



NEWS ON WHEELS

A Meals on Wheels of Mercer County Publication March 2026



Community Champions Month

On February 24th, after a snowstorm left many of our regular volunteers unable to deliver meals, the City of Trenton stepped forward when we needed help most.

Trenton is home to the largest number of participants we serve at Meals on Wheels Mercer County. With 11 delivery routes throughout the city, meeting the needs of our neighbors in Trenton requires a strong and reliable volunteer presence every day. When severe weather makes travel difficult, the challenge becomes even greater, especially for the homebound seniors who depend on us not just for a meal, but for connection and reassurance.

In the wake of the storm, Mayor Reed Gusciora and members of his administration quickly mobilized to ensure meals were delivered without interruption. We are deeply grateful to Officer Don Piotrowski of the Trenton Police Department; Kenneth Dodson of the Department of Health & Human Services; and Brian Weakliem and Gregorio Rodriguez of Housing & Economic Development for stepping in to serve our community.

Because of their willingness to act, our Trenton participants received the nourishment and friendly check-in they rely on, despite the snow-covered roads and sidewalks.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the City of Trenton for demonstrating what true community partnership looks like. Your support made all the difference.



Admin & Marketing Services Manager Jeannie Weakliem (left) and CEO Venetta Ellerbe (right) with Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora at Rider University.

March for Meals is a month-long celebration honoring the Older Americans Act Nutrition Program, the federal legislation that helps to fund community-based programs like Meals on Wheels.

This month, we will be hosting mayors, assemblymen, council members and police chiefs. Keep a lookout on our social media to see our Community Champions volunteering their time!

[Learn More](#)

Older Americans Act Nutrition Program

The Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program is a federal program that supports the health and well-being of older adults through nutrition services. The program, originally a Title VI senior nutrition demonstration project, was officially established under its own title (Title VII) in 1972 when it was permanently authorized by Congress. Several years later, the program was authorized under Title III of the OAA – Grants for States and Community Programs on Aging – where it remains today.

The OAA Nutrition Program is comprised of three sub-programs: 1) Congregate Nutrition Services; 2) Home Delivered Nutrition Services; and 3) the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP). States and U.S. territories receive federal grants to

administer a combination of these nutrition services programs (i.e., Meals on Wheels) in a way that is tailored to the unique needs of the seniors in their communities.

Facts:

- OAA service numbers are now 244 million meals served to 2.6 million seniors annually.
- Providers can serve a senior Meals on Wheels for one year for the same cost as one day in the hospital or 12 days in a long-term care facility/nursing home
- Nearly 14 million older Americans are threatened by or experience hunger.



Participant with hot meal tray.

A Simple Visit. A Lifesaving Difference.

Volunteers Clare and her 16-year-old daughter Elsie were delivering meals when they witnessed a participant on their route in need of medical attention.

Clare and Elsie have been delivering with Meals on Wheels of Mercer County (MOWMC) for about three months, consistently doing the same route every week. Doing so, they've gotten to know the participants on that route quite well, even noticing changes in a senior's health and wellbeing.



Volunteer mother-daughter duo Clare and Elsie at Rider University.

“I said to my daughter, ‘We could be the only people that they see each week, so it’s important that we’re friendly, we say “Hi,” and we don’t just throw the meal in and run off,’” she noted.

Clare first noticed something was off about two weeks ago, when she reported to the office her concerns with a participant's living quarters. Considering all the circumstances, to her it felt like it was a matter of time before they had found the participant in an unsettling position. “In a weird way, I felt more prepared,” she recalled.

“I think it was a bit of an eye opener for my daughter in particular that people really do live like this,” Clare said. The participant, who suffers from dementia, lives alone; volunteers are the only connections that she has during the day. When the mother-daughter duo found her in her home, the participant had suffered from two falls in just two days, showing signs of painful injury. The pair worked together to help the senior while also calling the MOWMC office and emergency contacts for further assistance.

Clare admitted that she hesitated calling the office two weeks prior with her concerns, but ultimately she thought about the bigger picture. “I felt like it’s a case of ‘see something, say something,’” she said. “I have a responsibility here to say something because nobody should be living like that. I could have just delivered the meal, put it in the fridge, walked away and said ‘that’s none of my business,’ but it didn’t feel right.”

At MOWMC, volunteers are the heart of our mission. Not only are they there to be a friendly face while delivering a meal, but they’re also there to make sure that our participants are happy, healthy, and doing well in their homes.

If you would like to sign up to volunteer with MOWMC, please email volunteer@mealsonwheelsmercer.org.

Volunteers Hub



Coolers and hot meal bags lined up at Rider University.

New Volunteers

Each month, we will be highlighting our newest volunteers.

In February, we welcomed:

**Kpehe C.
Debbie F.
Donald G.
Christine H.
Estella R.**

I want to Volunteer!



**When you sign up to volunteer for MOWMC,
you receive hands-on training from our Program Coordinator!**

All new volunteers receive training, a tour of the dining hall at Rider University, as well as a delivery experience with a seasoned volunteer. We want to make sure that our volunteers are well equipped and comfortable when going on route to deliver meals.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about training and onboarding, email volunteer@mealsonwheelsmercer.org.



MOWMC Program Coordinator, Lisa Heredia, training volunteers at Rider University.

Share Your Time. Share a Meal.

This March, consider volunteering for Meals on Wheels of Mercer County!

We are looking for dedicated individuals in our community to **deliver meals** with us or **help in the kitchen** at Rider University.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about how you can get involved, send an email to volunteer@mealsonwheelsmercer.org or call (609) 695-3483.

MOWMC Nutrition

At MOWMC, we work closely with **Allie Hadden, Registered Dietician Nutritionist**, to ensure that our participants are receiving balanced meals everyday. Along with the hot meal, we provide supplemental items such as fruit, salad, roll & butter, as well as a beverage (milk or juice).

Expanding Culturally Responsive Meals

We are working to incorporate more culturally familiar dishes to better serve Mercer County's diverse senior population. For example, on February 25th, we served curried chickpeas with quinoa, naan bread, mushrooms, bell peppers, and zucchini!



Hot meal delivered on Feb. 25.

February 27th was **National Protein Day!** Check out the nutrition education piece that was shared with our participants, created by **Allie Hadden and the dietic interns.**

National Protein Day

February 27th



NATIONAL PROTEIN DAY
FEBRUARY 27

WHY IS PROTEIN IMPORTANT IN YOUR DIET?

- Building blocks for bones, muscles, and skin
- Repairs tissue after exercise and as we age to preserve muscle mass
- Supports the function of the brain, heart and liver
- Regulates the immune system
- Maintains hunger

Great Sources of Protein:

- Meat
- Seafood
- Dairy
- Beans/ Legumes
- Broccoli
- Nuts

Gifts from the Community! 🎁



Check out these cute crafts from the students at **Villa Victoria Academy**. It's inspiring to see the younger generation giving back to the community. This was a real treat for the seniors we serve!



A huge thank you to the students at **Mercer County 4-H Youth Development** for creating placemats for our participants! The students did this on Martin Luther King Jr. Day as early Valentine's Day surprises for us to deliver.

Look at these beautiful cards created by **Karen O.**, our volunteer Tom's wife who donates her time by creating these Valentine's Day keepsakes for us every year. Holiday cards mean so much to our participants, especially those who don't have family living close by.



A big thank you to **Pennington Presbyterian Nursery School** administrators, parents, and students for collecting pet food for our seniors and their pets! The students decorated the boxes for collection — one cat and one dog — and were so excited to give back to their community!

Giving Info

What Your Donation Provides

\$20 = Two nutritious meals
\$100 = A week of meals for one senior
\$500 = A month of stability

[Donate Now](#)



Make this birthday a special one! 🎉

Your friends and family can donate in your honor! Share our website or set up a fundraiser on your social media to donate to Meals On Wheels of Mercer County.

For Reference



Is this a tribute gift?

in honor of ▾
select one
in honor of
in memory of

Information

Tribute Name *

First Name

Last Name

Dedication



You may now select more options for recurring donations!

Your recurring donations can help Mercer County seniors on a regular basis and without a second thought.

- **Weekly**
- **Bi-weekly**
- **Bi-monthly**
- **Quarterly**
- **Yearly!**

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



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