

CONVERTING VOLUNTEER PROSPECTS INTO DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS: A PEER EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE WEBINAR

*RESPONSES TO MEMBER QUESTIONS BY PRESENTERS ELLEN FALK,
MEALS ON WHEELS OF CENTRAL MARYLAND, AND LUANNE HINKLE,
MEALS ON WHEELS SAN DIEGO COUNTY*

QUESTIONS FOR ELLEN

HOW DID YOU ARRANGE FOR VOLUNTEERS TO DELIVER GROCERIES AND PET FOOD? I'M ASKING FROM A LIABILITY STANDPOINT. – LAUREN

We do it as another type of volunteer opportunity and because it is a flexible schedule we have many people interested in this volunteer opportunity. Our grocery shoppers shop for a homebound individual in their area. Once the volunteer is matched, they work closely with their client to schedule shopping, prepare grocery lists, and help put their groceries away. Each shopping trip averages one to three hours. The volunteer commitment for this program is a minimum of one year. We do not take the client shopping. We only take the list. The volunteer is given a Meals on Wheels credit card, and the client writes a check to Meals on Wheels for the exact amount that is spent. We ask the volunteer to get 2 copies of the receipt, and it is the volunteer's responsibility to send in the check, receipt, and their time card after each shopping trip.

THE RIDE-ALONGS SEEM LIKE A REALLY GREAT IDEA TO GET NEW VOLUNTEERS INVOLVED. DO YOU HAVE ANY INSURANCE ISSUES AROUND HAVING VOLUNTEERS THAT AREN'T REGISTERED HELPING YOU OUT? – CAITLIN

We don't have any issues as we have everyone fill out an application prior to the ride-along and most of the ride-a-longs are from people who work at companies. Those that are individuals and have come to us without a work place connection we first run the background check before we take the person out.

WHAT IS THE MUGS OF LOVE PROGRAM? – JEANNINE

MUGS OF LOVE is a great group project!!! Purchase or create mugs, and fill with a can of soup, hot cocoa packet, packaged goodies, protein bar, etc. and a card to be shared with our homebound clients in your community.

DO VOLUNTEER PROSPECTS GO THROUGH TRAINING PRIOR TO THE RIDE-ALONG? – PAULI

We encourage the volunteer to attend our general orientation, and I always ask the person to arrive early so I can do some one on one training prior to the delivery. We do go through training with our new volunteers before a ride-along, as well as the background check. We feel that if a volunteer runs into a situation they will be well-informed and more comfortable because there are good procedures in place to protect the client and volunteer's best interests.

WHAT IS YOUR POLICY ON BACKGROUND CHECKS BEFORE RIDE-A-LONGS HAPPEN? – MICHELLE

We have everyone fill out their paperwork prior to the ride-along. We wait until the background check is complete before a ride-along happens. We have, unfortunately, found some applicants that we have turned down because of past criminal history.

ARE THE PHONE PALS REQUIRED TO GO THROUGH A BACKGROUND CHECK? – VIKI

Everyone goes through the background check process.

QUESTION FOR ELLEN

WHAT IS IN THE "WHAT'S NEXT?" EMAIL THAT YOU SEND TO NEW VOLUNTEER PROSPECTS? – JESSICA

Here is my “what’s next” email...

Subject: Meals on Wheels - Please Read!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Meals on Wheels!!

We deliver meals Monday through Friday from 11am to about 12:30pm. Most volunteers help us about once a week at the distribution site nearest to them. Volunteers can also choose to help at a site that has a greater need for volunteers. We have 21 distribution sites throughout Central Maryland, so there are many locations to choose from!

Professional volunteers can also deliver during their lunch hour.

If you’d like to do a “ride along” to try it out before committing, please know they’re available upon request!

If you’re ready to get started right away, please plan on completing these steps as soon as you’re able. All potential volunteers must:

If you have not already, please submit a volunteer registration form here:
<https://www.mealsonwheelsmd.org/volunteer-application>

Attend one volunteer orientation, held every Tuesday from 10:30am to 11:30am at our Main Office, 515 S. Haven St, Baltimore, MD 21224. Please bring your driver’s license and vehicle insurance card.

Pass a MD Criminal Background Check, which I will conduct after your orientation using the information provided on your registration

Let me know if you have a scheduling conflict and cannot make orientation, and we will discuss an alternate time.

Please let me know if you have any questions. A variety of schedules, opportunities, and programs are available; some volunteers help once a month or grocery shop for clients on their own schedule. Please inquire about these alternate opportunities if you’re interested!

We are so excited you want to join our fantastic team of volunteers!

Thank you!

QUESTIONS FOR LUANNE

DO YOU GET FUNDING FOR BOTH MEALS YOU DELIVER? IF SO, BY WHOM? – VALISA

We are a “fee for service” agency and our standard fees are \$7.00 for lunch and dinner or \$4.00 for one meal, delivered by a caring volunteer. However, we will take a financial assessment to further reduce fees if a senior expresses the inability to afford this pricing. At the standard fee structure we are subsidizing 60% of each meal. Through grants, events and fundraising we make up the difference between the client fees and the actual costs. We receive approximately 6% of our funding through Community Development Block Grants combined with the pass through of Older Americans Act funds as a result of contracts with some San Diego County cities. Program fees are approximately \$1.7 Million, the rest, or approximately \$2.7 Million is raised year over year to fund the organization.

WHAT TYPES OF RECOGNITION DO YOU DO FOR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP RETENTION? – JOEY

We have 4 Service Centers throughout the county. Each service center has a large volunteer appreciation event where all the volunteers come together and are honored for their years of service awards. This event typically involves a lavish luncheon, entertainment and raffle prizes that are garnered through in-kind donations. Additionally, we honor several volunteers and their stories in our newsletters which we mail to nearly 40,000 people and on our web site. We nominate them for additional community service awards outside of Meals on Wheels as well contact local papers for inclusion (see <https://www.meals-on-wheels.org/making-difference> for a volunteer story). The service centers also have gas cards we raffle off to our volunteers on a regular basis.

IS THERE A BEST PRACTICE SAMPLE FOR YOUR INITIAL EMAIL TO POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS? – ANNETTE

We keep our initial email very simple, we thank them for their interest in joining the Meals on Wheels family and tell them the closest service center to their location will be reaching out to them via phone, which we do within 24 hours. We believe the personal touch is extremely important.

WHAT DO YOU COVER IN YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS? – HAILEY

We cover a brief history of our organization and our mission. We often show one of the new “Let’s Do Lunch” videos as a mission moment. Then we cover the actual process and logistics of the delivery, safe food handling procedures, emergency procedures, as well as what to look for from a senior that may need additional help and/or services.

WHAT IS THE REGISTRATION PROCESS? – MARGARET

We have an online volunteer application. Once someone submits the application, they receive an email that welcomes them to the Meals on Wheels Family and it also states the service center

will be calling them soon to attend an in-person training. If they choose they may also pay for the background check online before attending the training (we charge the volunteer \$10.00). As soon as the volunteer attends a training and the background check is clear, they can begin the actual volunteering. Many start with a ride-along and then start their own route.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING DO YOU OFFER PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEERS WHILE WAITING FOR BACKGROUND CHECK RESULTS? – CHERYL

A volunteer can go through the in-person training prior to the background check, so they can begin the process as soon as the very next training. Volunteers just cannot deliver until the background check is returned, typically 7 to 10 days.

WHAT IS A SERVICE CENTER? – SHERINE

We have a large county which we serve in its entirety. Therefore, to have a better foothold and presence in the local communities we have 4 offices which we call Service Centers that are geographically spaced in North, Central, East and South San Diego County.

QUESTIONS FOR ELLEN & LUANNE

CAN THESE GUESTS SHARE THEIR HANDBOOKS, ORIENTATION? – LIZ

~~ELLEN~~ Please share your mailing address and I can send you one.

~~LUANNE~~ Yes, we can share our handbook, Liz. Send your mailing address and I will forward.

HOW DO YOU FUND YOUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS...ARE THESE MEALS ON WHEELS CENTERS FEATURED COUNCILS ON AGING? – LIZ

~~ELLEN~~ We have a budget and we know how important our volunteers are to our agency as we could not do what we do without our volunteers.

~~LUANNE~~ Our volunteer programs actually fund us! They save us over \$2.5 M a year driving their own cars and using their own gas! Volunteers are trained, routed and scheduled in each of our Service Centers (offices). The cost of this coordination is absorbed into our overall budget under administration costs. We basically fund administration through all our revenue garnering methods through a combination of fundraising and program fees.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE LIABILITY ISSUES – LIZ

~~LUANNE~~ We carry an umbrella liability insurance policy, and other coverage for accidents, etc. would be handled under the volunteer's insurance policy.

CAN THESE GUESTS SHARE THEIR HANDBOOKS, ORIENTATION? – LIZ

~~ELLEN~~ Please share your mailing address and I can send you one.

~~LUANNE~~ Yes, we can share our handbook, Liz. Send your mailing address and I will forward.

DO YOU DO CALL TO ACTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA? – PAUL

~~LUANNE~~ Yes, we use the assets from the "Let's Do Lunch campaign, as well as create our own posts on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube:

<https://www.facebook.com/mealsonwheelssd/>

<https://twitter.com/MealsonWheelsSD>

<https://www.instagram.com/mealsonwheelssd/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/mealsonwheelssd/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/WeAreMealsonWheelsSD/videos>

[https://www.linkedin.com/company/meals-on-wheels-greater-san-diego-inc.?trk=company logo](https://www.linkedin.com/company/meals-on-wheels-greater-san-diego-inc.?trk=company_logo)

DO YOU EVER FOLLOW UP AFTER A VOLUNTEER LEAVES AFTER A SHORT TIME? – NANCY

ELLEN Yes we try to follow up with every volunteer after they leave as we want to make sure their experience was a good one.

LUANNE Yes, however, most of our volunteers stay! The exception is the military that often adopts a route and if members are deployed. We have volunteers that have been on our rosters for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years!!!!

HOW BIG IS YOUR STAFF... BOTH SPEAKERS? – JULIE

ELLEN We have 3 full-time people in my Volunteer Support Services Team and about 100 employees organization-wide.

LUANNE We currently have 45 Fulltime employees and 31 part time employees in the agency as a whole. Each of our 4 Service Centers handles volunteer acquisition, training and managing with 1 person, who also often preforms other duties.

HOW MUCH DO YOUR BACKGROUND CHECKS COST? – SHERINE

ELLEN For our volunteer background checks, we use the same company as our employee background checks, and the volunteer checks each cost \$5.75 as a part of this contract. Please contact Inquiries, Inc. for more info.

LUANNE \$13.86 single name, \$18.68 for two last names (maiden name). We receive a discount at Intellicorp through an insurance policy we carry with Philadelphia Ins.

IF YOU HAVE BUSINESSES COME IN AND DO A DAY OF SERVICE AND THEY DELIVER MEALS, HOW DO YOU HANDLE THEIR TRAINING. ARE THEY SET UP FOR TRAINING JUST SOMETIME BEFORE THE SCHEDULED DAY OF SERVICE? – JESSICA

ELLEN We only bring in groups for a day of service to volunteer in our kitchen packing meals, and they do not go out as deliverers. Each group gets a quick orientation about MOW before they head into

LUANNE We do not have organizations deliver for just a day. If a company only wishes to help for one day, we suggest creating “We Care Packages” or participate through our Visionaries in Philanthropy (VIP) group that preforms hand-on projects at a senior’s homes such as yard work, or other projects that take a few hours with a large group. We also conduct Team Building events, fundraising events such as Giving Tuesday campaigns, reverse telethons, or suggest involvement through our March for Meals walk/run, etc. to engage business groups.

WHAT LEVEL OF BACKGROUND CHECKS DO YOU RUN ON YOUR VOLUNTEERS WHO HANDLE MEAL DELIVERIES? NATIONAL? MOTOR VEHICLE? BOTH? -CANDICE

ELLEN Pass a MD Level 1 Criminal Background Check

LUANNE Yes, we check on a national basis and this includes motor vehicle violations such as DUIs, etc.

HOW MANY SENIORS ARE ON ONE GIVEN ROUTE? - TAMITHA

ELLEN We try to keep our routes to 8-14 clients on a route.

LUANNE Our routes vary from 6-10 seniors, depending upon the locale and driving distance. [If it] gets larger we try to create a new route.

SAN DIEGO OR MARYLAND DO YOU DELIVER HOT MEALS, FROZEN MEALS, OR SHELF MEALS? -VALISA

ELLEN In MD we do one hot meal and 1 cold meal and an accessory tray, and in 2 counties we do frozen meals 3 days a week with a 2 or 4 pack.

LUANNE Entrees can be delivered hot or frozen and lunches are delivered in a stadium box that is shrink-wrapped for protection. We deliver fresh fruits and vegetables as well as shelf staple goods to our rural clients along with 5 or 7 day frozen meal packs (dinner only). We deliver our Sunday meals on Saturday and deliver for every day of the year, including holidays.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE THE POTENTIAL DISCONNECT BETWEEN YOUR VARIOUS SERVICE/DISTRIBUTION CENTERS AND YOUR MAIN DISTRIBUTION CENTER? - HANNAH

ELLEN We have quarterly team meeting to keep the lines of communication open.

LUANNE We have twice monthly meetings that include all managers in the organization from all divisions.

DO YOU STAFF YOUR CENTERS WITH VOLUNTEERS OR ACTUAL STAFF? - HANNAH

ELLEN All distribution sites have a part-time paid coordinator.

LUANNE We have both full and part time positions in our service centers and utilize some interns and office staff volunteers periodically.

WHAT IS YOUR TURNAROUND TIME FROM PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER TO BE SCHEDULED ON A REGULAR ROUTE? - PAULI

ELLEN After completion of the background check which takes 48 hours, they are then placed on a route with 2 weeks!

LUANNE If a route is open that the volunteer wishes to deliver on, they can start immediately after training and background check completion. This can be as quick as 5 days if the background check is returned quickly.

WHAT DOES THE BACKGROUND CHECK COVER? – BECKA

~~ELLEN~~ The background check looks for felonies and misdemeanors, so if something comes back we can see assaults, thefts, and other charges for which a potential volunteer would become ineligible to deliver.

DO YOU PAY FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR VOLUNTEERS? – SHERINE

~~ELLEN~~ Yes

~~LUANNE~~ Yes, with the exception of a \$10 buy-in from the volunteer.

IS IT AFFORDABLE AND QUICK BACKGROUND CHECK RESULTS? WHICH WEBSITE DO YOU USE? – SHERINE

~~ELLEN~~ Yes

~~LUANNE~~ See above answer.

MY QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH COST OF BACKGROUND CHECKS AND WHO CONDUCTS THE BACKGROUND CHECKS – JULIE

~~ELLEN~~ We use Inquiries Inc. to conduct our background checks.

~~LUANNE~~ See above answer.

DO VOLUNTEERS PAY FOR THEIR BACKGROUND CHECKS? THIS IS A BARRIER FOR US AS IT IS EXPENSIVE, AND WE REQUIRE IT BEFORE THE VOLUNTEER STARTS TRAINING OR GOES ON A RIDE-A-LONG – MICHELE

~~ELLEN~~ No.

~~LUANNE~~ See above answer.

DO YOU DO BCI/FBI BACKGROUND CHECKS AND THAT IS WHAT TAKES UP THE TIME? – PAULI

~~ELLEN~~ No, just a level 1 background check

DO THE PROGRAMS PAY FOR THE BACKGROUND CHECKS OR ARE THE VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED TO PAY? IF SO, HOW DO THE VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO BEING ASKED TO PAY? – JESSICA

~~ELLEN~~ I have a budget for this expense.

LUANNE Our volunteers have had no problem paying the \$10 fee we charge them, while we pay the rest.

HOW DOES THE THANK FOR GIVING WORK? – MARGARET

ELLEN The Thanks for Giving event is an annual cocktail reception we have at a venue in Baltimore City. It's held every October, and we invite volunteers and donors as a way of saying thank you for supporting our program.

HOW LONG ARE THE ORIENTATIONS/TRAININGS? WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING ARE YOU DOING? – SHERINE

ELLEN We have a one hour power point presentation and a tour of our kitchen.

LUANNE Approximately one hour is the length of San Diego's training. In-person trainings in San Diego thus far.

WHAT'S IN A "WE CARE" PACKAGE? ARE THEY DONATED ITEMS? -LAUREN

ELLEN We do "blizzard bags" and they are all donated shelf stable foods and personal hygiene items.

LUANNE For a list of items in our "We Care" packages, please see:

<https://www.meals-on-wheels.org/volunteer/we-care-packages>

HOW DID YOU GET THE COMPANIES TO PAY FOR THE CARE ITEMS? - MICHELLE

ELLEN Working with our contacts at the companies many want to help those in need so they collect the items at their work place.

LUANNE We simply tell them this is how the program works, they pay for or do a "drive" for the items where employees bring in the items themselves.

IS THERE A "UNIVERSAL" VOLUNTEER INTAKE FORM? - LIZ

LUANNE You can see ours here: <https://www.meals-on-wheels.org/volunteer-application>