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# Food and Friendship



The Sheridan Press/Michael Sullivan

Doris Moeller-Edwards delivers lunch to Tony Nickel on Wednesday as part of the Sheridan Senior Center’s Home Delivered Meals program. Moeller-Edwards and her father, Selmer Moeller, both of Sheridan, have been volunteers with the program for the past eight years.

## • Program offers meals and companionship for seniors

**By Kristen Salamon**

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“It is not about the meals, and I’ve never thought of it that way,” Home Delivered Meals volunteer Doris Moeller-Edwards said, adding:

“We may be the only people some of these folks see during the day. The importance of this program cannot be over-stressed.”

Moeller-Edwards is one of approximately 300 people who volunteer for the program.

The Home Delivered Meals program at the Sheridan Senior Citizens

Center delivers meals to those over age 60 with health issues. The program caters to specific dietary issues like diabetes, vegetarianism, or somebody who doesn’t eat broccoli.

The meals are cooked and delivered for a suggested donation of just \$4.

“We have to give credit to the cooks,” Senior Center Director of Community Nutrition Carolyn Benepe said. “They keep a special eye on food preparation for our most challenging customers. They make special meals according to needs.”

Last month, about 4,500 meals were delivered on 11 city routes with

eight to 20 people on each route receiving meals on an average day.

And program coordinator Shirley Knisley knows each of the approximately 220 older adults who use the program.

“She knows them all, she could tell you information about them all,” Benepe said. “She chats with them like they are her aunts or uncles.”

Knisley is in charge of coordinating drivers for each day and each route and ensuring that the meals are prepared to specification based on dietary needs.

“Some people take meals every day, some just once or twice a week,

and some only occasionally,” Knisley said.

Regular volunteers often know the people they deliver meals to well.

“It is really sweet,” Benepe said. “You’ll have volunteers talk about ‘their people.’ They’ll come back and report if anything is unusual. Sometimes delivering the meals serves as a kind of safety check.”

Moeller-Edwards agrees. She and her father, 81-year-old Selmer Moeller, have delivered on the same route for several years. The pair deliver three times each week.

## Food

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“There have been times that we've delivered a meal and found a person in a point of distress,” Moeller-Edwards said. “It is like we're supposed to walk in at that moment to be sure they get the help they need.”

But Moeller-Edwards said the best part about delivering meals is spending time with her father.

“People should never lose the drive to volunteer and interact with people,” she said. “The Senior Center gives my dad a place to go; he has people he cares about and who care about him. Delivering meals gives him a sense of purpose.”

Moeller himself said he is usually at the Senior Center early, drinking coffee and waiting for meal-delivery time.

“I'm always here early, even

though I don't go to work until 10:30 a.m.,” Moeller said. “Keeping moving sure helps.”

Moeller is known by the people on his route for the sturdy basket that holds the meals he delivers — and the dog biscuits.

“I have so much fun with the dogs,” Moeller said. “Lots come romping and barking at me, but I give them a treat and they skip away. I don't have any trouble with dogs.”

The Home Delivered Meals program is available 365 days a year. According to organizers, Sheridan's Senior Center is the only one in Wyoming that is open every day.

“That's a big deal, we deliver during snowstorms and all,” volunteer coordinator Nancy McKenzie said.

Funding is through a combination of federal, state, private, and program revenues.