

Senior Services Plus and Local Mayors Visit with Meals on Wheels Clients

by Leslie Eberlin
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ALTON - During the month of March, Meals on Wheels (MOW), a service that provides meals to over 2 million older adults nationally, celebrates March for Meals. The goal of March for Meals is to raise awareness for the Meals on Wheels program, highlighting the importance of providing nutritious meals and social interaction to older adults who may struggle with food insecurity and isolation. Senior Services Plus, Inc. in Alton, IL has been providing this service for over 50 years, serving older adults throughout Madison and St. Clair counties and preparing and delivering nearly 280,000 meals in 2023 with the assistance of grants and donations by supporters.

To celebrate March for Meals, SSP invited local mayors to join them in-route, riding along to deliver meals and visit with MOW clients. “Interactions between delivery drivers and clients don’t stop with just the hand-off of a bag of prepared meals,” says Leslie Eberlin, SSP’s Marketing and Development Coordinator. “Our drivers are encouraged to keep an eye out for the well-being of our clients and have been able to spot safety issues at residences and report back to SSP that a client may need home repairs or other services that SSP offers. But they are also friendly faces, and a kind conversation, a social interaction that many home-bound seniors appreciate immensely. It’s important for our local mayors to see that in action.”

Alton Mayor David Goins, Granite City Mayor Michael Parkinson, Roxana Mayor Marty Reynolds, and Wood River Mayor Tom Stalcup participated in this year’s March for Meals with SSP. Over the course of three mornings, SSP drivers and staff met with mayors and MOW clients, learning more about the lives and needs of those SSP serves.

William Coghlan of Wood River greeted us with a smile and an open door, having nothing but praise for MOW and David, his dedicated MOW driver. “He is just awesome, so pleasurable—I look forward to seeing him!” says Coghlan. Coghlan, a proud grandparent of four, struggles with his COPD, making it difficult to shop and prepare meals. Meals on Wheels “gives me at least one good meal a day. About 3 minutes in the microwave does the trick!” When asked what his favorite meal was, he had a hard time deciding, stating “Several of them, I like them all!” but ultimately decided on the meatloaf or sweet and sour chicken.

During the visit to Roxana, Mayor Reynolds and SSP staff met with Linda Watson, a former teacher who is battling lung cancer. MOW really helps her, especially when she comes home tired from chemotherapy treatments. “They really come in handy and are really good!” says Watson, who is also a big fan of the meatloaf.

At the final visit, Mayor Stalcup and SSP staff visited with client William McCune, a Wood River resident, who has been receiving meals for a few months. As they all spoke in the client’s driveway, SSP staff took note of other services McCune and his wife needed. He shared with the Mayor and SSP staff some obstacles his wife is facing that SSP’s Home Repair Department may be able to assist with.

“It was an honor to help deliver to Meals on Wheels customers,” says Mayor Stalcup. “It is a pleasure to see their faces light up when David knocks on their doors to deliver the meals. What an asset he is to the program, getting to know the people and establishing a great relationship, which is one aspect that makes your program so successful.”

There are three ways to support the continuation of this essential program: donate, volunteer, and advocate. Supporting SSP's Meals on Wheels program helps over 1,000 older adults in both Madison and St. Clair counties. To learn more about SSP's Meals on Wheels program, visit the website at www.seniorservicesplus.org or call 618-465-3298. Donations to the program are greatly appreciated and can also be made via our website. If you or loved one is in need of Meals on Wheels, call 618-236-5863 to schedule an in-home assessment with Southern Illinois Visiting Nurses Association (SIVNA) to see if you qualify.

SENIOR SERVICES PLUS

Senior Services Plus, Inc. is a 501(c) not-for-profit organization established to enrich the lives of older adults through programs and services, for everyone aging successfully. Senior Services Plus, Inc. has been providing services for older adults since 1973. Our mission is: To provide opportunities and resources to individuals as they age.