



# BEHIND THE WHEEL

THE KING'S DAUGHTERS DINNER WAGON NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NUMBER 78

*More than just a meal!*

SPRING 2009

## 40 Years of Service to the Elderly

(by Christine Dawson, Dinner Wagon volunteer)

As I walk up to the front door, I know it will take Miss M a few minutes to answer. I'm carrying a bright blue insulated bag with The King's Daughters Dinner Wagon logo on the side. As I wait, I notice that Miss M has not yet picked up her mail so I balance that in my other hand. Slowly the door opens and I see her – tiny, frail, bent over and in clothes that now seem too large for her. Her house is sparse and tidy but shabby. Today as I place her hot meal, her soup, dessert, and fruit on her counter we talk about Whitty, her cat. She spells out his name for me. Sometimes she gives me a letter to mail that I bring home, add the stamp and place in the mailbox with a prayer that someone will be able to decipher the address so it can reach its destination. Today she asks me to go next door to get Gloria, her neighbour. I am happy to do that.

Back in our car, John and I head off to our next stop. Mr G lives in a tall highrise. He is visibly upset when I get to his door. After putting his meal on the table, I pause for a moment to see if he wants to chat. He tells me that he has just come back from the clinic where he has been told that he has colon cancer. At age 80, and with several other major health problems, this news comes as a real blow. We talk about his family for a few minutes and it is clear that he has their support. I must be off. There are more meals to deliver.

When Mrs B answers the door, she is not dressed and she apologizes saying that she has taken double her medication by mistake. As I set out her meal I ask if she would like my help to call her doctor. "No thanks" she says "I have done this before and I know I will be okay in a little while." She seems steady on her feet and able to follow our conversation so I wish her a restful day.

And on it goes, for the rest of our delivery route. John stays with the car, plans our route to the next stop and makes sure I put the right meal elements together for our special diet folks. I hop in and out of the car getting the meals to the doors. Back at home I send a quick email to the staff at Dinner Wagon office about the three people on the route that need a little extra care. I can rest knowing that the staff will follow up.



*John and Christine Dawson picking up the hot food at Riverside Hospital prior to delivery  
Photo: J. Dawson*

All over the central part of the City of Ottawa, teams just like us have been out doing the same thing. Every weekday 26 teams of two deliver hot noonday meals. The meals are prepared at one of ten kitchens across the city. Nursing homes, retirement homes, hospitals, and a seniors' centre are partners in the production of the hot meals. In addition, twice a week, teams of volunteers go out from the Dinner Wagon office with packages of frozen meals. Some clients, who can handle re-warming meals in a microwave, like the flexibility that frozen meals provide. But that's not all. Saturday service is available in the downtown area. And, for our Asian population, the Dinner Wagon provides meals specially prepared by an Asian chef.

The result is that in 2007–08, a total of 56,225 hot meals and 43,530 frozen meals were served to 1130 clients with the help of 530 volunteers. But it wasn't always this large an operation.

The King's Daughters Dinner Wagon was founded in 1968 by the Ottawa City Union of The King's Daughters and Sons. Led by Evelyn Sparks, Phyllis Lyon, Gwen Richards, and many others, these women set out to provide a Meals on Wheels service to people who needed a hot meal and a friendly face at the door. During the first week of operation there were 29 meals served to 15 people at a cost of 75 cents per meal. By the end of that first year, a total of 874 meals had been served to 89 people.

In the early years the staff was voluntary and all were women. The money came from the Ottawa City Union of The King's Daughters and Sons, fundraising tea and coffee parties, client donations, memorial gifts, and a donation from the festival of Christmas Carols. It was not until 1972 that the Dinner Wagon received its first government grant.

Today, the Dinner Wagon still receives financial support from the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Health through the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, and from the City of Ottawa. Client fees, donations, fundraising activities, and the strong support of the Ottawa City Union as a donor and a friendly landlord all help to balance the budget.

Supporting the teams of volunteers, the clients and their families is a well-run agency with a small professional staff and a talented Board of Directors. All elements need to come together if seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals convalescing from illness are to maintain their goal of independence. Truly, The King's Daughters Dinner Wagon is "more than just a meal."

For more information, visit [www.mealsonwheels-ottawa.org](http://www.mealsonwheels-ottawa.org) or email [services@mealsonwheels-ottawa.org](mailto:services@mealsonwheels-ottawa.org)

## Welcome!

Volunteers joining Meals on Wheels since October 2008 are:

Diane Baines  
Herb Bergen  
James Book  
Andrea Budgell  
Kirk Cameron  
Kathy Day-Rogers  
Susan Gardiner  
Marie-Josée Gill  
Emma Grace  
Ray Leblanc  
David Major  
Wayne Martin  
Patrick Murphy  
Caitlin Ripley  
Sunil Sarwal  
Beatrice Short  
Ingrid Short  
Janet Smith  
Tim Smith  
Dale Snider  
Katie St. Marie  
Jeremie Thompson  
Jeff Warren  
James Willis  
Mindy Woolcott  
Martin Zweig

### Great West Life: New Corporate Volunteer Team

Lynn Allan  
Judy Beehler  
Sandra Berube  
Chris Bulger  
Meredith Crew  
Rubeena Damry  
Marcia Hammersley  
Anne Hoyle  
Vida Kudzma  
Ernie Laporte  
Renate Mowat  
Louise Patry  
Pauline Raby  
Dean Sansom  
JC Savard  
Sylvie Skyba  
Carole Smith  
Sharon Storie  
Julie Theriault  
Jennifer Williams  
Caroline Workman.

## New Website Coming Soon

Stay tuned for our new website. You'll be able to register for the service, order food, sign up to receive newsletters, read latest articles, be notified of upcoming events and more... All this in English and French. Bookmark [www.mealsonwheels-ottawa.org](http://www.mealsonwheels-ottawa.org) and stay tuned. Special thanks to the Champlain Local Health Integration Network for supporting this project.

## Staffing Update:

Our newest staff member Jill Dodd came to Meals on Wheels in replacement of Peggy Winstan who left to take up a position with another organization. Jill, originally from New Brunswick, moved to Ottawa last spring with her husband Geoff and their two young daughters Georgia and Madeleine. As Volunteer Coordinator, she is responsible for the west end hot and frozen delivery teams. We're quite pleased to have her with us. As a trained social worker, she brings another dimension to our service. Welcome to Meals on Wheels Jill.

## February 26<sup>th</sup> Hockey Fundraiser:

The hockey fundraiser was a total success as almost all the tickets to the Ledge Carvery Box were sold for the game between the Senators and the San Jose Sharks. Good food and great fun was had by all and almost \$10,000 was raised in total. A second fundraising game is planned for April 7th when the Sens take on the Boston Bruins. Special thanks to the Ottawa Senators and Scotiabank for their support. Our gratitude to Realtor Madat Kara and his team of business associates for organizing the event. Senior members of his team include Tina Moledina, Ashad Jiwa, Pierre Dulude, Yves Robert, Bruce Sergeant, Shamez Charania, Henri Nadeau, Jacques Bédard and Nadin Kara. Stay tuned for further events.!

## Walk of Ages Fundraiser June 6, 2009

The Walk of Ages is an opportunity for the community to join in raising funds for The Good Companions Seniors' Centre and its partnering organizations. Participants will spend a pleasant morning strolling along the Ottawa Parkway in support of active independent living. The Walk of Ages will start at The Good Companions, 670 Albert Street, at 8:15 a.m. and run until 12 noon. Breakfast and entertainment, including prizes, will be provided for all. As part of the Equal Partners Program, Meals on Wheels will receive 50% of any money raised by the Meals on Wheels participants. Please let Terry or Jill know if you plan on participating so we can all walk together!.

## Down Memory lane: Stories of the Meals on Wheels Pioneers -Helen Suggett retires after the first 500,000 meals

(by Kit Irving. Originally published in the Ottawa Journal January 25, 1978)

When the first five dinners were delivered in 1968 by The King's Daughters and Sons Dinner Wagon volunteers, Helen Suggett as chairman of the enterprise had a difficult time persuading senior citizen shut-ins that they needed the service.

At a recent luncheon honouring her on her second retirement as the group's chairman, and an estimated half million meals later, Suggett recalled those early days.

"Many senior citizens were giving up their independence and moving into institutions sooner than necessary, we thought," she said. "Believing that we could slow this process by providing nourishing, reasonably-priced meals for those who were becoming too infirm

to cook for themselves, we formed a committee of eight to start a Meals on Wheels venture.”

The seniors approached, however, hadn't "jumped at the idea" she remembered ruefully. The very thought of "strangers" walking freely into one's house every day was a frightening one, and often even those who had agreed to the home meal service refused at the last minute to open the door to the Dinner Wagon volunteers.

But soon prejudices had disappeared and for many of the "regulars" on the dinner program list the service became a social highlight of the day, she recalled.

Although Helen Suggett, who has twice been Dinner Wagon chairman during its 10-year history, has turned over her job to incoming chairman June Freeman, she will continue as a volunteer with the group. "I've retired, but I'm not tired," she joked at the luncheon.

## Why volunteering is a great experience...

(by Elizabeth Mason, delivery volunteer)

Today was an excellent example of why I like a regular delivery route and enjoy delivering the meals too. I have gotten to know my clients and enjoy dropping by to say hello. I especially enjoy a few of the clients who share a part of their life and thoughts with me. One lady today told

me that she is now going to Elizabeth Bruyère Centre twice a week. She enjoys being with other people and seeing the kindness of others, both young and old. If she only reads the newspaper then she thinks that the world is a terrible place. But when she meets others she renews her faith in humanity. She will miss her Wednesday and Friday meal deliverers but is grateful for this chance to see our world in Ottawa at its best. I left that home singing in my heart... and she was singing in her heart too!

A few years ago I delivered to a couple because the woman had broken her leg. Her husband often answered the door and we chatted and discovered we three had a love of nature and were quite familiar with Algonquin Park. They were unable to go up that fall to stay in a lodge as they often did. Last fall I was staying at the very same lodge overnight. I asked the owner about this couple whose name I could not remember... but he knew them and said they had arrived that day and would be at the second seating for dinner. We arranged to play a trick on the couple—I served the soup instead of the waitress. As it happened, the woman was sharing the story of Meals on Wheels with the wife of the owner and so she knew me right away! We had a good chat and went away singing in our hearts for friends made and re-met!

## I remember when...

(by Joan Glynn, volunteer)

I began volunteering with Meals on Wheels when my youngest child went into grade seven and was no longer coming home for lunch! One of your volunteers, Joan Finney, had often talked of your service and suggested that I might like to volunteer too. I did and 35 years have passed and I still consider it one of the most important volunteer jobs that one can do!

I, of course, started out delivering the hot meals, as frozen were not provided at that time. I delivered out of the Royal Ottawa for the most part, although I remember times when the meals came from two homes on Carling Avenue and Bank Street. I also remember delivering from the Grace on several occasions. It seems ages ago that I received a certificate for 500 hours! I started my own costume manufacturing business around 1977 but felt that the delivery of these meals was too important to give up. I continued to be involved until my husband and I retired and he joined me. At that time we also became volunteers at The Good Companions Seniors' Centre and found that delivering the frozen meals worked better for us. My husband received his 500 hours pin in 2006.

When I first began delivering we were taking the meals into the homes and putting them on the client's own plates and because of this we were able to converse with these people and become friends with them. I have come to realize that this meant a great deal to them as they often had no one to talk to and the visit was as important as the food! There were times when I was working that I would think to myself "darn, I have to do meals today" but by the time I had finished deliveries I was saying "gee, I'm glad I did meals today" and I would go home or back to work with a smile on my face.

I am now 79 years of age and my husband is 83 and we plan to continue delivering to these people who appreciate it so much, for as long as our health allows!



Long-time delivery volunteer Elizabeth Mason "I left that home singing in my heart!"  
Photo: B. St-Cyr

## Kudos to a Volunteer

Frans Olberg has been a volunteer delivering Meals on Wheels every week for over 20 years. Frans enjoys socializing with the clients and believes that the help this service provides is very important in helping them stay healthy and independent. Frans fulfills his role with much kindness and dedication and we are pleased to have him as a part of our volunteer team.

In 2006, the Ambassador of the Netherlands presented Frans with The Mobilization War Cross given as a token of respect and appreciation for his efforts under extremely difficult circumstances for services from 1940 until 1945. "Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Grand Master of the Royal Order of Orange-Nassau has appointed Johan Frans Olberg a member of the Royal Order of Orange-Nassau for his meritorious contributions in war and peace."

Meals on Wheels would like to offer our congratulations to Frans for this great honour.

## Volunteer Notes

Please call the office if a client does not answer the door and a staff person will be happy to call the client's home. You will be encouraged to give the meal away to another client if there is still no answer when the staff person calls. Do not leave a hot meal or frozen package at the door unless instructed to do so by the client or the office. Food spoils quickly and can pose a health risk to the client.

City of Ottawa map books have recently been purchased for the volunteers. Please contact Terry or Jill if you would like to obtain one.

Route pick up times: The following times are when the kitchens have agreed to have



*Staff Shelley Lergen making sure all Christmas day clients receive a gift and other goodies  
Photo: B. St-Cyr*

the meals ready for pick up. The kitchens do their best to have the meals ready for these times. Please be patient if the meals happen to be running a little late:

11:00 a.m.: Centre D'Accueil Champlain, Glebe Centre, The Good Companions, Riverside Hospital, Riverpark Place

11:15 a.m.: CHEO, Royal Ottawa Hospital

11:30 a.m.: Gary J. Armstrong (Island Lodge), St. Pat's, Carlingview

Please remember to report any concerns or frustrations to the Meals on Wheels staff. We are here to help and will contact a kitchen or client on your behalf if a situation should arise that requires us to do so.

## Stay tuned...

Meals on Wheels will begin hosting volunteer meetings for each kitchen beginning soon. Join your fellow volunteers for tea, coffee, and fellowship. These gatherings will be a way to share experiences, meet Meals on Wheels staff and fellow volunteers, share thoughts and give feedback on routes and meal delivery and gain knowledge on the needs and issues facing the clients we serve. Come and get to know each other and be part of a community of Meals on Wheels volunteers!

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