



Behind the Wheel

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Meals on Wheels Driver Delivers Friendly Connections

Along with a hot meal, a roll and milk, Meals on Wheels driver Trisha* carried a bouquet of carnations for Ellen*. The pink and scarlet blooms matched Trisha's lacy T-shirt and Ellen's housecoat.

Just because, Trisha explained. Just because.

After four years of delivering 25+ meals every week day, Trisha navigates her route in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights with ease, turning down alleys and into driveways to provide homebound adults with a nutritious meal and her engaging smile.



She counts the meals, checking against the four pages of participants' addresses and any special instructions. She's got the whole process down, and heads out in her Chevy Equinox five days a week.

"I have the best job in the world," she said. "I've been asked if I wanted to take other routes and I always turn them down. I have relationships with these people."

And that's why she carried a bunch of flowers to Ellen's door, with her meal. Ellen's tidy home next to the railroad tracks is surrounded by pots of plants and flowers. Her flower beds overflow with blooms. Somewhere in the mix is a lily that Trisha gave her, an extra bulb from her own garden.

Ellen sniffs the delicate blooms and places her lunch on top of her walker.

"I've got a cat now," Ellen tells her visitors. "I can hear him purring when he jumps up on my lap and I pet him. His name is Tigger."

It's So Much More Than a Meal!

At another stop, we joked with Rosemary* about her neighbor's rooster, crowing loudly despite it being midday and not sunrise.

Anne* was being cared for by a younger family member. She told us three times how she bent her toes back when she tripped.

Susan's* cat had escaped and we plucked him off the tree he was attempting to climb and delivered him safely to her arms.

More than 60% of the seniors who receive home delivered meals report their only social contact is with their driver. Having someone willing to spend a few minutes talking with them helps stave off isolation, which is so damaging for seniors.

For Trisha, she's watched names come and go from her list. She tells the story of how one participant didn't come to the door one day and she contacted staff to do a safety check. The man had suffered a stroke and spent over a year in rehabilitation before he was back on her list.

"He was only there for about a month and then he dropped off again," she said quietly. "I don't really know what happened to him. I really don't want to know."

For a driver, relationships do come and go as participants' needs change.

If you or a loved one is homebound and needs assistance with meals, please call 231-755-0434 or 1-800-442-6769 and speak to a program specialist.

**All names have been changed to protect confidentiality of participants and drivers.*

Volunteers Needed: Senior Transportation Program Drivers

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, 9,052 rides were given to 272 seniors to non-emergency medical appointments. Many volunteers had to stop driving during the pandemic for their own health. Now the demand is growing, so more drivers are needed.

If you enjoy driving and would like to bring a smile to someone's face, consider becoming a volunteer driver for the Senior Transportation Program.

*Interested? Please contact Jessica Squires, Wellness Receptionist and Volunteer Coordinator,
Phone:
231-733-4788 or email
jessica@agewellservices.org.*



Kick Up Your Heels!

Two years in the making, the 7th Heels for Meals & More promises to be THE epic party of the season!

This can't-miss Saturday, April 23rd event is filled with fast-action auctions, Signature Cocktails, a delicious dinner -- and SHOES! Who can forget the shoes? Fancy flats, sober wingtips, sky-high heels, cozy slippers and more can compete for a variety of fun prizes.

After the COVID-19 pandemic forced cancellations in 2020 and 2021, this year's event will be held from 6-11 p.m. at the Event Place at Fricano in downtown Muskegon. Guests are encouraged to wear masks and get vaccinated prior to attending. Most tables will be limited to seating of six to eight chairs to encourage additional distancing. These safety measures are highly encouraged so everyone can enjoy this event safely.

"We have really missed being able to hold this event and see our guests," Advancement Director Diane Smith said. "It's always a good time, and those who attend provide critical donations to the seniors we serve."

Program

6:00 p.m. - Cocktails & Bidding for Silent and Good Fortune Auctions

6:30 p.m. - Welcome

7:00 p.m. - Dinner and Dessert

7:30 p.m. - Heads or Heels Game

7:45 p.m. - Best Shoe Style Show

8:30 p.m. - Live and Greatest Needs Auctions

9:30 p.m. - Mix, Mingle and Party!

Tickets are \$50 each and can be obtained on the AgeWell Services website: www.agewellservices.org/heels-for-meals/

A number of sponsorship opportunities are available, or you can donate an item for any of the auctions or make a financial gift and we will put an auction item together for you. Contact Diane Smith, Advancement Director at 231-683-2651 or diane@agewellservices.org

Women Who Care Gifts Target Wellness Center Upgrades

Muskegon's Women Who Care's nearly 230 members are making it possible for AgeWell Services to repair our kitchen walk-in cooler and upgrade exercise equipment at Tanglewood Park.

This committed group of female philanthropists meets quarterly to hear appeals from three local nonprofits. The members vote on the best pitch and then every single member writes a \$100 check to support the nonprofit selected.

In January, Jackie Engel championed AgeWell Services in a short presentation outlining the need to replace aging equipment in the Tanglewood Park kitchen and weight machines used in the Wellness Center.

"We certainly set aside rainy-day funds for equipment repairs and eventual replacement, but instead of a rainy day, we got a tsunami," AgeWell Services Executive Director Kris Collee said. "Women Who Care gifts like this help our senior neighbors stay nourished, active and connected. We're so very grateful to have been selected!"



The gift will be used to cover the cost of a replacement compressor on a 13-year-old walk-in cooler at the Tanglewood Park main kitchen which keeps milk, fruit, salads and sandwiches fresh at safe temperatures.

The remainder will be used to replace aging exercise machines that were brand new 13 years ago when the Wellness Center at Tanglewood Park opened and technology access for art and enrichment classes to keep people connected virtually and in person.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

--Margaret Mead

From the Director...



Dear Friends,

We call it the Silver Tsunami. The number of Michigan residents over the age of 60 continues to grow exponentially. AgeWell Services, with its important partner agencies, have been seeing steady growth in recent years, and more will be coming.

Despite the global pandemic, more seniors are looking for affordable places where they can exercise safely at their own pace and connect with others. They need rides to medical appointments. They need nutritious meals – either at a Lunch & Activity Center or delivered to their homes. They need fun activities to keep their brains nimble, and AgeWell Services is growing to meet these needs.

This issue contains our Annual Report, demonstrating the sheer number of participants and services they need in Muskegon, Oceana and Ottawa counties. We're also very proud that our annual audit highlights we're following all recommended practices to carefully document how grants, donations and other fees for services are spent. Kudos to our team for their outstanding work!

We need your help to keep serving the growing needs in our communities. Would you consider volunteering as Meals on Wheels delivery driver? Or taking someone to a medical appointment? Do you have a skill that seniors need and would be interested in learning?

Another fun way you can help is to attend our upcoming Heels for Meals & More! It's been two years since we've been able to gather safely and we're planning a huge bash on Saturday, April 23 from 6-11 p.m. at the Fricano Event Place in downtown Muskegon. It's a great way to help support all of AgeWell's programs and introduce new people to what we do! I can't wait to see you there!

Warm Regards,

Kris Collee
Executive Director

Wish List

Every gift to AgeWell Services makes a difference in a senior's life. If you want to see more tangible results of your gift, please consider funding something on our Wish List.

- | | | | |
|---|---------|---|---------|
| • Feed a homebound senior for 1 month | \$140 | • Feed a homebound senior for 1 year. | \$1,680 |
| • Air Mover Carpet/Floor Blower to dry Tanglewood Park kitchen floor to keep volunteers and team members safe. | \$250 | • Replace the engine of a 2015 Ford Taurus Vehicle used for Senior Medical Transportation | \$6,006 |
| • 10 Anti-Fatigue Mats for Tanglewood Park Kitchen | \$560 | | |
| • Paint supplies for Tanglewood Park Community Room wall mural. AgeWell art student volunteers will complete work | \$1,000 | | |

To make a wish come true, contact Diane Smith, Advancement Director 231-683-2651.

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Mission Statement

AgeWell Services invites you to redefine age!

We provide vital connections to keep you nourished, active, learning and living independently.

AgeWell Services of West Michigan

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Muskegon, MI 49440

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PLEASE HELP KEEP YOUR RECORD UP TO DATE!

Is your name and mailing address correct?

Please contact Colleen G. Steinman with any changes:

Email: Colleen@agewellservices.org

Phone: (231) 412-7966



Heels for Meals & More

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

Saturday April 23rd, 2022

6:00 PM

The Event Center at Fricano Place



For tickets or more information visit:
www.agewellservices.org/heels-for-meals