



Subscribe

Flash Sale! Unlimited Digital Access - \$5 for the first month

Advertisement

Federal cuts threaten free meal delivery program for older Washtenaw County adults

Updated: Apr. 03, 2025, 4:58 p.m. | Published: Apr. 03, 2025, 4:51 p.m.



Volunteers and employees, in this file photo, pack meals from Michigan Medicine at Meals on Wheels' headquarters inside First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti, 1110 W. Cross St. in Ypsilanti. Federal cuts threaten the program providing daily meals, wellness checks and social connection for homebound older adults in Washtenaw County, Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels says. Jacob Hamilton/MLive.com



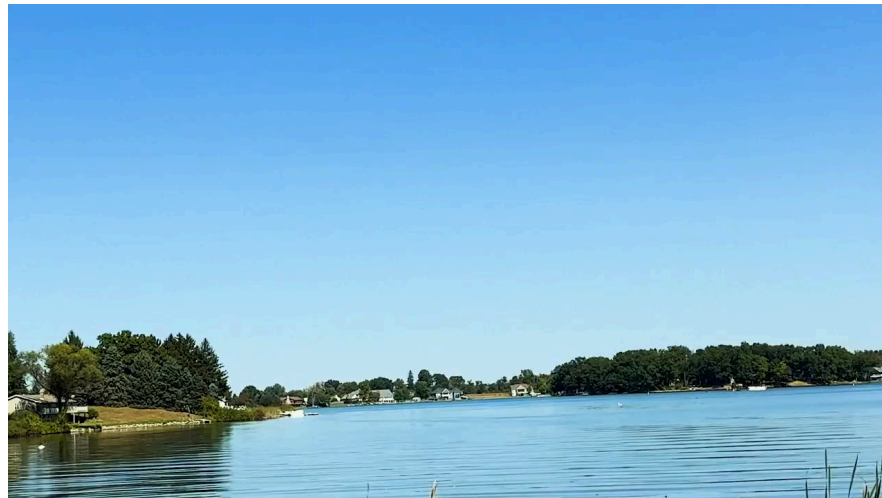
You have been gifted this Subscriber Exclusive article and will have access until Apr 10, 2025.

By **Sophia Kalakailo** | skalakailo@mlive.com

YPSILANTI, MI – Federal cuts threaten a program providing daily meals, wellness checks and social connection for homebound older adults in Washtenaw County, a local organization says.

Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels doesn't have a clear path forward following the restructuring of the Department of Health and Human Services, said President and CEO Barbara Niess-May, and it's putting seniors at risk of hunger and isolation.

Advertisement



The organization receives half of its food funding – about \$250,000 – from the Administration for Community Living, or ACL, which was dismantled. Staff members were integrated into other HHS agencies, according to an [announcement](#) from the department last week. It funded programs that run senior centers and distributes 216 million meals a year to older and disabled people, Niess-May said.

Former head of the ACL Alison Barkoff said 40% of staff from the agency lost their jobs, [NPR reported](#). Barkoff said she learned this by talking to multiple members of her former staff.

It's unclear exactly how the federal cuts will impact the program, Niess-May said. The organization hasn't received any direct communication from HHS. "We're completely in the dark," Niess-May said.

Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels serves 450 people who are overwhelmingly low-income in Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, Superior Township, and Pittsfield Township, according to Niess-May. They have a median monthly income of \$1,300 and more than 30% earn \$1,000 or less per month.

RELATED: [Michigan food banks face \\$4.3M cut: How will they replace 2 million meals?](#)

Many of the older adults they serve also live alone, she said. This puts them at heightened risks of social isolation, Niess-May said, which has been linked to serious health conditions, including heart disease and stroke.

HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy has said bureaucracies like HHS become wasteful and inefficient over time. The restructuring will make the agency more responsive and efficient, while ensuring essential health services remain intact, HHS officials have said.

The need for home-delivered meal programs is rising, Niess-May said. There are 1,700 eligible people in total that Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels could be serving, based on the organization's analysis of census data examining age, homebound status and income level. Its service area starts south of Whitmore Lake and spans just north of Milan.

"We're going to continue doing all that we can with what we have, it just won't be robust and continue to meet the very real needs of those we serve or could be serving."

Niess-May also noted that food banks across Michigan are facing cuts. The U.S. Department of Agriculture [canceled \\$4.3 million worth of emergency food](#) — roughly 2 million meals — for low-income households.

Read More: [Michigan food banks face \\$4.3M cut: How will they replace 2 million meals?](#)

The people Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels serves often rely on food pantries to make ends meet, she said. Food pantries and other types of aid also keep them out of nursing homes because they can age in place, she said.

“What it means is that seniors are going to be even more food insecure,” Niess-May said.

Washtenaw County’s [millage for senior programs and services](#) passed by voters last November has expanded local services for older adults, she said, but it’s not enough to cover growing demand.

“We can’t let our seniors down,” Niess-May said.

Want more Ann Arbor-area news? Bookmark the [local Ann Arbor news page](#), the [Ypsilanti-area news page](#) or sign up for the free “[3@3 Ann Arbor](#)” daily newsletter.



Stories by **Sophia Kalakailo**

Expanded cinema, filmmaking competitions: Ypsilanti film festival returns for a 6th year

These two commutes outside Detroit are Michigan’s most enjoyable, survey says

Seven car pile-up on U.S. 23 injures six near Brighton

Crash shuts down U.S. 23 near Brighton

If you purchase a product or register for an account through a link on our site, we may receive compensation. By using this site, you consent to our [User Agreement](#) and agree that your clicks, interactions, and personal information may be collected, recorded, and/or stored by us and social media and other third-party partners in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#).

Around the Web

Explore Trading Tools

With TradeStation's advanced platform built for self-directed traders.

TradeStation | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Discover the power of Ooni Koda 2's new features

Ooni Koda 2 - Portable, easy to use and now in a new color option

Ooni Pizza Ovens | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Farmers Trust This Simple Trick to Keep Mice Away—Now You Can Too

Vamoose | Sponsored

New Ooni Koda 2 is a must have for pizza lovers

Ooni Koda 2 - Portable, easy to use and now in a new color option

Ooni Pizza Ovens | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Your Browser Can Convert PDFs Now (Discover How)

aiBrowser | Sponsored

[Download](#)

President's Proposed IRS Reform To Forgive Tax Debt for Millions of Americans [Check Eligibility]

The White House announced on Tuesday a plan to forgive over \$300 million in taxpayer debt in 2025. If enacted, it would be the largest tax forgiveness windfall in American history.

Fresh Start Information | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Sponsored

Last Warrior:Survival Game

A new post-apocalyptic survival strategy building game. Download Now and Play it For Free.

Last Warrior | Sponsored

Play Now

Empty Cruises Departing That Seniors Can Book For Cheap

Find and Compare Low Cost Cruises.

SearchPad | Search Ads | Sponsored

Explore

Looking For Best SUVs? Get top results now

See search results for Best SUVs. View top options now.

DealsSpirit | Sponsored

[Search Now](#)

A new post-apocalyptic survival strategy building game.

The zombie virus has swept the world and survivors have built shelters to fight back.

Last Warrior | Sponsored

[Play Now](#)

Best 2025 Investment Ideas (Get Started)

GoSearches | [Search Ads](#) | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

6 Things Not to Do When Selecting a Financial Advisor

Avoid some of the common mistakes in looking for an advisor.

SmartAsset | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Kid Rock concert gets scathing review

MLive.com

‘You going home now, baby.’ Saginaw man acquitted of murder on grounds of self-defense



▼ About Us

[Contact Us](#)

[Jobs at MLive](#)

[MLive Media Group](#)

[Our Team](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Accessibility Statement](#)

▼ Subscriptions

[MLive.com](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[The Ann Arbor News](#)

[The Bay City Times](#)

[The Flint Journal](#)

[The Grand Rapids Press](#)

[Jackson Citizen Patriot](#)

[Kalamazoo Gazette](#)

[Muskegon Chronicle](#)

[The Saginaw News](#)

▼ Already a Subscriber

[Manage your Subscription](#)

[Place a Vacation Hold](#)

[Make a Payment](#)

[Delivery Feedback](#)

▼ MLive Sections

[Jobs](#)

[Autos](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[Rentals](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[News](#)

[Business](#)

[Sports](#)

[Advice](#)

[High School Sports](#)

[Betting](#)

[Life](#)

[Opinion](#)

[Obituaries](#)

▼ Your Regional News Pages

[Saginaw](#)

[Jackson](#)

[Kalamazoo](#)

[Muskegon](#)

[Ann Arbor](#)

[Bay City](#)

[Flint](#)

[Grand Rapids](#)

▼ Mobile

[Mobile apps](#)

▼ More on MLive

[Video](#)

[Weather](#)

[Post a job](#)

[Archives](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Sell your car](#)

[Sell/Rent your home](#)

[Sponsor Content](#)

▼ Follow Us

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[RSS](#)



Use of and/or registration on any portion of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#), (updated 8/1/2024) and acknowledgement of our [Privacy Policy](#), and [Your Privacy Choices and Rights](#) (updated 1/1/2025).

© 2025 Advance Local Media LLC. All rights reserved ([About Us](#)).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Advance Local.

[Community Rules](#) apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.

YouTube's privacy policy is available [here](#) and **YouTube's terms of service** is available [here](#).

[▶ Ad Choices](#)