

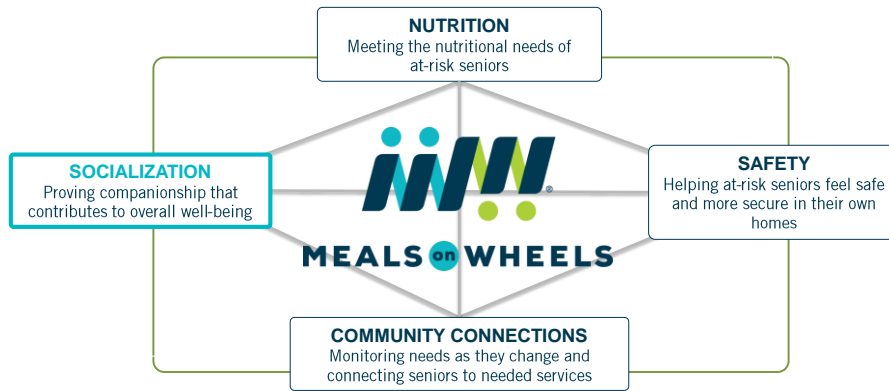


## Making the Most of Client Socialization

### SPEAKERS

1. **Elise Hernandez**, Meals on Wheels America
2. **Mary Lee Anderson**, Senior Services of Alexandria

# So Much More Than Just a Meal



## Why It's Important to Increase Opportunities for Socialization among Meals on Wheels Clients



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## Social isolation is widespread



1 in 5 seniors feels lonely

1 in 4 lives alone  
(1 in 2 for those 85 years old and older)

## Dimensions of social isolation

- Size - Small social network
- Frequency - Infrequent contact with friends/family
- Proximity - No one close enough or able to provide help
- Quality - Troublesome personal relationships



Photo Credit: [whereyoulivematters.org](http://whereyoulivematters.org)

## Social isolation is costly and deadly

- **\$47.6B** in healthcare costs
- Increased risk of mortality
- High rate of chronic illnesses
- Cognitive decline
- Poorer mental health
- Increased risk of malnutrition
- Increased likelihood of falling

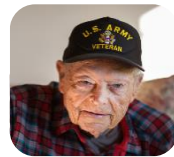


Photo Credit: NYT

## Meals on Wheels seniors are at risk

### Client profile

- 59% live alone
- 76% not married/partnered
- 43% are 85 or older
- 79% facing poverty
- 25% live in rural areas
- 33% fallen in past 3 months



## Meals on Wheels shows results...

99% of clients say people who give services are courteous

89% of clients say it helps them feel better

- Decreases loneliness
- Decreases anxiety
- Prevents falls

## Social engagement is beneficial

Ensures availability of practical support during times of need, including illness, crises, and emergencies

Buffers the impact of stress on the immune system

Prevent onset of chronic isolation and loneliness

Provides opportunities to intervene on other issues like safety, medication management, physical activity, etc.

# Screening and Tailoring Efforts

Is it isolation and/or loneliness?

	<b>Social Isolation – An objective state</b>	<b>Loneliness – A subjective experience; a feeling</b>
<b>Measures</b>	Living arrangements	Feeling left out or disconnected
	Social network <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Size</li><li>• Frequency of contact</li></ul>	Availability of support
	Geographic proximity to family, friends, and community	Relationship quality
	Access to transportation	

# Screening: Example Measures

Lubben Social Network Scale (6 questions)

- How many relatives/friends do you...
  - see or hear from at least once a month?
  - feel at ease with that you can talk about private matters?
  - feel close to such that you could call on them for help?

## Screening: Example Measures

### UCLA Loneliness Scale (3 questions)

- How often do you feel..
  - that you lack companionship?
  - left out?
  - isolated from others?

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## Screening: Example Measures

### Lengthy Alternatives

- Social Integration in Later Life Scale  
(Assesses broader community engagement)
- Duke Social Support Index  
(Asks in-depth questions about social support)

# A spectrum of opportunities for social engagement

Volunteers delivering meals	Telephone Reassurance	Other	Friendly Visiting +
<p><u>Eyes, ears, and hearts in the home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly conversation</li> <li>• Identify needs and refer to services</li> </ul>	<p><u>Volunteers on a "hotline"</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow-up when meals are missed</li> <li>• Open line for seniors to call and chat</li> </ul>	<p><u>Events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holiday card and gift drives</li> <li>• Outings</li> </ul> <p><u>Supports</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pet assistance</li> </ul>	<p><u>Quality time in the home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help with household chores, errands,</li> <li>• Shared lunch</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Creative activities</li> </ul>
			

## Friendly Visitor Program



**MARY LEE ANDERSON**

Executive Director

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## BACKGROUND

- Meals on Wheels Volunteers recognized need for more time with socially isolated seniors
- Red Cross program operated 2000-2009
- 2012 SSA Task Force evaluated feasibility
- First “match made in October 2012



## PROGRAM

- Seniors are referred by the Office of Aging and Adult Services, family members, neighbors, assisted living and continuing care communities
- Program director interviews seniors to determine interests and eligibility
- Volunteers recruited via local media, AARP, Volunteer Alexandria, Meals on Wheels volunteers

## PROCESS

- Program Director interviews all volunteers to determine interests & provide training on best practices
- Background check for all volunteers to ensure client safety
- Program Director introduces seniors to volunteers
- Weekly 1-hour visits are scheduled by volunteer and senior



## IMPACT STUDY

- 2015 formal evaluation of the impact of the Friendly Visitor Program on seniors and volunteers
- Seniors reported close friendships with their visitors, decrease in loneliness and depression
- Volunteers reported powerful changes in knowledge and needs of elderly, importance of giving back to the community and satisfaction from helping others

## PETS VISIT TOO!

SAA is working with the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria to screen pets for visits



## CHALLENGES

- Maintain balance of volunteers vs. seniors
- Establish firm boundaries for volunteers, i.e. no driving with seniors
- Regular follow-up with matches seniors and volunteers
- Create connection for volunteers to SSA as an organization and opportunities for education

## CURRENT STATUS

- Over 250 seniors have been matched with Friendly Visitors since the program began
- 60 seniors are now in the program
- Over half live in senior living communities
- Activities include reading, board games, walks, cards and listening to music

## QUESTIONS?

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