



Fall 2023

## YMOW CEO Alison Foreman shares heartfelt farewell after decade of service



To the Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor area community –

It has been my absolute honor and privilege over the last ten and a half years to help homebound seniors throughout the community to feel **nourished, valued, and supported**. The YMOW vision is not just a lofty statement, it is the way I feel about what has been achieved for the organization and for myself professionally.

**In my decade at YMOW, we have nourished the community by:**

- Eliminating our waitlist in 2013 and continuing to remain a no-wait service provider, ensuring that no one in need goes hungry.
- Expanding to provide two meals a day for all clients in 2014, adding weekend meals in 2019, and offering medically tailored meals beginning in 2021.
- Adding countless wraparound support services to ensure our seniors can age in place in the living situation that meets their needs.

### The work of YMOW is valued by the seniors and you.

- Over 92% of YMOW clients report feeling more independent as a result of the daily meal delivery and social contact from the volunteers and client care associates.
- We leverage every dollar that is donated to gain financial support from community and private funders like the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, the United Way of Washtenaw County, Exhale Funders (including the Ralph Wilson Jr. Foundation), and the Vera & Joseph Dresner Foundation.

### Throughout my time at YMOW, I have been supported by the staff, board, volunteers and community.

- Volunteers provided more than 3,000 hours of support in the first nine months of 2023 alone.
- YMOW's dedicated staff delivers in challenging weather, on the holidays and continued uninterrupted service throughout the pandemic.
- The community continues to participate in our fundraisers, including Pi(e) Day, Meals on Heels, and our newest fundraiser, the Wonderland Breakfast & Creature Carnival. **(continued on page 3)**

## YMOW to celebrate 50 years with eyes on the future

2024 will mark 50 years since Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels served its first meals to homebound seniors in the community. But rather than look back at what we've done, YMOW's 50th anniversary will serve as an opportunity to prepare for the work that lies ahead.

On Jan. 1, 2024, we will launch our "Give More to Feed More" project, and we're counting on each of you to make it a success.

There is an aging crisis on the horizon. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 24% of Michigan's population will be 60 and older by the year 2030, an increase of 32% from 2012. By 2040, the number of Washtenaw County seniors living in poverty will more than double.

We are staring down a perfect storm, and how we get through it depends entirely on the preparations we make today. **(continued on page 3)**



## Volunteer of quarter makes Mondays easier at YMOW

Every Monday morning, YMOW can count on a delivery of fresh fruits, vegetables and other treats from Food Gatherers. And not far behind is volunteer Sylvia Bethea, YMOW's volunteer of the quarter.

Sylvia sorts the bulk delivery of produce into individual, manageable portions that are sent out with each client's regular meals that same day.



"I'm always a helper," said Sylvia, whose dedication to Meals on Wheels began decades before she became a member of the YMOW team. She worked part time for a Meals on Wheels program in Howell nearly 40 years ago.

After retiring from Eastern Michigan University about 10 years ago, Sylvia said she welcomed the chance to give back to the Ypsilanti community, where she has lived for 18 years. Along with YMOW, she also volunteers at the Ypsilanti Thrift Store and works with the Ladies Literary Society. Prior to COVID, Sylvia brought arts and crafts to patients at University of Michigan Hospital as an "art cart lady." And several years ago, Sylvia's home, including her whimsical Wonderland-themed laundry room, was featured on YMOW's annual holiday home tour.

"I'm so glad for Sylvia's thoughtful work," said YMOW Supportive Services Manager Chris Brown. He said knowing that Sylvia will be on hand makes YMOW's busy Mondays easier on the entire YMOW team.

Chris said Sylvia is always willing to lend a hand with whatever needs to be done.

"I'm sensitive to peoples' needs," said Sylvia, whose own mother lived to be 102.

"It wasn't without the help of her children," said Sylvia. As a volunteer with YMOW, she hopes to make aging a little easier and more pleasant for someone else's parent. Family, Sylvia said, doesn't require a biological connection.

"My neighborhood is my family," she said, and she plans to keep helping them for as long as she can.

## Annual award goes to Michigan Medicine's Patient Food & Nutrition Services

The Cathy Day Step Up To The Plate Award is presented each year to a person, group or organization that consistently demonstrates the "can do" attitude of our late friend, team member and board president Cathy Day.

This year, we honor Michigan Medicine's Patient Food & Nutrition Services (PFANS).

PFANS has prepared meals for Ann Arbor Meals on Wheels since the 1970s. When it expanded operations to accommodate YMOW in 2019, PFANS also expanded clients' access to more vegetarian options, as well as weekend nutrition, which YMOW hopes to resume in 2024.

Changing to meet the needs of our clients has never been a problem for the PFANS team, said Kelly Schwartz, YMOW's Director of Operations.

"When COVID happened, we needed to adjust our delivery schedule," Kelly said. "PFANS stepped up and created a plan to provide meals three days a week, ensuring clients had the same amount of food as before."

Kristin Sisty, associate director for patient food service for the adult hospital at Michigan Medicine, said that for many members of the team, preparing meals for the area's seniors is much more than a job.

"We have a very, very passionate team," she said, some of whom have been preparing meals for Meals on Wheels for decades.

In short, the PFANS team "steps up" every day and never hesitates to adjust to meet the needs of our homebound neighbors. Whether it's a snow storm or a global pandemic, YMOW can always count on PFANS.





## YMOW CEO steps down

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- I know with confidence that the staff, volunteers and community will continue to support YMOW during its yearlong 50th anniversary celebration and its campaign to fund 1 million meals in the next five years.

My decision to leave Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels is bittersweet, but I am not going far as I head down US-23 to serve as Mobile Meals of Toledo's next CEO. Like YMOW, Mobile Meals of Toledo is part of the Meals on Wheels America organization and is dedicated to supporting seniors in their homes. In my new role, I will continue to support Ypsilanti indirectly, as Mobile Meals is the provider of medically tailored meals for YMOW clients. I also plan to stay active in the Washtenaw County community, advocating for funding for senior services at the local, county, state, and national level.

I thank you all for an amazing journey and leave knowing that the YMOW team and community will continue to support its homebound senior neighbors.

Alison Foreman

## YMOW celebrates 50 years

(continued from page 1)

Our goals are ambitious, to say the least. But with your help, we know it can be done.

Please join us as we embark on this journey by:

- Subscribing to our eblasts. Send an email to [sandy@ymow.org](mailto:sandy@ymow.org).
- Attending fundraising events happening throughout the year.  
Visit [ymow.org/news-events](http://ymow.org/news-events).
- Considering an increase in your financial gifts to YMOW.  
Visit [ymow.org/donate](http://ymow.org/donate).
- Becoming a YMOW volunteer.  
Visit [ymow.org/volunteer](http://ymow.org/volunteer).

## Client does her part to support fellow seniors

Facebook can be a great way to reconnect with friends and communicate with family. YMOW client Marilyn recently learned it can also be a tool for real change.

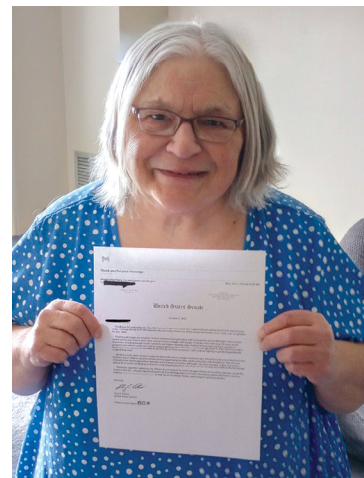
Marilyn was scrolling through Facebook when she saw a post from Meals on Wheels America urging people to send a letter encouraging their senators to support senior nutrition programs. Funding for programs like Meals on Wheels is in jeopardy while the legislature works to approve a federal budget.

"They had it all filled out for you," said Marilyn, who only had to add her name, address and email.

Marilyn said she was surprised to open her email a few days later to find a response from Senator Gary Peters thanking her for her concern, and for taking time to write.

"I will continue fighting to get Michiganders the support they need," Peters wrote.

Marilyn said she is proud to play a small part in providing for others through her simple act of writing to her senator, and empowered by having her voice heard.



## Our heroes return Tuesday, Nov. 28

This Giving Tuesday, the adventure continues. Watch as our band of Dungeons & Dragons heroes embarks on a virtual quest to bring food to those in need. Guests can watch via the event website (just scan the QR code) or on the YMOW YouTube Channel, [@ysilantimealsonwheels2666](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCysilantimealsonwheels2666) at 6 p.m. Tuesday, November 28.

Support your homebound neighbors while enjoying an epic adventure from the comfort of your couch and support YMOW by donating to guide the game's heroes and villains.

Check the website for updates and more information, including how to join us in person!

Thank you to [Domino's Pizza](#) and [Zingerman's](#) for sponsoring this event!



*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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## Want to go paperless?

If you would prefer to receive *Food for Thought* via email, please send a note to **[sandy@ymow.org](mailto:sandy@ymow.org)**.



## Save the date:

- Pi(e) & a Pint **Thursday, March 14**
- Meals on Heels **Friday, April 26**



## 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.

## Make the holidays bright for your homebound neighbors

**E**ach year YMOW tries to make the holidays special for every client with a special meal and gifts. Of course, collecting and assembling gifts for 250 people is no simple task, and we could use a little help!

This year, we hope to fill gift bags with items that can offer comfort, entertainment and enjoyment to our homebound neighbors. Please consider donating one or more of the items listed below. Multiple purchases of a single item are more helpful in fulfilling our wish list than single purchases of multiple items. Because we want every client to feel special this holiday and every day, only new, unused items will be included in our gift bags.

Help us fill our holiday wish list by donating the following items, many of which can be purchased directly from our Amazon wishlist, [ymow.org/donate/amazon](https://www.amazon.com/?ref=AHSW_ASHS_Wishlist).

- Large-print word search puzzle or coloring books (up to 25 of each)
- Large/thick pens, markers, and colored pencils (up to 25)
- One-size-fits-most fuzzy socks (up to 25)
- One-size-fits-most fuzzy hats or gloves (up to 15)
- Warm scarves (up to 50)
- Washable lap blankets (up to 10)
- Pocket facial tissues (up to 50)
- Lip balm (up to 25)
- Small tubes of UNSCENTED hand and foot lotion (up to 25)
- Small tins or containers of holiday treats (up to 25)
- Grocery bag size gift bags (up to 250)

All donations can be sent directly to YMOW, 1110 W. Cross St., Ypsilanti, MI, 48197, or please call 734-487-9669 to schedule a dropoff.