

Rotary clubs to help Meals on Wheels serve more Gaston seniors

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More than 150 Gaston County senior citizens who qualify for the Meals on Wheels program can't be served now because of a shortage of volunteers to make deliveries, and Rotary clubs in Belmont, Mount Holly and Gastonia are teaming up to help.

Belmont Rotary President Whitney Norton made addressing the needs of senior citizens one of the club's objectives for the year and contacted other clubs to seek their support. After two combined meetings of the Belmont

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Gaston adult nutrition supervisor Selina Pate, left, spoke to Belmont Rotarians about volunteer requirements for the Meals on Wheels program at the invitation of club President Whitney Norton, who is working to provide additional volunteers for the program from Rotary clubs in Belmont, Mount Holly and Gastonia.

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Rotary clubs

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and Mount Holly clubs, Meals on Wheels was identified as the program where Rotarian volunteers could be most effective.

Today, more than 750 volunteers are delivering meals to more than 360 senior citizens five days a week, but many more qualified seniors are on a waiting list because of a shortage of volunteers.

Selina Pate, who directs Meals on Wheels in her role as adult nutrition program supervisor at Gaston County social services, spoke at a Belmont Rotary Club meeting recently to provide more specifics on the role of delivery volunteers and to encourage Rotarians to complete a registration form available online. Several members already have volunteered, and more sign-ups are anticipated following the presentation.

Delivery volunteers dedicate at least one lunch hour each month to the program. In addition to helping meet seniors' nutrition needs, Meals on Wheels volunteers provide a brief visit and a safety check on those who may not see or speak to another person that day.

Pate said the main requirements for being a Meals on Wheels volunteer is "to have a big smile and a desire to care for those who once cared for us." Other requirements are to have a reliable vehicle, a driver's license and to pass a screening process that includes a criminal background check.

Meals are delivered every weekday from eight sites in Gaston County. Queen of the Apostles Catholic Church is the Belmont area meal pick-up site, also serving Cramerton, McAdenville and Lowell. Routes are established so meals

can be delivered within one hour. Volunteers pick up meals between 10:45 and 11:30 a.m., so routes can be completed by 12:30 p.m. Volunteers sign up to deliver at least one day per month.

How to become a volunteer

Join the network of more than 750 volunteers who are making a difference in the lives of seniors across Gaston County. By donating your lunch break at least once a month, you can help the Meals on Wheels program reach the 1 in 6 seniors who might not know where their next meal is coming from. Find out more about volunteering on the Meals on Wheels website at: www.gastongov.com/466/Meals-on-Wheels, or you can call 704.862.7540, or send an email to: volunteer@gastongov.com.

About Rotary

Rotary is an international service organization with 1.4 million members in more than 200 countries. "Service Above Self" is the Rotary motto. Rotarians work together to promote peace, fight disease, support education, grow local economies and protect the environment.

Belmont Rotary Club, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2025, meets for lunch and a program on local topics each Wednesday, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m., at the Home2 Suites by Hilton in Belmont. Guests interested in learning more about local businesses and issues and how Rotary serves the community are welcome. For more information, visit www.belmontrotaryclub.com.

Ted Hall is a member of Belmont Rotary Club.