



THE SCOOP

Winter 2024

Newly established best friends, Maxine and Maxine.



Volunteer, 8 year old Maxine, delivers her colorful bags while helping her grandma deliver meals.



The Art of Creating Smiles

By Sarah Stege, Lakeland University Student

For one grandmother and granddaughter duo, making people smile is an art form. Lois Otten has been delivering meals for Fresh Meals On Wheels since fall 2021. Her eight-year-old granddaughter, Maxine, joined her on a meal delivery route a year ago. Shortly after, Maxine decided to start decorating meal bags for the people on her grandmother's route.

She said that her favorite thing to draw on the paper bags is "anything that doesn't really exist – like dragons, or mystical sea monsters." Besides fantasy illustrations, Maxine also draws real animals people, usually with colorful markers.

Maxine pulls inspiration from books her mom reads aloud to her while creating her whimsical artwork, like the *Inkheart* series by Cornelia Funke. In these books, the main character's dad has the magical ability of making fictional characters appear in the real world and real characters disappear into the fictional world.

Like the characters from the books, Maxine has a magical talent—she's gifted with the power of creating smiles on meal recipients' faces.

"It brings a little brightness and cheer to people who are alone and probably don't have much of a chance to enjoy children," Lois said. Many clients keep Maxine's decorated meal bags to display on their refrigerators and bulletin boards.

"It really is a lot more than food," Lois said. "It's the connection with people."

One meal recipient has an extra special point of connection. "We share the same name!" Maxine said. The day the two Maxines met, they were both wearing outfits with sea anchors on them.

Every meal recipient is special to Maxine. "I always think about them," Maxine said. "I have a memory of each person saying thank you. All the pleasure I need comes out the smile they give when they see me and the drawings on my bags."

The Missing Ingredient:

Social Isolation's Impact on Senior Nutrition

By Sarah Stege, Lakeland University Student

In the fight against malnutrition among older adults, one major adversary lurking in the shadows is social isolation.

Dr. Kerry Hamm, director of the nursing program at Lakeland University, shed light on this issue: **"We need social connections and networks to thrive. Isolation can negatively affect an individual's sleep behaviors, anxiety level, depression and increase the incidence of heart disease, dementia and obesity."**

For the elderly, the risk of social isolation heightens. Hamm explained that older adults "experience greater loss of friends and family, may live alone, or experience challenges with transportation to engage in social activities."

Studies underscore a distinct correlation between social isolation and malnutrition in the elderly. According to "Malnutrition in elderly: relationship with depression, loneliness and quality of life," a study published in the European Journal of Public Health, loneliness and depression can lead to malnutrition, especially in this demographic.

Moreover, older, isolated individuals may struggle to purchase nutritious foods. "Securing healthy food choices, like fruits and vegetables, is a challenge because they often cost more and may not fit into the budget. They are also perishable, requiring more frequent visits to the store," Hamm said. For those who rely on neighbors or family for trips to the store, this isn't always feasible. Consequently, elderly individuals might resort to shelf-stable comfort foods that lack important nutrients, further contributing to malnutrition.

Fresh Meals On Wheels doesn't just meet the need for healthy meals with ample fruits and vegetables. These meal deliveries offer social interaction.

When volunteers spend time with meal recipients, "a social connection is made and with time, relationships form," said Hamm, a former meal delivery volunteer. "These regular connections provide support, a sense of safety, and meaningful interaction that lessen their sense of loneliness and isolation." Fresh Meals On Wheels brings to light the importance of social connection, a crucial ingredient for wellbeing.



Did you know that in addition to meals, FMOW delivers pet food, library books, lap blankets, birthday cards and other special deliveries in an effort to combat isolation?



From the Garden: *More Asparagus Please*

Back in 2015, there was a smart, kind man, Les Cole, who visited the Wildwood Garden and asked FMOw gardeners if he could help. He'd always been a gardener and volunteered to water the pepper plants. That whole summer, at the age of 101, he was a dedicated worker.

On his visits he'd share watering tips and stories about how people would call him Johnny Appleseed. His friends say that gardening was a constant companion and provided him hope for the future. After he passed away a friend of his sponsored a garden bed dedicated to growing asparagus, Coles' favorite vegetable.

Since that time, asparagus has been growing in a 4' x 20' raised garden bed in the FMOw backyard garden. Providing a good source of important vitamins, minerals, fiber and protein to our clients' meals.

However, as the number of meal recipients grows, and food prices increase, we have seen a need to grow more asparagus. This is where you come in. **We would like to expand our asparagus operation to the Wildwood Garden**, which would more than double our harvest in the years to come. If you're interested in sponsoring a new 5' x 40' asparagus bed at Wildwood Garden, please contact Allison@FreshMealsOnWheels.org.

Thank you!

Jane & Libby, FMOw horticulture and produce team



Projects Coming Together

Nolan Berger of Sheboygan North High School, Troop 859

As our campus continues to grow we always have dreams and aspirations on how we can make things better.

In December 2023 we were lucky enough to be the recipients of an Eagle Scout Project. Nolan planned, built and installed an arbor at the entrance to our sensory garden.

Stop by our building and check it out!



Thank you Nolan!



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A meal recipient and her daughter enjoying our St. Nick Celebration.

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Routes are more fun with a buddy!





THE SCOOP

Winter 2024

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