



## LIFT SOMEONE UP



Nationally, 1 in 6 seniors struggles with hunger. Many have no desire to cook, feel uncomfortable in the kitchen or physically unable, so they miss nutrients to keep them healthy or able to live on their own. Thankfully, we have a program right here in the Sioux Empire that focuses on this particular group, Active Generations' Senior Nutrition Program a Sioux Empire United Way funded program. They provide hot, nutritious meals to home bound residents through Meals on Wheels. Trained volunteer delivery drivers provide the eyes and ears for these clients reporting any change in status or concerns to the Program Coordinator, Samantha Locke.

Trained volunteer delivery drivers deliver the meals with a smile, and short conversation to check on the clients. This summer, SEUW staffer, Annie had the opportunity to ride along with a couple that have been delivering meals for 14 years.

Our day started right at 10:45 am as Warren and Lynda pulled up to Active Generations. The Program Coordinator, Sam carries out one red and one blue cooler with a black binder. The coolers go to the back for easy access and the binder to the front seat. We had our introductions and away we went. As we head to our first stop, Warren gives me a little background information on himself and the route. [Warren states, "We have the best route, very steady group, but I might be biased..."](#) Warren has been doing this particular route since 2000! Warren began as a Meals on Wheels driver through their church, St. John's Lutheran. Shortly after he retired from the US Post Office, he was asked to fill in on his own route as the regular driver for Friday and the last five years Lynda has joined along.

We arrive at our first stop, apartments on the west side. At this stop, there are six deliveries. Lynda uses the binder to verify if there are any special dietary needs and we

head inside. Down one hall, up the elevator, down another hall, say hello to one of the residents and back down the elevator to the next stop. It is usually pretty quick, but sometimes the residents enjoy a few minutes to talk. For many Meals on Wheels recipients, this may be the only interaction they receive for the day. As we get into the van, Warren mentions, "My longest client was our last stop, he lets us in the building and we typically talk news and politics. He is a really good guy."

Off we go, for stop two, halfway done. Lynda makes the checkoff in the binder, those that we deliver to and notes if any have comments or changes to be made at the main office.

Our discussion picks back up and when I asked why they wanted to get involved or continue to stay involved, Lynda said, "It is really a great opportunity to help those that are unable to cook or leave their homes safely to receive the proper nutrition." Warren said, "I enjoy meeting the people, they become family after so many years. You get to know them personally and you invest in who they are as a person. Plus, Sam, does a great job back at the office, we enjoy helping over there too."

As we continue through our route, we come across one client who isn't home, Lynda wasn't surprised as it was her birthday and assumed family came to take her out. There are times that someone won't be home and there are instructions about where to leave their meal so they can enjoy it in the evening or for the weekend, as many don't want to miss their meals. Every client raved about the food and were even more excited about this particular meal (hot roast beef with mashed potatoes) and showed their appreciation for Lynda and Warren.

One of our final stops was for a lady who had just celebrated her 103 birthday. She lives at home and has her lunch routine. She was very proud to show us her flowers and let us know how well she was doing. It is because of this program, Meals on Wheels, that her family has agreed to let her stay in her home this long. Without the proper nutrition and consistent meals, she and others, would not be able to continue to live on their own in the comfort of their own homes.

One client shared, "When my wife came down with cancer, she didn't like certain foods and didn't always feel like cooking. To make sure we both get the right nutrition - Meals on Wheels would be the right ticket for both of us. So I signed us up. I am 83 years old and didn't think I would be any good at planning and cooking 3 meals a day. She passed away last year, but I figured I might as well continue with MOW. It takes a lot of stress off of me because I hate planning meals and don't care for shopping either. Meals on Wheels works for me."

Meals on Wheels has 28 routes throughout Sioux Falls and Brandon. The average a volunteer delivers 16 meals within 90 minutes. In 2017, an average of 380 people were served through the Meals on Wheels program with 101,954 total meals received. Active Generations suggests confidential minimum donation of their clients, but it is not required

and many are unable to give. On average, one meal cost \$6.75, due to the support of the community and Sioux Empire United Way, Active Generations is able to continue to provide over 500 meals a day to their clients with our ever-growing community of the Sioux Empire.

"Meals on Wheels is a godsend. The people who deliver the meals are just like family and close friends. They are very pleasant. I am able to live alone and the volunteers and the mail carrier provide contact. I am thankful for this program," stated another grateful client.

As we ended our route and headed back to the office, it was truly eye-opening to be a volunteer for the day and see how appreciative all the clients were for the delicious meal and the two wonderful volunteers who delivered it. It's inspiring to see community members so dedicated that they have donated almost 2 hours every Friday for nearly 18 years! Active Generations is very lucky to have such dedication and our community as a whole is lucky to have Warren and Lynda's passion to continue to give back. Thank you for letting me ride along and enjoy the day in the life of a volunteer, I look forward to the next opportunity.

Without the support of 300 volunteers and United Way, many of the current clients would not be able to stay in their home or would not be receiving the proper nutrition on a daily basis. A gift of \$500 through Sioux Empire United Way will provide 125 meals to home bound participants who are unable to donate toward the cost, which enables 25 clients to enjoy a hot and nutritious meal for one month.

To learn more about the Meals on Wheels or any of our funded programs visit [www.seuw.org](http://www.seuw.org).



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