



# FOOD *for* THOUGHT

Spring 2023

## Meals on Wheels gets man back on his feet

*Receiving help from Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels isn't always about aging comfortably. Sometimes, it's about gaining the strength to get back to living.*

When Mark suffered a serious leg injury and resulting infection in 2020, he knew it would impact his ability to get around. What he didn't know is that it also would limit his access to food. Even standing at the microwave was painful, and driving was out of the question. Other options for getting food to his table were just too expensive.

"I would just go without," the 71-year-old said. But without proper nutrition,

Mark's leg was unlikely to heal. Meanwhile, the isolation caused by his injury was causing him to feel depressed.

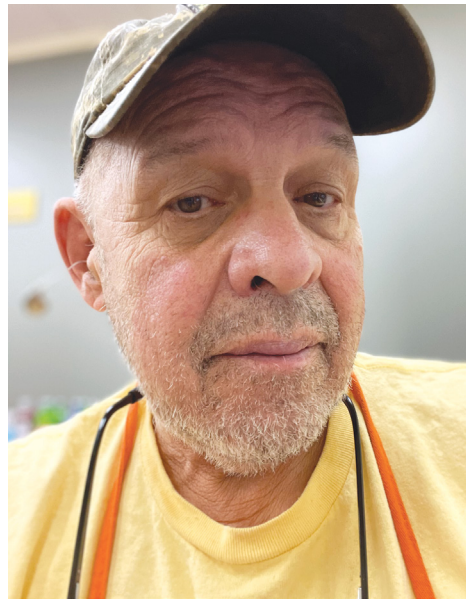
"It was a struggle. It's always an option just to give up," he said.

But Mark didn't give up. Instead, he took the advice of an acquaintance and called

Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels. YMOW, Mark said, gave him everything he needed to literally get back on his feet.

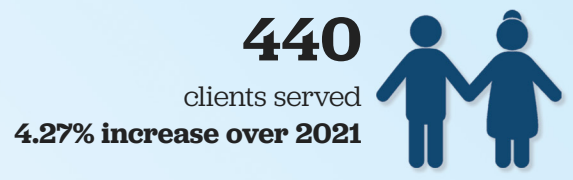
In addition to nutrition, knowing that someone would visit each Monday, Wednesday and Friday gave him

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YMOW client, Mark

## 2022 by the numbers



## Client Care Associate calls his job the best he's ever had

**W**hen Joe Waldrop applied to join the YMOW team, he didn't realize the position came with a paycheck. Three and a half years later, he said he would still do the job for nothing.

"It's the best job I've ever had," said Joe, one of eight Client Care Associates on the YMOW staff.

Joe's day as a CCA begins with a trip to Michigan Medicine to load up the hundreds of meals that will be distributed that day. With the help of another CCA, they deliver used coolers back for cleaning and fill the van with coolers containing the day's hot and cold meals. Once back at YMOW, the CCAs and other staff members and volunteers take the coolers inside, where the meals are sorted into routes. Staff and volunteers carefully count each item to be sure every client has just what they need.

While he loves his job, Joe said it didn't take long before he understood why it is a paid position, and why it carries the title Client Care Associate.

"There's so much more to it than delivering meals," he said.

With every knock on a door, Joe quickly assesses each client's general well being. He looks for changes in their appearance or behavior, and notes any physical conditions that might require attention. On one such visit, a woman answered the door wearing open-toed slippers that revealed nails in desperate need of trimming. Joe reported the situation to YMOW's social work team, who found someone to help. On another visit he noticed that a client's porch was rotting. He told YMOW social workers,

who found someone to make the porch safe again.

Even when all seems well, Joe knows his visit is important. His might be the only smile a person sees in a day – even if that smile comes from behind a protective mask.

Three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, YMOW staff and volunteers still wear masks to protect themselves and their clients. But at least one client recently broke the social distancing rules. In doing so, she reminded Joe once again of the important role he plays in the lives of the people on his route.



"She ran up and gave me a big hug," Joe said of the client, who then told him of a devastating health diagnosis. She just needed someone else to know, Joe said.

"You realize how lonely some of these people are," Joe said. "I wouldn't trade it for the world."

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## Meals on Wheels gets man back on his feet

**(continued from front)**

something to look forward to and an important reminder that he was not alone.

"The people were just really nice, and they made me feel part of something. It gave me a little hope that there are people who care," he said.

After several months of service from Meals on Wheels, Mark was well enough not only to cook for himself, but to get a part-time job. After experiencing homelessness following his accident, he now has his own place to live and is gaining even more strength as he visits the gym several times a week.

"I was trying to do it myself, and it was nearly impossible," Mark said. "There are probably a lot of people out there who need help and are too embarrassed to ask for it."

But receiving meals literally saved his life, Mark said, and gave him hope to get to where he is today.

"You feel like Mother is home when you get a meal," he said. "It was something I could count on."



## A knock on the door can save a life

A wellness check is an important part of every YMOW visit. One recent visit likely saved a life.

YMOW volunteer Debbie said she looks forward to stopping at Mary's house while on route with CCA Eric each Wednesday and Friday.

"She always answers right away with a smile on her face," Debbie said.

But on February 15, Debbie's knock went unanswered, except for a faint call for help coming from inside Mary's house. Unable to open the locked door, Eric called for help while Debbie spoke with Mary through the door, ensuring her that help was on the way.

It was only a few minutes, but Debbie said it felt like forever before police, fire and paramedics arrived to find Mary on the floor of her kitchen. Mary's son would later tell YMOW staff that his mother had fallen in the bathroom the day before. Knowing that YMOW would be there with her meals on Wednesday morning, Mary managed to move herself to within shouting distance of the door so that she could be heard when Debbie and Eric arrived.

Mary knew she could count on YMOW, and YMOW did not disappoint.

"We were just doing what we were supposed to do," Debbie said. "I'm just glad we were there for her."

Mary is out of the hospital and continuing her recovery in a rehab facility. Debbie said she looks forward to the day Mary is back home, eagerly greeting Debbie at the door once again.



## Spring appeal is on its way

Spring is on the way, and so is our direct mail fundraising campaign!

Please watch your mailboxes in the coming weeks for your chance to support Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels as we prepare to support our homebound neighbors through the coming months.

*Did you know that government funding accounts for less than 10 percent of the money needed to care for our homebound neighbors each year?*

Individual donations like yours are essential and needed more than ever.



## Expanded menu choices meet varied needs of YMOW clients

YMOW is excited to partner with FedUp Ministries of Ann Arbor to offer vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free meals to our homebound senior neighbors.

Through a pilot partnership, FedUp Ministries will create menus to meet the dietary needs of our diverse population, some of whom prefer specialized diets for cultural, ethical or religious reasons. Some require these special diets to maintain their health.

YMOW strives to meet the nutritional needs of every client. This partnership is a big step toward making that happen.

YMOW also has begun offering pureed and mechanical meals for those who have trouble chewing, swallowing or cutting a typical meal. Prepared by Mobile Meals of Toledo, these options expand YMOW's capacity to serve our senior neighbors.



# FOOD *for* THOUGHT

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

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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.

## Save the Date for Meals on Heels: Vegas

Our biggest fundraising event of the year happens Friday, May 5, at the Riverside Arts Center.

Join Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels for an upscale night of Vegas-style gaming. Play poker or blackjack, try your luck at the roulette wheel or the craps table, all to benefit homebound seniors. Enjoy craft cocktails, delectable hors d'oeuvres, art, music and auctions.

Visit [mealsonheels.eventsmart.com](http://mealsonheels.eventsmart.com) to purchase tickets, sponsor the event or learn more. Tickets are just \$125 when purchased before March 31, so don't wait!



*Save the Date 5.5.23*

*5:30-8:30 pm*

MEALS  
*on*  
HEELS

*Vegas*



*at  
The Riverside Arts Center*



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