



Volunteer Opportunities

Mission

Meals On Wheels of San Francisco is committed to the belief that all seniors have the right to live independently with dignity and respect in their own homes for as long as it is safely possible. It is our mission to provide isolated homebound seniors in San Francisco with nutritious meals, daily human contact and supportive services to prevent their premature institutionalization.

History



MOWSF began as a grass-roots movement over 40 years ago with local members of the community looking out for their elderly neighbors. Concerned for the health and well-being of seniors who were unable to shop for or prepare meals, this group began preparing meals in neighborhood kitchens and delivering them to seniors throughout San Francisco. These volunteer efforts took hold and Meals On Wheels of San Francisco was founded in 1970.


As the program grew, it became apparent that isolated homebound seniors needed more than a meal. To help improve their quality of life, full-time social workers and nutritionists were hired. In 1995, Meals On Wheels of San Francisco opened its own industrial kitchen in Bayview/Hunter's Point. Today, more than 1,600 homebound seniors receive meals every day. Furthermore, collaboration with several local agencies allows us to provide our senior clients with access to the services they need to remain healthy and independent. Our growth has been tremendous but the need for support continues to outpace the public funding available to provide these services.

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In so many ways, the work of MOWSF is to end the life-endangering isolation that seniors sometimes experience, and our volunteers play a vital role in this mission.

- **Friendly Visitors:** Most of our clients have outlived their siblings, spouses and oftentimes their own children. Many will go for days seeing no one but a Meals On Wheels driver. Volunteers walk with a senior too frail to go out alone, play cards, watch movies, read aloud or just chat about mutual interests together. Volunteers visit with their client at least twice a month. The volunteer and senior work out a visiting schedule between them. Friendly Visitor volunteers often say that their seniors become their best friends, and their lives are enriched in ways they couldn't imagine. We require a six month commitment.

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- **Grocery Shoppers:** Volunteers receive a shopping list from a senior and pick items up for them, often when a volunteer is doing their own personal shopping. The senior reimburses the volunteer. We ask Grocery Shoppers to be available at least twice a month. The volunteer and senior are encouraged to work out a shopping schedule between them. Many Grocery Shoppers develop a relationship similar to our Friendly Visitors, finding that they've made a new best friend. We require a six month commitment for Grocery Shoppers.
 - **Client Needs:** Volunteers perform minor home and safety projects; deliver, set-up and train a senior how to use a microwave; install a smoke detector; hang pictures; change light bulbs a senior cannot reach; help with laundry; clean out a refrigerator; etc. Such simple efforts greatly improve the quality of life of our clients. We require a six month commitment, but the volunteer can do it as often or little as they wish.
 - **Delivery Assistants:** We need volunteers who assist our employed drivers, visiting clients, helping with parking, and generally supporting a successful route run for the driver and clients. This position requires a 2-3 month commitment of weekly route assistance, once or twice a week.
 - **Grocery Bag Volunteers:** We deliver fresh groceries on Wednesday mornings to clients who can still prepare their own food, but need help with getting quality, fresh food. Volunteers need to be available at least two Wednesday mornings a month, have a car, be willing to donate their own gas, and make a 2-3 month commitment.
 - **Special Events:** We have fund raisers throughout the year, large and small. Because of our food-oriented mission, most are fun, foodie-related events. This is a great way to get introduced to Meals On Wheels and make friends.
 - **Holidays:** Bring cheer to seniors for the holidays! Volunteers deliver our meals on Thanksgiving. Families, students, and other types of community and corporate groups make cards and placemats. Finally, we recruit corporate and other kinds of groups to help us wrap the many gifts we deliver in December.
 - **Children & Families:** Beyond the holidays, young people make birthday cards for our clients. For a deeper commitment, many parents become Friendly Visitors or Grocery Shoppers (see above) with their children. These often become rich relationships between the generations.
 - **Corporate Groups:** Beyond the holidays, we invite groups of about 8-15 to visit us M-F to make birthday cards for our clients, 70% of whom live alone. These are fun team opportunities, and they are enjoyed by employees who get to unleash their creativity on behalf of our clients.
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- **Internships & Office Work:** We have non-stipendiary positions to assist our professional staff in social work, volunteer management, development and other areas. These are great opportunities to learn about and develop skills in the social services and non-profit professions.
 - **Leadership & Organization:** Do you have special skills you would like to contribute? This is high impact, skilled volunteering for mature adults with skills and life experience. Time commitment varies with the project in which the volunteer is involved.

For all programs that require a volunteer to be in a client's home we run a background check using your name, date of birth, and social security number. This means we run a DMV check, we check your references, and we complete a criminal history check before you are accepted into the program.

For any inquiries about these positions, or if you would like to apply, please contact Leslie Nipps, Volunteer Department, lnipps@mowsf.org, 415-343-1325.

