



# Behind the Wheel

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## Feeding Seniors: AgeWell Services of West Michigan Provides So Much More Than a Meal

A big part of AgeWell Services mission is to keep adults 60 and over nourished. That means creating and delivering more than 261,057 meals and 69,250 more to meal sites across three counties each year.

The 12-month average is 27,525 meals each month.

It's a herculean task!

Each meal starts with rigorous nutritional standards to provide about one-third of a senior's daily nutritional needs. A six-week rotating menu provides variety and choice. Food shortages have required substitutions frequently. It's a juggling act to obtain sufficient amounts of specific foods.

A team of 14-15 kitchen staff prepare hot meals each week day, including salads, sandwiches and additional frozen meals for future uses.



The amounts are staggering. For a typical meal using ground beef, up to 400 pounds is needed. Providing fruits and vegetables – 270 pounds of green beans and 350 pounds of applesauce, for example.

### Meal Costs

The average meal costs \$12 to produce and most funders reimburse the agency between \$8 to \$10 per meal. That means charitable donations help make up the difference.

The biggest cost for each meal is food, coming at \$2.50 to \$3.00 for each meal using last year's food costs, which have gone up over 14.4% in the last year.

Some participants pay \$6 to \$7 for each meal, usually based on their income and ability to pay. Government funding sources also require us to ask all participants to pay a voluntary contribution. Even if people can't pay, they will not go hungry. This is why the charitable gifts donors make are so critical.

### Transporting Meals

A fleet of five vans and dozens of volunteers' individual vehicles deliver meals each day to 41 home-delivered routes and 11 congregate meal locations, including contract sites.

Each stop is documented for the time, the contact with the participant and logged to ensure records are kept for each meal served. Most drivers spend about two hours daily delivering meals, often forging strong relationships with the participants on their routes.

The drivers are also the first line of defense when a participant needs help.

For socially isolated adults, this wellness check can be the difference between life and death. Just ask Lisa H. Her

(Continued on next page)

### (Feeding Seniors Continued)

mother, Mary, was found in excruciating pain during a meal delivery in North Holland. The driver promptly called for help so she could get medical attention for painful kidney stones.

“We’re both so grateful for all they do for the seniors,” Lisa explained. “They are very kind and do so much for all the seniors, many of them whom don’t have a family nearby.”

### Lunch & Activity Centers

Sometimes called congregate meal sites, these locations provide opportunities for area seniors who are still mobile to gather and enjoy a nutritious meal and social activities.

AgeWell Services provides volunteers, meals and activities for nine sites and works closely with our partners at two additional contracted sites.

The Driftwood Café in Tanglewood Park is yet another place for seniors to get a meal. It’s become a popular Discount Dining locations on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, giving adults 60 and over another option for meals, motion and morale.

### DTE Energy Holiday Meal: An Extra Special Year!

The annual DTE Energy Holiday Meal was extra EXCITING this year because we could finally host adults 60 and over in our dining areas!

The event took place on Thursday, Dec. 15. After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able host a more traditional holiday meal at nine Lunch & Activity Centers. We were at in-person capacity at our Lunch & Activity Centers for older adults who chose to dine in with us. At many of our Lunch & Activity Centers, entertainment and festive decorations truly made the atmosphere special!

For those who weren’t comfortable or able to dine in person, we had meals to go. In addition to Meals on Wheels deliveries in our three service counties, AgeWell Services’ and volunteers served over 3,200 meals.



The 2022 holiday meal menu included cranberry brie stuffed chicken breast, mashed potatoes and gravy, chunk applesauce, Prince Charles veggies, salad, dinner roll and dessert. We heard the new dessert was a hit!

The annual DTE Energy Holiday Meal event is made special by many. We partner with DTE Energy Foundation, Senior Resources of West Michigan, Muskegon County Senior Millage, Lunch & Activity Center sites, CALL 2-1-1 and United Way of the Lakeshore in a variety of ways, including financial support, volunteers, reservations and so much more. Many individuals also donate their time to volunteer with Meals on Wheels deliveries and at Lunch & Activity Centers.

## AgeWell Services Wish List

Each gift makes an impact. Easily connect and meet a need by funding an item on our Wish List!

- Used delivery van for Meals on Wheels with installation of internal safety cages and exterior signage \$30,000
- 36-inch natural gas stainless steel restaurant range with six burners and a convection oven for Driftwood Cafe. This will replace the original stove installed in 2008 \$8,000
- Heavy-duty six-bushel plastic rolling cart to hold flattened cardboard boxes from the Tanglewood Park kitchen for recycling \$406
- Feed a home-bound senior for a week \$60

To make a wish come true, contact Advancement Director Diane Smith at 231-683-2651 or [diane@agewellservices.org](mailto:diane@agewellservices.org).

## Letter from the Director

We often use the phrase “so much more than a meal” when we talk about feeding adults 60 and over. But what does it really mean?

Our meal programs provide important safety checks for homebound seniors, along with multiple opportunities for older adults to break bread together at a meal site and ward off the isolation that is so damaging for all of us at every age. Read about how one of our volunteer drivers helped a woman suffering from painful kidney stones in the cover story.

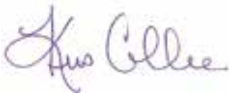
Proving seniors with nutritious (and delicious) meals has been at the core of AgeWell Services since the very beginning in 1973 when we were known as Nutritional Services for Older Americans and, then Meals on Wheels. It’s a massive undertaking that takes the efforts of hundreds of cooks, drivers, servers and our critically important volunteers.

But even more than meals, our agency has evolved and grown to include so much than just meals – because that’s what today’s adults 60 and over need and want as they redefine aging. Now we offer the Wellness Center, Senior Medical Transportation, SafeSeniors and Senior Activities. More than home-delivered meals, we have meal sites, discount dining and even the Driftwood Café at Tanglewood Park.

None of this would be possible without all the support from government agencies, granting authorities, corporations and individual donors like you. Truly, your gifts help bridge the gap between what it costs to feed seniors and what they can afford to pay. We don’t want anyone 60 and over to go hungry!

If you haven’t made your gift this year, please consider visiting our website to share the season’s holiday bounty with our neighbors 60 and over. There are two weeks left make a charitable gift in this calendar year.

Have a wonderful Holiday Season, surrounded by loved ones!



Kris Collee  
Executive Director



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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.

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# SAVE *The* DATE

AgeWell Services of West Michigan Presents

## Heels for Meals & More

SATURDAY  
**APRIL**  
**22** 2023

6PM COCKTAILS  
7PM DINNER

TRILLIUM  
EVENT CENTER

