

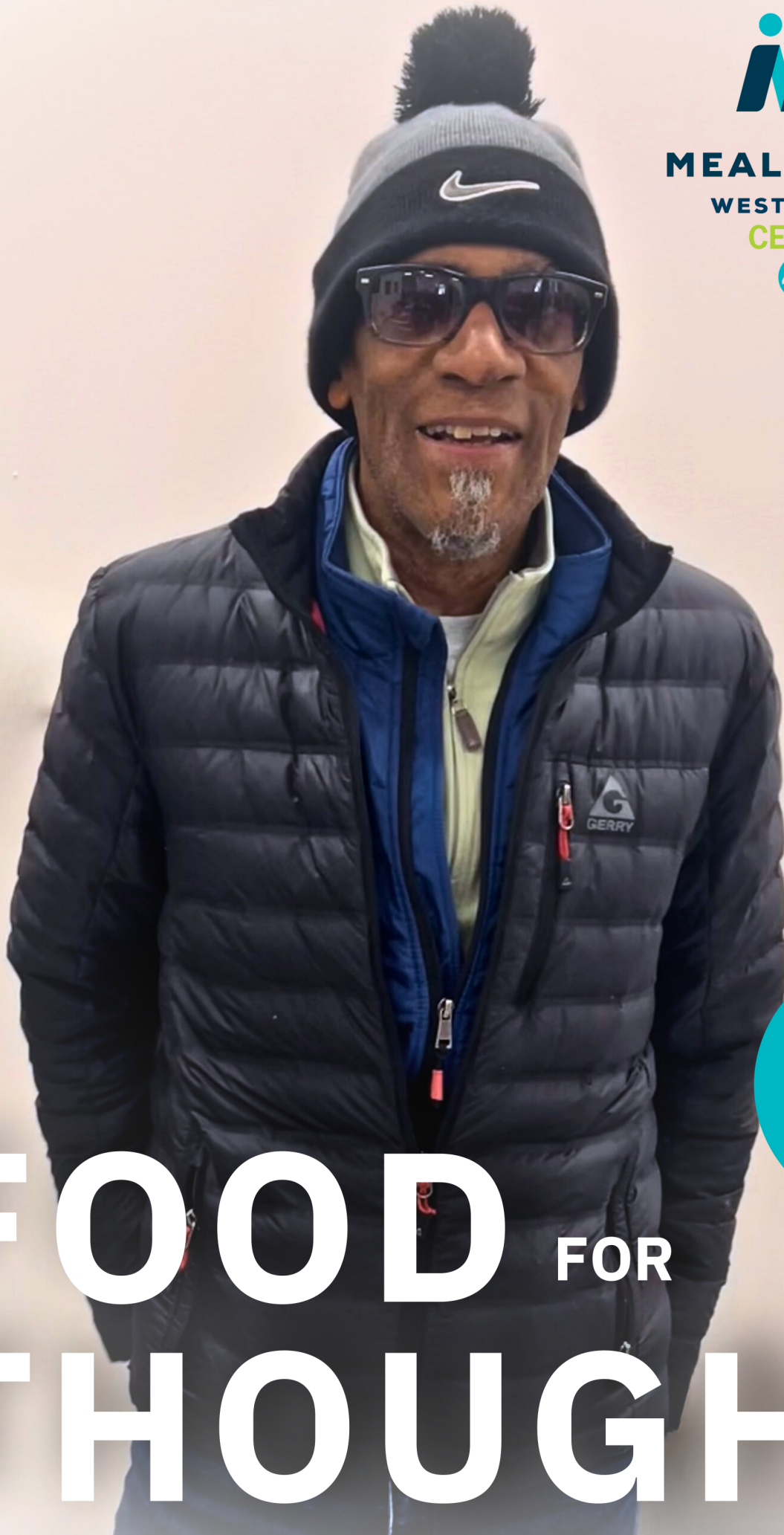


**MEALS on WHEELS**

**WESTERN MICHIGAN**

**CELEBRATING**

**40 YEARS**



**Winter  
2024**

**FOOD FOR  
THOUGHT**

# PRESIDENT & CEO UPDATE



## GREETINGS,

As we begin 2024, I am thrilled to share that Meals on Wheels Western Michigan (MOWWM) is celebrating its 40th year of unwavering commitment to serving seniors in our community. This milestone is not just a testament to our enduring dedication but also a reflection of the tremendous impact we've collectively made on the lives of thousands of older adults in Kent and Allegan Counties. Each meal delivered/served, every smile shared and the continuous support from our community has fueled our journey, and for that, I express my deepest gratitude. Thank you.

As we reflect on our four decades of service, we also cast our gaze towards the future with excitement and anticipation. The coming year holds promises of growth, innovation, and even more impactful initiatives. We are embarking on a new chapter, with plans to introduce significant improvements and expand outreach and initiatives that will further enhance the well-being of the seniors we are privileged to serve. Together, let us embrace the opportunities the future holds and continue our shared mission of bringing nourishment, companionship, and comfort to those who need it most. Together, we can deliver.

Warmly,

Lisa Wideman | President and CEO



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## RECIPE: Spiced Pear Cookies

**PREP TIME:**  
10 minutes

**COOK TIME:**  
15 minutes

**SERVING SIZE:**  
24 cookies

### INGREDIENTS:

- ½ c butter, softened
- 1 ½ c packed brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 c all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 pear, peeled, cored, diced
- ½ c raisins
- ½ c walnuts
- 1 ½ c confectioner's sugar
- 2 ½ TBS lemon juice

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Beat butter and sugar in a large bowl until smooth. Beat in egg and vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and ginger; mix into batter.
3. Stir in diced pears, raisins, and walnuts.
4. Drop cookie dough about 2 inches apart by rounded tablespoonsful onto baking sheets.
5. Bake until edges are golden brown, about 15 minutes.

### NOTES:

MAIN DISH

# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## MEET MR. FRED FRANKS

If you visit the senior pantry, you may get the chance to run into one of Grand Rapids' most historical residents. A regular, Mr. Franks has hours upon hours of stories about himself and his father growing up and growing out in Grand Rapids.

"I'm a retired cop with a proud story." Mr. Franks was in high spirits at the MOWWM Senior Pantry, happy to speak to everyone and anyone.

"With the help of programs like this, I stay independent. I'm content, I'm happy. I first came to the pantry when I walked up to the Walgreens next door about a year ago. Then I found out that the people were nice and it's close to home. It gives me a little something to do. I love coming here, even just to socialize."

After doctors' orders to slow down over the past 20 years, Mr. Franks has gradually been getting out again and telling his story and that of his father, football player turned civil rights activist, Julius Franks Jr.



"I like coming up here and chatting with the people and the staff."

Julius Franks Jr.'s promising football career was unfortunately cut short by a bout of tuberculosis that left him hospitalized for two years. He moved to Grand Rapids on the advice of fellow football player and future United States President, Gerald R. Ford. The Franks grew up on a street occupied by the Meijer's and the Gordan's, of Meijer grocery stores, and Gordan Food Services. "It was a historical street. My father bought that land and we started the integration of black people into Grand Rapids."

Your support helps amazing local seniors like Fred access fresh food, community and friendship. To learn more about how to get involved with the Senior Pantry, please visit [mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org](http://mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org).



He describes his life as one of duality, eating dinner at the governor's mansion with his father, and then going to throw rocks with his friends at North Park in the evening. He recalls once being introduced to Michael Jordan by Derek Jeter!

"I would dare you to find an earlier black man who was a sports guy turned civil rights activist like my father. He was around at the same time as Martin Luther King Jr., except he was fortunate enough to not have to protest because he had friends in the right places. But that doesn't mean we didn't have our struggles."

Mr. Franks recalled how his friend's mother would make all the neighborhood boys eat outside at the picnic table rather than welcome them into the house whenever he was present. "They knew who my father was, so they never turned me away, but there was always a subtext."

Mr. Franks has been asked to be interviewed by multiple broadcasting stations in the area this year. He is helping a new generation of Grand Rapidsian's learn about the roots of our city. He and his father's lives are woven into the tapestry of Grand Rapids history.

After loading up on fresh produce and pantry staples to last him over the holidays, Mr. Franks parted ways with a beautiful sentiment,

"You keep telling your story, and I'll keep listening."





# A LOOK BACK AT

Thanks to the support of this amazing community and people like you, MOWWM has grown to see a lot of changes over the last 40 years and is looking forward to what the next 40 will bring!

Back in 1984, Meals on Wheels Western Michigan (originally Senior Meals Program, Inc.) was established to address the nutritional needs of older adults in Kent County through Home Delivered Meals and Community Dining Sites. The program was located at Two Fountain Place in Grand Rapids, and later that year was incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, serving 975 seniors.

Eight years later, in 1992, MOWWM moved to its first commercial kitchen at 1279 Cedar Street in Grand Rapids. Thanks to the new facility, MOWWM could cook from scratch to help address the growing needs of the community's older adults.

In 1999, the first Kent County Senior Millage was passed, providing funding for the MOWWM Senior Pantry program to be established in 2000. This program was one of the first food pantries to offer a shopping experience in Kent County, allowing seniors the dignity of choosing their food, rather than just receiving a pre-set box of items.

As the nonprofit continued to grow, it became obvious that a new and larger facility was needed. In 2008, MOWWM started the move to its current location in Grandville at 2900 Wilson Ave SW. After 4 years, the move was complete and a much larger commercial kitchen, as well as increased warehouse, storage, and office space, allowed for many more seniors to be served. Some of the staff who have been around since 2008 recalled that the new kitchen space alone was larger than the entire previous facility!



The new kitchen being constructed at Wilson Ave!



FIRST COMMERCIAL KITCHEN  
**1992**



MOVE TO WILSON AVENUE COMPLETED  
**2012**

**1984**  
MEALS ON WHEELS WESTERN MICHIGAN ESTABLISHED



**2000**  
SENIOR PANTRY PROGRAM ESTABLISHED



# 40 YEARS OF MOWWM

In 2014, the Choice Meal Program was launched. This program helps meet the diverse preferences and dietary needs of MOWWM clients and allows seniors to choose from a large variety of menu options. The number of choices you can make is often diminished as you age, and MOWWM is proud to offer the dignity of choice to local seniors.

Having previously served just Kent County, in 2016 MOWWM expanded its service area to include Allegan County. MOWWM now serves over 1,000 seniors per year in Allegan County via Home Delivered Meals and Community Dining Sites.

Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Paula Kerr, joined MOWWM in 2019 to improve the nutrition content of meals and develop meals suitable for more specialized diets. Paula plays a key role in constructing the menus and counsels seniors looking for guidance on what meals are best for their particular needs. She also creates a monthly Wellness Guide for MOWWM seniors and hosts cooking demos at the Senior Pantry!

After assisting in the growth of MOWWM for 11 years, Lisa Wideman was appointed President and CEO in 2020. That same year, the COVID-19 pandemic brought increased food insecurity and isolation, hitting the senior community especially hard. MOWWM never paused services and rose to meet the increased need. In 2020, MOWWM delivered over 625,000 meals to more than 3,000 homebound seniors and the Senior Pantry Program provided more than 1 million pounds of groceries.

This past fiscal year, MOWWM served a total of 6,214 seniors and made a significant investment in increasing capacity by installing a new freezer capable of holding 62,000 prepared meals.

As the senior population keeps growing, we know the need for our services will continue to increase. Thanks to the incredible support of this community, we look forward to meeting the needs of aging adults for the next 40 years and beyond! With your continued partnership, the vision of a community where no senior is hungry or forgotten is within reach! Together, for them, we will deliver.



**EXPANSION TO  
ALLEGAN COUNTY**

**2016**



**OVER 7,000 SENIORS  
SERVED DURING COVID-19**

**2020**



**2014  
CHOICE MEAL  
PROGRAM LAUNCH**

**2019  
ADDITION OF  
REGISTERED DIETITIAN  
NUTRITIONIST**

**NOW  
AND BEYOND**



# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

## LAKE MICHIGAN CREDIT UNION

Like many of you, LMCU's relationship with MOWWM began organically through volunteering over the last few years. You'll often see groups of volunteers in their blue LMCU gear assisting with meal preparation or loading up for a delivery to homebound clients.



Last year we were honored to have LMCU as generous event sponsors and to welcome LMCU CFO, Peter Dann, to the MOWWM board.

Covering a delivery route has been Peter's most memorable experience with MOWWM so far, "seeing firsthand the impact that MOWWM has on seniors in our local community who are friends, family, and neighbors to many in West Michigan."



As the population demographics continue to shift and age, LMCU recognizes the critical need for nutrition services, as well as the care, compassion, and connection that MOWWM provides to local seniors.

LMCU's hope for seniors in West Michigan is that they have consistent and adequate access to the critical needs necessary to live a healthy lifestyle, and that more seniors are able to remain independent for as long as they choose.

With the help of organizations and individuals like you and LMCU, that vision can be a reality. Get your workplace involved by reaching out today!

## #SAVELUNCH

Congress is currently negotiating and finalizing funding levels that will determine the amount of federal funding that Meals on Wheels programs receive in 2024. Help us show our elected officials how much local seniors rely on Meals on Wheels as a lifeline!



#SaveLunch

Help MOWWM #SaveLunch for local seniors by writing notes to elected officials on paper plates and dropping them off at MOWWM. For more ways to #SaveLunch and save our seniors independence, scan the QR Code!



# SAVE THESE DATES

Meals on Wheels Western Michigan is looking forward to hosting another year of inspiring events! Make sure you reserve these dates on your calendar. Keep an eye on our website, social media, and future newsletters for more information as we get closer to each event. We can't wait to see you there.

## 3RD ANNUAL MARCH FOR MEALS COMMUNITY WALK AND 5K RUN

March 24, 2024 - Millennium Park

Get active and join in the fun with a 2-mile walk or 5K timed run in support of local seniors! All ages and abilities are welcome at this fun community event.



## MORE THAN A MEAL LUNCHEON

May 15, 2024 - New Vintage Place

This free table-hosted luncheon is a great opportunity to learn more about MOWWM while enjoying a tasty lunch prepared by our very own kitchen and some fun trivia!

## 10TH ANNUAL CHEF'S SPECIALTY

October 16th, 2024 - The Goei Center

Join us for this celebration of good food, local seniors, and our 2024 honoree, Shawn Kohlhaas. The evening will feature an open bar, seated dinner, and a friendly competition among local chefs.



# 2024 MARCH FOR MEALS COMMUNITY WALK & 5K RUN

SUPPORT LOCAL SENIORS AND JOIN IN THE FUN  
WITH A 2-MILE WALK OR 5K TIMED RUN!

ALL AGES & ABILITIES WELCOME \* DOG FRIENDLY

AWESOME PRIZES \* FOOD-THEMED COSTUME CONTEST



MARCH	MILLENNIUM PARK GRANT PAVILION	
<b>24</b> SUNDAY, 10:00 AM	1400 MAYNARD AVE SW GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49534	
	MEALSONWHEELSWESTERNMICHIGAN.ORG (616) 459-3111	<b>REGISTER TODAY!</b>



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@MealsOnWheelsWesternMichigan

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Meals on Wheels Western Michigan is supported  
by:

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