

Home Delivered Meals Program Needs Fortuna Volunteers

by Maureen McGarry

"It's good! I like what I had for lunch," proclaims Carol Clendenen who, at 98 ½, has been receiving meals from the Home Delivered Meals program for two years. Formally a public health nurse, she moved to California in 1948 where she married her husband Andy, had two sons, and got into the Fortuna family apple cider business. "I'm glad to still be on my feet."



Her son, Clif Clendenen, who is busy with apple season and works at College of the Redwoods, is glad as well. "It's one of those rhythms that is valuable to my mom. It's something she can count on."

He is grateful for the program that allows his mother to continue living independently in her own home. Home Delivered Meals is a program of the Humboldt Senior Resource Center, which is funded in part through a contract with Area 1 Agency on Aging. "When I first called HSRC to ask about the program, I inquired about how much it cost and was told they would gladly accept donations, but they serve anyone in need of this service."

Funding for this program comes from the Older Americans Act- Title III Senior Nutrition Program. Meals are delivered to the homes of frail and homebound seniors by community volunteers. In

Fortuna, there is a shortage of volunteers to help with delivery.

"I think we have a higher number of seniors in Fortuna compared to other communities. With that, there are greater needs for senior services here," reports Clendenen who serves on the RSVP Advisory Council. "We need to realize that, in addition to government services, we as a community need to provide volunteer assistance which extends government programs."

Linda and Kent Wrede have been volunteering in the Home Delivered Meal program for 4 years. "We really enjoy it. We meet new people and get to learn a little about them. We always try to get a smile out of them. It has brought a great joy to us," says Linda. "We look forward to it. Even though it just takes an hour once a week, volunteers can do more. A nice hello and a friendly face can make a big difference in someone's life."

Meals come from HSRC's Senior Dining Center in Fortuna. Drivers come in at 11 a.m., pick up the hot meals, find out who is on their route, and deliver meals in their own vehicles to approximately 10 houses. Launa Salsbery is the Fortuna Dining Site Coordinator. "We've had difficulty having enough volunteers. We keep the routes short to keep food hot and safe. We could really use six more drivers. Right now, we're at bare bones with only 2 drivers per day. We really need 3 drivers each day to go to 10 houses." Salsbery says the program provides some mileage reimbursement to drivers.

Ray and Kathy Lovell have been delivering meals in Fortuna for 3 years. They found out about the opportunity at a Kiwanis meeting where someone mentioned the program. They signed up when they heard that more volunteers were needed.

"It's a good way to pay back," says Ray Lovell who delivers meals with his wife, Kathy. "And it's quality time for us together."

"You know that each person can't cook for themselves," adds Kathy. "It may be the only socialization they have that week. We've met some lovely, lovely people." The Lovells say that the hour to hour and a half once a week is time well spent. Ray Lovell encourages Fortuna residents to "get your feet wet. Once you get into it, you find out how wonderful it is."

Clif Clendenen knows that drivers get a feeling of satisfaction from their service. "You can see how dedicated they are. You get a sense from them that doing this regularly is very rewarding."

For more information about volunteering in Fortuna or services offered by the Fortuna Senior Dining Center, contact Launa Salsbery at 725-6245 or email lsalsbery@humsenior.org.

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Aging.