

Service Opportunity for Seniors Meals on Wheels (SOSMOW) was gratefully awarded a grant of \$25,000 in November 2022 by Eden Township Health District. The purpose of the grant is for recruiting volunteers and our volunteer hub in Castro Valley that allows us to serve the Eden area. This hub helps us to maintain service to an expanded caseload because it reduces delivery driving time, and mileage, which makes recruiting and sustaining volunteers to deliver meals easier. Consequently, this is increasing capacity to decrease food insecurity, loneliness, and premature institutionalization. So far, this funding has allowed us to serve 83,347 meals to 869 clients towards a goal of serving 275,000 meals among 1,200 clients in the Eden Area. In addition to grant support, EHD board members have volunteered their time by delivering meals to our community. We are profoundly grateful for the valuable partnership we have established with EHD, and eagerly anticipate strengthening our collaboration in the future to further support our community.

After 56 years of providing senior nutrition services, SOSMOW is uniquely suited to meet the needs of older adults at risk of malnutrition from food insecurity and loneliness from isolation. Our service model provides much more than meals because it fosters a “system of care” for nutrition, socialization, safety, community connections, and access to other support services. Every day, we provide the dual nourishment of a healthy meal and a dose of human kindness that makes it possible for our older homebound neighbors to stay in their homes, cared for and connected, into their advanced years. Like Marjorie, who has been receiving meals since the start of the pandemic, which has allowed her to continue to age in a home she has loved for over 75 years.

Like Marjorie, many homebound older adults found themselves needing Meals on Wheels when COVID-19 hit our community. Prior to the pandemic, it was already a struggle for several of those we serve to survive (let alone thrive) in Alameda County due to the increasing costs of housing, healthcare, food, and utilities, as well as access to transportation for those with mobility issues. SOSMOW experience anecdotally suggests that food insecurity among low-income seniors in Alameda County is a growing issue, especially as this population a) increases exponentially, b) is living longer than previous generations, c) is attempting to do so on limited fixed incomes, d) is coping with the lingering stressors of COVID-19 on daily living, and e) inflation. To that end, SOSMOW served approximately in the range of 380,000 meals to 1,900 people per fiscal year prior to the pandemic. At the height of the pandemic, in fiscal year 2020-2021, we served 566,773 meals to 3,047 clients countywide and 550,954 meals to 2,725 clients in fiscal year 2021-2022. We predict that our new normal will fall somewhere between prior to the pandemic and its peak.

Do you want to become a hunger hero and support our cherished older adult community at a time when it is needed most? Whether you are rolling solo or looking to volunteer as a team with friends, colleagues, or family members, we've got something for you! Although our greatest ongoing need is for Meal Delivery Drivers, we have other volunteering opportunities, including volunteering in the kitchen, helping with administrative tasks, assembling bags of non-perishable grocery items for our clients, and helping with events. If you would like to volunteer with us, fill out the application form on our website and our Volunteer Coordinator will be in touch with you as soon as possible. This form is available on our website under the “volunteer” page or with this link <https://www.sosmow.org/volunteering-form>. You can also provide a meal by donating today at <https://www.sosmow.com/donate>. Help make a difference in your community today.



Marjorie



Mariellen Faria and Pamela Russo, from the Eden Township Healthcare District Board, at the Castro Valley Service Hub.