



Meal options meet the needs of a diverse population

When it comes to food, one size doesn't fit all. Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels is taking steps to see that every homebound neighbor not only has food to eat, but that they have the right food to meet their medical needs, culture and lifestyle.

Janet is one of several YMOW clients who receives medically friendly meals in lieu of YMOW's regular diabetic-friendly meal offerings. She receives five dinners a week, each tailored to her need for a low-sodium diet.

"It's been a real lifesaver for me," Janet said.

The meals she receives are made by Mobile Meals of Toledo and delivered by YMOW to her door each Wednesday. The boxes of frozen dinners include a variety of Janet's favorites, including chicken alfredo and chicken florentine.

Janet said her blood pressure is lower since starting her medically friendly meals, and she feels better knowing that she's eating what her body needs.

Karen Schlegel of Mobile Meals of Toledo said the frozen meals provided to YMOW are good for renal patients, too. Designed

to be low in potassium and sodium, the meals avoid things like potatoes, squash, spinach, tomatoes and dairy. The meals are prepared in Toledo and picked up every other week by a YMOW Client Care Associate. Once the meals arrive back at YMOW, they

are divided into variety packs and delivered to the client's door.

"Providing our clients with food isn't always enough," said Alison Foreman, president and CEO of YMOW. "What people choose to eat is very personal and often important to their physical, mental and emotional health."

Alison said a handful of insurance plans already include medically friendly meals such as YMOW's renal and cardiac diet as a benefit. She said she hopes to see more insurance companies consider "food as medicine" soon.

Like Janet, YMOW client Tom enjoys the frozen meals he receives each week, and not only because they taste good. A recent doctor's exam revealed that the meals also are having an effect on Tom's health.

"All of my tests came out good. They're happy with what I'm doing," he said. And so is Tom.

While some diets are meant to control existing conditions, others are adopted as a preventative measure. 64-year-old Tarya is very particular about what goes into her body and often chooses YMOW's vegetarian options over the traditional menu choices. She particularly likes the corn bread and beans, which offer her plenty of flavor and protein while avoiding ingredients she tries to avoid.

"I love that," she said.

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YMOW client Tom



YMOW client Tarya

Board member honored as Volunteer of the Quarter

Brent Kolb has never been one to sit idly by while there's work to be done. And in his first year as a member of the YMOW board of directors, he's found plenty of opportunities to pitch in.

"I can't stand by and watch people do stuff without at least offering to help," said Brent, YMOW's volunteer of the quarter for the second quarter of 2022.



Even as a kid, Brent said he was always offering to help in the kitchen and around the house. A recent volunteer appreciation event became a classic example of Brent's can-do attitude.

"My intent was just to show up and be supportive," he said, but when the skies opened up, he joined in rescuing supplies and equipment from the rain.

At YMOW, Brent has delivered meals, attended fundraising events and helped to recruit event sponsors. His own business, Dexter Family Dentistry, is a YMOW sponsor, and he never missed the chance to tell anyone who will listen about the work of YMOW and the people the organization serves.

He said his job as a board member is to learn all he can about the organization.

"The best way to do that is to immerse yourself," he said.

"I'm more than flattered," Brent said of being named volunteer of the quarter.

As much as he has given to YMOW, Brent said he believes he has gained even more from his experience as a member of the board. He's gained an understanding of the inner workings of a small non-profit, about the community, and about the needs of those served by YMOW.

"It is eye opening how hard that team works and how much they do on a daily basis," said Brent, who is an important part of the team himself.

"I should leave the organization in a better place than when I joined it," he said, and he's well on his way to doing just that.

YMOW's first Community Health Worker connects clients to the help they need

Whether it's by preparing their favorite meal or just taking time to listen, Traci Bibins' favorite thing to do is help a neighbor in need. As YMOW's first Community Health Worker, she's made helping her neighbors a full-time job.

Traci joined YMOW in March 2019 as a Client Care Associate, delivering meals to clients and checking in on their general well-being. When the chance arose in early 2022 to become a certified Community Health Worker, she didn't hesitate at the opportunity. Traci will finish her training at the Henry Ford Community College in mid August, completing her certification as a Community Health Worker.

During her months of training Traci learned motivational interviewing skills to facilitate home visits, and tools to properly document her visits. She gained an understanding of trauma and the support needed to recover, and she became familiar



with the resources available in the community. As a Community Health Worker, it's her job to problem solve and to connect clients with the support they need.

Traci also learned about case management and is helping to train YMOW interns in how to assess clients. By helping with intake and assessments, Traci supports the YMOW social work team.

As a Community Health Worker, Traci is out in peoples' homes, helping them to find ways to live healthy lives as they age in place..

"I'm basically helping them to be more independent," she said.

YMOW President and CEO Alison Foreman said the promotion of Traci from CCA to CHW is a big step toward providing homebound neighbors in Ypsilanti with the wraparound support they need to age in place.

"We are so fortunate that Traci was willing to take on this challenge to become our first community health worker," Alison said. "This is a big step forward for Traci, for YMOW and for our homebound neighbors."

Summer intern leaves her mark on YMOW

Chatting with YMOW summer intern Ranjana Angamuthu, it's hard to know who got more out of the experience – YMOW or Ranjana.

A student at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, Ranjana came to YMOW through the university's Development Summer Internship Program and spent much of her time supporting the work of Development Manager Madison.



"This internship really helped with gaining skills that will be valuable in any career," Ranjana said.

In addition to shadowing Madison and learning about how YMOW and non-profits function and raise money, Ranjana was tasked with creating and carrying out a series of summer events to raise awareness and money to support YMOW.

From concept to execution, Ranjana took the lead on the Welcoming Wellness event in June, the Food Truck Rally in July and the Pets for P.A.L.S. event in August, raising well over \$7,000 and spreading the word of YMOW's work throughout the community.

Ranjana also took part in grant writing and along the way learned about YMOW and the needs not only of the Ypsilanti community, but of the aging population.

"I was surprised by the lack of grant opportunities to serve older people," Ranjana said. "I believe that they deserve access to the same basic needs that we all have."

While working with and for older adults was new to Ranjana, serving her community is not. She has volunteered for the Red Cross and for a food bank and believes in giving time to help others.

Ranjana said she learned many skills during her months at YMOW, not the least of which is the ability to be flexible when things don't go according to plan. When a vendor canceled just two days before the food truck event, Ranjana worked hard to find a replacement.

"That's a big lesson and takeaway that I'll be carrying with me to school and to all aspects of my life," she said.

Madison said Ranjana's work will leave a lasting impression on her, the organization and the people that YMOW serves.

"She is any non-profit's ideal, dream intern," Madison said. "Watching Ranjana become more confident in her skills and her role within the organization was such a joy to witness. Her growth was amazing to watch."

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YMOW clients over 60 years old can choose a standard or vegetarian dinner option each day. Two-bean tamale pie, broccoli cheese casserole and vegetable stir fry are tasty ways for YMOW clients to exercise a vegetarian lifestyle.

Alison said there is plenty of opportunity to expand upon what YMOW has started. She hopes to one day offer Kosher meals, Halal meals and soft food diets. Soon, YMOW hopes to begin grocery shopping service. This would allow clients with specific needs or preferences to further customize the foods they receive.

"A meal does so much more than fill our stomach," Alison said. "We want to provide for our clients with the foods they need to nourish their bodies, minds and souls."

FOOD *for* THOUGHT

Food for Thought is published by Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels. For comments or questions, contact Sandy Bosch at sandy@ymow.org, or 734-217-4578.

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Join the YMOW mission as a member of the Board

The YMOW Board of Directors is made up of volunteers from throughout the community who are committed to helping to provide food and support to our community's homebound neighbors. Members of the Board of Directors make guiding decisions about YMOW and its services while supporting the organization as community ambassadors.

New members are needed!
To learn more, please contact President/CEO Alison Foreman at alison@ymow.org, or visit ymow.org/volunteer/join-the-board.

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Our Mission

To provide nutritious meals and social contact for the homebound elderly, ill and disabled in eastern Washtenaw County, enabling them to live healthier, safer and more independent lives.

Our Vision:

A community where every senior feels nourished, valued and supported.

Get Groovy at Meals on Heels: '70s Edition

Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels invites you to experience the Fabulously Funky '70s at Meals on Heels: '70s Edition. Our annual fundraising event will be held from 7 - 9 p.m. Saturday, September 24, via Zoom.

Join us for:

- Craft beers by 734 Brewing Co., Ypsilanti
- Delicious hors d'oeuvres by Simply Scrumptious
- Live music by Funkwagon
- Cocktail demonstration by The Bar at 327 Braun Court
- Prizes for best '70s outfit and shoes
- Silent auction

Tickets can be purchased at ymow.org/moh.

Each \$125 ticket includes access to the online event, beverages and food. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres will be available for pickup the day of the event.

Please help us meet our fundraising goal of \$100,000 – enough to provide 22,000 hot meals for Ypsilanti's homebound seniors.

Link to ticket sales: <https://ymow.org/moh>

