

SUMMER OF LOVE SENIOR THRIVES TODAY

By: *Jim Oswald*

Monica's building is located at the northern edge of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Her apartment is modest and gets a lot of sunshine. Everything is neat and tidy — a beautiful string of sparkly fairy-type garland is draped across her windows, and cloth tapestries with intricate designs that remind me of India, adorn some of the walls.

"Would you like some tea and cookies?" she asks me. She's already laid out an assortment of sweets, creams, and teabags for me to choose from.

Monica is 74 and receives Meals on Wheels. Matter of fact, she's been receiving home-delivered meals, wellness checks, and nutrition advice from our team for the past 14 years shortly after getting out of the hospital after treatment for stage 2 bone cancer at age 60.

"The social workers at San Francisco General knew I would need home support



services, to include meals, but I wasn't 60 yet, so they referred me to Open Hand," Monica explains. "Once I turned 60, I decided to sign up for Meals on Wheels and haven't left since."

I feel very comfortable in Monica's apartment — maybe it was the tea and cookies, the bright sunshine, and the Beatles tune playing somewhere in the background — Eight Days a Week.

During our chat, I learned that Monica was and in many ways, still is the quintessential San Francisco hippie. In 1966 at the age of 15, Monica decided to

escape the brutal Chicago winters. She had made a short list of places she'd like to live — Australia, New York, London, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. She chose the latter because of its budding music scene. Plus, she already had friends in Noe Valley that she could crash with.

"I loved the Castro, especially the buildings, they were beautifully painted with gorgeous flowers," she recounts. "It was the year before the Summer of Love began, and the music and the scene were incredible!"

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LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friend,



I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. My name is Jennifer Steele, and I am honored to introduce myself as the new CEO of Meals on Wheels San Francisco.

As I step into this role, I want to take a moment to express my deep gratitude for your trust in us and for allowing us to be of service to you.

At Meals on Wheels San Francisco, we understand the importance of nourishment and wellness in supporting you in staying safe and independent in the comfort of your own home. Our mission is to ensure that you have the nutrition and connection that is so important to all of us, and to treat you with dignity and respect.

We are committed to enhancing your overall well-being by offering a wide range of menu options that cater to your unique dietary needs and preferences. In our continuous efforts to improve and diversify our offerings, we have recently added vegan lamb and beef entrees to our menu. We understand the importance of catering to different dietary choices, ensuring that everyone's nutritional needs are met.

Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers work tirelessly to prepare these meals with love and deliver these meals to your doorstep with care, ensuring that you receive not

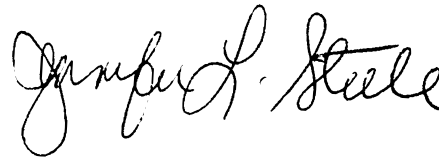
only sustenance but also a warm smile and a friendly face. We want you to know that you are not alone. We are here to support you and to provide you with the care and attention you deserve.

While we navigate through these challenging times, your safety is our utmost priority. We follow strict health and safety guidelines to ensure that our meal preparation and delivery process is carried out in a manner that minimizes any potential risks. Your well-being is at the forefront of everything we do.

As we move forward, we are committed to building a stronger, more vibrant community together. Your continued support and feedback are invaluable to us, as they help us improve our services and better meet your needs. We encourage you to reach out to us with any suggestions or concerns you may have. Your voice matters, and we are here to listen.

Once again, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for allowing us to serve you. I hope to meet you one day, but until then please know that I share a meal with you in spirit!

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jennifer Steele".

Jennifer Steele
Chief Executive Officer,
Meals on Wheels San Francisco

OUR MISSION:

Meals on Wheels provides a network of services that allow seniors to live in their homes with dignity and independence for as long as possible.

Contact Meals on Wheels San Francisco:

Office Phone: (415) 920-1111

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SUMMER OF LOVE SENIOR THRIVES TODAY

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Monica tells me she had never seen so many hills before — nor so many people doing their “own thing.” She loved it!

“All of my favorite psychedelic rock bands were right here — Big Brother and the Holding Company, The Charlatans, and Quicksilver,” she said.

Monica eventually moved to a different place in the City — her new roommates were Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley — part of the “Big Five” responsible for designing some of the most famous psychedelic concert posters of all time including many for the Grateful Dead.

Around this time Monica started performing with a small band “jamming” at clubs, doing blues and rock — mimicking all of the influences she grew up with in the suburbs of Chicago.

In the 80s, Monica and her husband Rolland created a rock band called STAROCK which appeared on SFTV cable access on Friday nights at 8:30 pm.

In between all of this, she was raising her son, Solomon, and her daughter, Venus.



I asked Monica how she knew about Meals on Wheels. She said it was in 2001, the year her mother passed away in Chicago. Monica decided to fly her dad, who was living alone, across the country to San Francisco to be closer to her.

“I signed him up for Meals on Wheels and he was with me for four years before he died.”

In 2009, Monica began experiencing her own health problems including the operation to remove a cancerous bone, which was successful but resulted in a hernia and a slew of other complications.

The following year, she underwent an extremely dangerous surgery.

“Doctors had to rebuild some of my internal organs — bladder and urinary tract. They removed nine parts. I had five of the best urologists working on me,” she explained.

Doctors told Monica this was a rare surgery and “no one survives this kind of thing.” But Monica did survive and proved everyone wrong. While she cannot lift anything heavy and has to be careful with her diet, she says she’s enjoying life in her current apartment near the park.

“I feel really good right now, I’m really fortunate to have this — being able to eat good and balanced food. Meals on Wheels helps me do this,” she says.

“Sometimes I don’t have the energy to chop the potatoes and fry them. I have to have something pre-made. “I think it’s amazing how Meals on Wheels puts together so many different things and presents it.”

Our conversation drifted into the present-day and the end of the CalFresh pandemic emergency benefits in April. I asked Monica if this impacted her.

“I was receiving an extra \$90 a month for a total of \$290 which helped. Now I’m back down to \$200. It’s ridiculous to think that everything is just fine now when obviously it isn’t. Food has gotten more expensive. That’s why Meals on Wheels is handy — for people like me. I think it’s saving a lot of lives.”

MEET OUR NEW CEO

MEET JENNIFER STEELE — OUR NEW CEO! *By: Jim Oswald*

There was quite a bit of excitement at Meals on Wheels last month!

On July 17, we met our new Chief Executive Officer, Jennifer Steele, who flew across the country from her home in Cincinnati to meet us for the first time and to get to know our operations.

Jennifer was the President & CEO of Meals on Wheels of Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky whose mission runs parallel to ours — ensuring older adults in the region have home-delivered meals and services that help them live with grace and independence in their homes.

She has an impressive track record of success having led the Ohio Meals on Wheels for almost five years and helping it transform into an innovative organization that better serves thousands of homebound older seniors. She also serves on the national board of Meals on Wheels America, is an accomplished lecturer, and has been honored with



numerous awards for her service to the community including Outstanding Woman of Northern Kentucky by the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

“My goal is to support all of you in delivering on our mission and making sure that we’re fighting senior hunger and loneliness in this community,” Jennifer announced as she introduced herself to us in our employee cafeteria. “You know, people think the CEO is the face of the organization, but you are every bit the face of the organization as well and I just have such a deep respect and appreciation for the work that you do.”

Jennifer has dedicated her professional career to advocating for those who can’t advocate for themselves.

She explained that before joining Meals on Wheels, she worked in food insecurity and hunger relief both domestically and internationally.

“I’ve always been passionate about nutrition and hunger. I’m a social worker. I’ve always cared a lot about seniors, and underserved groups. I’ve always wanted to fight for people’s rights and make sure that they have what they need.”

Jennifer shared with us that when she went to school to become a social worker (she received her Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Public Administration from Northern Kentucky University) she never imagined that she’d be a CEO. But when she started working in the field, she began seeing how broken so many systems were and how much that impacted the ability of individuals to overcome a lot of challenges. That’s when she began working her way up the ranks, hitting each level.

“I realized I could do so much more if I could climb a little higher and do so much more if I had more influence and to amplify my voice. It [becoming a CEO] was really about how I can have the biggest impact and affect the most change every step of the way.”

JENNIFER STEELE

Once the morning meet and greets were done, Jennifer toured the kitchen and headquarters to see how more than 10,000 meals are prepared, packaged, and delivered each day. Later, she met with District 10 (Bayview) Supervisor, Shamann Walton, to learn about the impact Meals on Wheels has in this community. We celebrated the end of her first day with an intimate reception held in our kitchen.



"I definitely think there is so much opportunity for this organization [Meals on Wheels San Francisco] not only to be the biggest in the country but to really lead the nation in some innovative, new approaches."

Jennifer is no stranger to innovative ideas. Back in Ohio, during the pandemic, she acquired a food truck using COVID emergency relief funds and had it retrofitted to cook Meals on Wheels meals. Her team then drove that truck to low-income senior housing buildings — places where people with needs lived but had little to no access to transportation or affordable meals. The



pilot for this truck became a huge success.

"We've also used it to serve meals to some of the homeless camps," she explained. "Using it to help facilitate the unhoused counts because food is an offering and builds trust in the community. We're now starting to use it in targeted ways, including some congregate meals."

On day two of her visit with us, Jennifer donned a pair of jeans, and a Meals on Wheels safety vest, and hit the road helping to deliver meals to seniors living in both the Bayview and Tenderloin areas of the city. In Bayview, she met Roslyn who has been receiving meals from us since 2020.

"How do you like Meals on Wheels; is there anything we can do better?" Jennifer asks Roslyn.

"I love Meal on Wheels," Roslyn answers. "You guys are great. I'm thankful you have the program. A lot of seniors have to make a choice between [paying]

their utilities and eating, their rent, and eating, medicine and eating."

On her last day in San Francisco, Jennifer came in at the crack of dawn and helped bag thousands of pounds of groceries — part of our Home-Delivered Groceries volunteer program and partnership with the SF-Marin Food Bank.

Jennifer will move with her daughter across the country in August and plans on having feet on the ground in the Bay Area after Labor Day.



"I am so excited for the opportunity to work with all of you and to take what's clearly a really good organization to the next level. I fell in love with San Francisco when I visited, and I think it's going to be a lot more my speed than the Midwest. This is where I belong; I'm excited."

YOUR HEALTH

6 STEPS TO PREVENT A FALL

September is Fall Prevention Month in the U.S. and our friends at the National Council on Aging (NCOA) have some wonderful resources to help you assess your risk (or a loved one's risk) for serious falls.

Incidentally, according to the National Institutes of Health, seniors who are malnourished are at greater risk of falls which is why home-delivered meals, Such as Meals on Wheels, that provide seniors with proper nutrition, decrease the likelihood of falls.


1 Find a good balance and exercise program

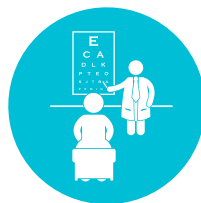
Look to build balance, strength, and flexibility. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for referrals. Find a program you like and take a friend.


2 Talk to your health care provider

Ask for an assessment of your risk of falling. Share your history of recent falls.


3 Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist

Make sure side effects aren't increasing your risk of falling. Take medications only as prescribed.


4 Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses

Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.


5 Keep your home safe

Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, make stairs safe, and install grab bars in key areas.


6 Talk to your family members

Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just a seniors' issue.

NEW HEADQUARTERS

AFTER 28 YEARS, MEALS ON WHEELS SAN FRANCISCO HAS MOVED ITS HEADQUARTERS!

We have fabulous news to share! In April, we moved into our new headquarters located at **2142 Jerrold Avenue, ending our 28-year run at 1375 Fairfax in Bayview.** Yes, can you believe it — 28 years! We sold our Fairfax building and were able to convert a warehouse space at 2142 Jerrold, also in Bayview, into an incredible office that houses our program and operations teams — this means administrative folks, Intake, HDM, Social Work, Nutrition, and Volunteer Departments as well as administrative staff.

Our new HQ, affectionately known as **The Wong HQ** — named in honor of the incredible generosity of Rosemary Wong (our Board Chair) and her husband, Harry — has room for us to spread out, and with this move, we made sure to



keep our volunteers in mind as well as staff!

For instance, we have a wonderful new Lounge for volunteers to enjoy hot coffee and snacks after their early morning bagging thousands of pounds of groceries for our Home Delivered Grocery Program. Also, we now have room for some of the new Volunteer

Programs we are creating to lessen senior isolation by making calls to an isolated senior or relaying Happy Birthday wishes!

We had many great years at our old location on Fairfax, but this change is a great new chapter in the ongoing growth and evolution of Meals on Wheels San Francisco.

ELECTRIC-POWERED FOR A CLEANER, GREENER FUTURE!



We are excited to announce our plans to electrify two-thirds of our fleet of meal delivery vehicles by 2027. Our current fleet of 32 combustion vehicles covers almost 100,000 miles a year visiting thousands of homebound seniors daily. By transitioning to EV, we expect to reduce our carbon footprint by 50% and reduce maintenance and fuel costs by approximately 10%.

As of August 3, 2023, we have 5, Ford eTransit vans on the road that can travel approximately 100 miles on a single charge, and one dual port-charging station.

Amazon is the lead financial sponsor of this program. Other funders of the EV initiative include San Francisco and San Mateo Counties, and industrial developer, Goodman.

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NOURISHING THE WHOLE PERSON

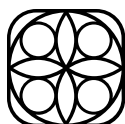
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Meet
Jennifer Steele
in this issue
of *Nourish*

LEAVE A LEGACY

Did you know you can include Meals on Wheels San Francisco in your will? The legacy gift you leave us today, can help ensure no seniors go hungry or are forgotten tomorrow.

Call us for more details.
(415) 343-1269 or visit:
MOWSF.org/legacy-giving.



SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
**Department of Disability
and Aging Services**

The City of San Francisco's Department of Disability and Aging Services is a leading partner and primary funder of nutrition and supportive services for homebound seniors and adults with disabilities.