

Meals on Wheels helps Lamorinda seniors stay in own homes



Meals on Wheels volunteer Greg Holm arrives at a home in Lafayette.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

By Sora O'Doherty

Former firefighter Greg Holm used to know Lamorinda like the back of his hand. He feels

comfortable driving his own car around the small, twisty lanes of Lamorinda where he was volunteering to drive a Meals on Wheels route on Feb. 26. The

usual driver had a family emergency, but Holm was happy to step in to deliver meals to the 16 clients on the route.

At each stop, he would check his list to see what type of meal the client was to receive, and if there were any special delivery instructions, which there quite often were. Each client might get either a regular meal, which is low salt and low fat; a regular meal with fruit, which has less sugar; or a special meal for those on a sodium restricted regime, chiefly heart and kidney patients. To receive low sodium meals, a doctor's approval is required. In addition to the hot daily meal, some clients also receive a deli meal, a light lunch consisting of a salad, sandwich or wrap. These supplemental meals are really for those clients who have no other way of getting groceries, according to Nancy Raniere, nutrition services division manager of Diablo Region, the contractor that distributes meals for Meals on Wheels.

As Holm made his way through the route, he patiently waited for clients to make their way to the door. Often the door was open, with the instruction to come in to deliver the meal. If a client does not respond, and the door is locked, the meal cannot not be left for them. Sometimes Holm was warmly greeted by clients who were clearly delighted both to receive the food but also to have a chance to chat a little with the volunteer who delivered it, knowing that the volunteers are charged with looking out for the clients, and getting help if anything is amiss. A number of clients don't speak English, and several spoke only Russian.

Nancy, 87, has been living in Lafayette for three years, having moved up from Modesto three years ago to be closer to her family. Her daughter lives in Lafayette, her son in Dublin,

and another daughter lives in Castro Valley, while her "baby" lives in New York. She has eight grandchildren. Nancy has vision trouble, but manages to watch television with her huge glasses. Arthritis has twisted her hands and makes it impossible for her to cook. She enjoys the meals delivered, "very, very much. I like everything," she enthused. She receives one meal a day from Meals on Wheels. Her children stock her fridge and cook meals she stores in her freezer.

Carolyn, 70, has lived in Lafayette for two years after her social worker found her small apartment in a cul-de-sac. She currently has no family in the area, but her son, a church minister, is moving back from Florida soon. Born in Fresno, Carolyn started working for her father, who owned a trucking company in Las Vegas. She drove for him for several years, delivering construction materials. She was a cross-country trucker for 10 years and she became accustomed to eating sandwiches while driving. To this day, she really likes sandwiches, and she gets a deli meal in addition to the hot meal of the day. Carolyn has great difficulty moving about, and her son would like her to move in with him, his wife and their two girls, but she is happy on her own, and Meals on Wheels allows her to continue to live independently, which fulfills the organization's avowed purpose of enabling seniors to live on their own for as long as possible.

Rose, 84, lives with her husband, 88, in the same house where they have lived for 50 years. They raised six children, and have seven grandchildren, but their children are scattered, mostly in the military. Rose has her "kitchen cabinet," friends of her son who, now that she's older, are happy to help her out. Rose is retired from an insurance company in San Francisco, and her husband was a journeyman sheet metal worker. Rose had enjoyed cooking, but she had to give it up because of a leg ailment that makes it impossible for her to stand at the stove. The first thing to go from their diet was fresh fruit and vegetables, and she is especially happy to receive the meals from Meals on Wheels because she gets a balanced diet. She enjoys the volunteers who come in, deliver the food, and check on her and her husband. The volunteers, are "very pleasant people. I really appreciate them," she said, adding, "I've made a couple of friends!" Rose couldn't emphasize enough how much she and her husband appreciate the service.

Meals on Wheels of Contra Costa, Inc. subsidizes 2,200 meals daily in Contra Costa County and is a nonprofit coalition of all the public and non-

profit agencies, and senior citizen advisory groups involved in providing Meals on Wheels services to frail homebound elders in the county. According to Marti Carlson, community engagement specialist for the nonprofit, Meals on Wheels of Contra Costa, Inc. is the only agency in the county raising funds to provide the meals delivered to homebound elders served by the Meals on Wheels program.

Diablo Region delivers between 1,800 and 1,900 Meals on Wheels meals daily in Central Contra Costa County. Diablo Region, recently under the direction of Interim Executive Director Carrie Blanding, are the "boots on the ground," so to speak, delivering to individual clients and also checking out the CC Cafes at the Senior Centers, according to Raniere.

According to Community Engagement Specialist Marti Carlson, Meals on Wheels of Contra Costa, Inc., is the umbrella group that is responsible for the fundraising and they liaise with the county, which provides a nutritionist who makes up the menus each month, meeting federal guidelines for nutritional content.

In Lamorinda, one route covers Lafayette and another covers Moraga and Orinda. Each route has 16 clients, and delivery to both routes requires 10 volunteers, each driving one route once a week, since the routes are some of the longest in the area.

Volunteers seem happy to use their own vehicles, and can, but rarely do, declare their mileage as a tax deduction, according to Raniere. Each driver receives an hour of training and orientation. Before driving their first route, new drivers do a ride-along with an experienced driver. Volunteers sign confidentiality agreements, and security training agreements and drivers are mandated reporters of any situation they think is abusive. According to Carlson, there is always a need for more volunteer drivers, but there is also a long list of substitute drivers. Many local groups, such as local churches or Rotary groups, volunteer to drive. All volunteers are subject to background checks.

Meals are delivered to clients five days a week. On Friday, delivered frozen meals for Saturday and Sunday are provided for those who need it. Meals are also provided in advance of holidays. Meals on Wheels clients receive at least one meal for every day of the year.

Raniere says that the Lamorinda area routes are pretty stable, with people who have been on the routes for a long time. The most common reason people come off is because they are going to an assisted living facility, she added.



The Lafayette City Council is soliciting applicants to fill a vacancy on the Planning Commission..

Planning Commission. This seven-member body is responsible for matters relating to land use and development in the city. The commission serves as an advisory agency to the City Council for administering the laws and ordinances governing the approval of general and specific plans, zoning text amendments and rezonings. The commission also hears and decides on applications for subdivisions, land use permits, variances, and ridgeline development. Members of the Planning Commission are required to be qualified electors of the City of Lafayette, and are selected on the basis of training, education, occupation and expertise. The commission reviews design drawings, construction plans and technical reports. The following are planning documents that commissioners must be familiar with to execute their duties. 1) Lafayette General Plan; 2) Lafayette Municipal Code, Title 6 -Planning & Land Use; 3) Downtown Specific Plan; 4) Downtown Design Guidelines; 5) Residential Design Review Guidelines.

Link to the application and additional information www.lovelafayette.org/pc

Individuals with questions may call Interim Planning & Building Director Greg Wolff (925) 299-3204. Completed applications must be received by 5:00pm March 29, 2019.



Lafayette Volunteer Opportunities

There are currently openings on the following Lafayette Commissions/Committees

- Capital Projects Assessment Committee (CPAC)
- Community Center Foundation
- Creeks Committee
- Crime Prevention Commission
- Downtown Street Improvement Master Plan Implementation Committee(DSIMPIC)
- Emergency Preparedness Commission
- Environmental Task Force
- Parks, Trails & Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Senior Services Commission
- Transportation & Circulation Commission
- Youth Commission

For additional information visit the city's website: www.lovelafayette.org Hot Topics

Or e-mail City Clerk Joanne Robbins, jrobbins@lovelafayette.org

Application deadline March 31, 2019. Positions open until filled.

Council to keep talking gas safety

... continued from Page A3

Furthermore Gina Dawson says that by virtue of their efforts over the past two years, Save Lafayette Trees has already become an informal gas safety task force.

"We've researched for countless hours, spoken with pipeline safety experts, presented at safety conferences, and importantly, engaged with the CPUC. We helped instigate the development of the Lafayette Pipeline Safety Alliance – the collaboration of PG&E, CPUC, and the community (city and residents together) – all for improved gas pipeline safety."

Burks says he is eager to agendize the item. "The issues are complex and an open session, with public input, is necessary to understand solutions and strategies. I have made it clear over and over that my main concern is for the public safety of our community," he said.

At the same meeting both Gina and Michael Dawson expressed dismay over the city's Feb. 21 Almost Daily Briefing email which featured as its lead story an arti-

cle from the Northern California Record with the headline "Court grants PG&E's reconsideration and denies Save Lafayette Trees protected tree petition." Michael Dawson accused the city of giving an "erroneous and false" headline knowing that "distributing this story would give residents a false impression that PG&E had won a new ruling."

Subramanian responded by saying that the city cannot change a headline.

"The Almost Daily Briefing is a collection of published articles related to Lafayette. The city does not change the headline or content of any article, and simply presents the stories to the community so that people are aware of what is being written about Lafayette," said Jeff Heyman, communications analyst for the city of Lafayette.

"The article in question was published by a legal journal serving Northern California, and the city had no hand in authoring the article or its headline," Heyman added.

Michael Dawson was disappointed that the city did

not issue a correction. "This biased article was written by a national organization with a specific mission to enact business-friendly tort laws, and was falsely made to look like local news. Not only does the city need to vet their top story news links, they need to do a better job being honest and transparent in their communications."

Heyman says that the city will be submitting a staff report to the council detailing the Almost Daily Briefing production process at the March 11 meeting.

Meanwhile Burks says that the city is moving forward to arrange a second meeting with the community, the city council, the CPUC and PG&E. A previous meeting with these parties took place in November. They are currently looking at dates in March and Burks says it will include senior/high-level stakeholders who are in a position to make decisions.

"So the city is certainly not sitting on our hands – we are actively facilitating engagement/collaboration in the interests of public safety," Burks said.