, the produce bags include crops such as grapes, peaches, nectarines, apples, pears, oranges, strawberries and blueberries (depending on the season and availability).

The vegetables which Farmer George includes are cucumbers, zucchini, squash, peppers - ingredients that could easily be thrown into a salad or that don't require much preparation. MOWMC often included a simple recipe for using the items in the bag.

Over the years, the produce bag program has continued to evolve. Since MOWMC volunteers deliver fresh fruits and vegetables alongside regularly scheduled meals, staff quickly learned which items were most enjoyed, and which were less popular with participants.

In a Produce Survey conducted in 2024 by MOWMC, about 84% of the participants felt that the additional produce was ample for their diets, and 85% were satisfied with the variety of the products.

"I love it very much," a participant responded in the survey. "If it wasn't for you (MOWMC) I would not have any. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

HELP NEEDED ASAP

☀ Summer Volunteers ☀



SUMMER

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Open Routes
Available
Throughout Mercer
County!



MOWMC IS LOOKING FOR
DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS IN OUR
COMMUNITY TO DELIVER MEALS
WITH US!

LET'S MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR
OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED.

Meals are picked up at
Rider University
Mon-Fri
10-10:30 AM

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING!

Contact Us Today!
volunteer@mealsonwheelsmercer.org
609-695-3483

I want to volunteer!

Volunteer Highlight

*Each month, we will be highlighting our newest volunteers.
In May, we welcomed:*

**Alan S.
Mahdu S.**

**Deborah O.
Tierney M. (Bill's Grandaughter!)**

*Every year we give awards to
outstanding volunteers for their service.
We are happy to announce this year's recipients:*

**Joseph H.
West Windsor-Plainsboro Post Grad Program**



*Dungarvin Volunteer
holding two cold bags.*

Honorable Mention:

**Dungarvin volunteers have
delivered meals every day
for many years.**

**We are so happy to have
them as a partner!**

MOW Improves Health and is Cost Effective

*All information is provided by Meals on Wheels America.
Data reflects the national population.*

**Almost 95% of older adults have at least one chronic condition,
and nearly 80% have two or more**

**Food insecure older adults experience
worse health outcomes than food-
secure seniors, with greater risk for:**

- HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
 - HEART ATTACK
 - DIABETES
 - DEPRESSION

**Older adults have the highest rates of
social isolation,
putting seniors at risk for:**

- HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
- ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
 - COGNITIVE DECLINE
 - DEMENTIA



Federal funding shortfalls for Meals on Wheels **end up costing the government and taxpayers more** due to costly health care and long term care expenses **THAT COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED.**

\$75 BILLION

SENIOR MALNUTRITION costs an estimated \$75 billion a year in health care costs.

\$98 BILLION

OLDER ADULT FALLS cost the U.S. health care system \$98 billion a year, with most of the cost paid by Medicare.

9 BILLION

SOCIAL ISOLATION costs Medicare an estimated \$9 billion annually.

☐ *The estimated economic value of family caregivers' unpaid contributions is approx. \$600 BILLION...*



Meals on Wheels is proven to:

- Reduce use of costly health care services
- Reduce nursing home use and increase ability to age in place
 - Reduce health care costs
 - Increase food security
 - Improve diet quality
- Improve or reduce decline in nutritional status
 - Reduce social isolation and loneliness
 - Reduce falls and increase home safety

WE CAN SERVE A SENIOR FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR for roughly the same cost as a day in the hospital or 10 in a long-term care facility



Want to learn more about the stats in New Jersey? Check out mealsonwheelsmercer.org/research for more info!

In the News

From Princeton to Trenton, On the Trail of Meals on Wheels



Jim McCloskey, right, with Frank, one of the more memorable characters on Jim's Meals on Wheels delivery route.

Photo Credit: Charlie Yedlin

Check out this story by writer Pam Hersch in ***TAPinto Princeton***, featuring our volunteers Jim McCloskey and Charlie Yedlin!



Read the excerpt below discussing the impact of volunteering for Meals on Wheels...

The few hours I spent seeing and speaking with residents in Trenton's Calhoun Street neighborhood had an impact on me far greater than anything I have ever read or seen virtually. It gave me enough food for thought (sorry) to last a lifetime. I only hope others with a greater number of years in their futures will be inspired by the Friday morning efforts of Charlie and Jim – not only to volunteer, but also to reform a society that could spend \$100 million on a state supreme court election – such as the recent one in Wisconsin – yet be unable to find the funds to alleviate food insecurity among individuals, no different from me, just unluckier.

[Read More...](#)

□ Farewell to Our Grads □

**Congratulations to Bonner scholars and TCNJ graduates
Simranjot (Simran) M. and Emma W.!**

Though we are sad to see our student volunteers go, we look forward to seeing all the great things Simran and Emma accomplish next!



*Graduate Simranjot M.
at Pinning Ceremony,
where she received
the DAISY Award for
Extraordinary Nursing Students.*



*Graduate Emma W. (right)
on her last day volunteering
with Bonner student Kennedy P. (left).*

Giving Info

[Donate Now](#)



*You may now donate via Apple Pay, Google Pay,
PayPal & Venmo!*

*You can also set up **recurring monthly giving!***

If you would like to make a donation **In Memory or In Honor** of someone, you may do so by selecting the type of 'Tribute Gift' on our donation page.
Please leave details regarding names and acknowledgement.

Be sure to check our [website](#) for acknowledgements for tribute dedications!
(currently listing donations received January 1, 2025 though March 31, 2025)

Contact Us: (609) 695-3483 or Email at info@mealsonwheelsmercer.org



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