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'Every day we're making a difference.'



Carol Childers' commitment to Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County spans nearly 30 years.

Why Carol Childers has devoted three decades to Meals on Wheels

Carol Childers has always felt called to work with older adults. She completed the gerontology certificate program at Cabrillo College, then provided home care services for several years before the opportunity arose to become a meal site manager with Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County. She was already familiar with the program's positive impact, so she eagerly accepted the position.

"I love the fact that every day we're making a difference in somebody's life," Carol said.

Carol spent 29 years supporting the meal sites in Ben Lomond and other locations for Meals on Wheels. She made deep connections with the community's older adults who dined there.

Now, as an assistant program manager with Meals on Wheels, Carol completes the initial assessments to qualify home delivery clients for participation and acts as a resource for them throughout their time in the program. Many people who reach out to Meals on Wheels share various questions and concerns, and Carol helps refer them to programs that can best meet their needs. As of September, we have nearly 700 older adults who depend on our nutritious home-delivered meals.

"We become their connection to other services. They always know they can call us and we will help them figure it out," Carol said. "We never hesitate to support them with navigating new things, because our clients are priority number one."

In addition to her role with Meals on Wheels, Carol is the chair of the Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission. She served on the county's Long-Term Care Interagency Commission, the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties board of directors, and the Community Bridges board of directors.

"When I go home for the day, I have to feel like I have made a difference and done something positive for the community," she said. "That is why I have stayed with Meals on Wheels for all these years. It just feels right."

How you can make an impact



Volunteers are critical to Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County's operations.

Volunteer with Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County

Volunteers are a crucial ingredient in the success of Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County. Our dedicated volunteers deliver healthy meals to participants' homes and help at our dining sites. They are the reason we are able to continue serving older adults in need of our meals program, without a waitlist. These dedicated volunteers embody community spirit by generously donating their time, saving the program approximately \$200,000 annually that is able to go toward the meals we provide. Without their support, it would be a struggle to meet the needs of the growing older adult population in Santa Cruz County.

In addition to ensuring older adults receive nutritious meals, our volunteers serve an important role in ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of participants. They provide wellness checks and battle loneliness by bringing friendly connections to our community's older adults. One of every five older adults in Santa Cruz County lives alone — that's more than 14,500 of our neighbors. The loneliness that many older adults face puts them at an increased risk of health decline.

When Meals on Wheels volunteers arrive at the door of a meal program participant's home, they may be the only friendly face the participant sees for the week. These volunteers are trained to conduct wellness checks as they deliver meals, ensuring older adults living in isolation receive the care they need. Volunteers also make referrals for any other services they identify as being needed or helpful.

Our program had more than 80 volunteers before the pandemic. Unfortunately, we experienced a dramatic decrease in the number of volunteers in the past few years, with numbers dwindling by more than half at the height of the pandemic. We are building our roster of volunteers back up, with nearly 60 people volunteering now.

If you are interested in contributing to the health and happiness of our community's older adults, we encourage you to consider volunteering with Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County. You can be part of helping this crucial lifeline continue, so older adults can stay independent with dignity in their homes. Meals on Wheels provides the care and compassion we would all wish for our loved ones and ourselves as we age. Support this vital program: [Sign up today to become a volunteer.](#)

—Darren Daley, Program Director, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County

News & Notes

The Live Oak School District has asked to move Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County to a month to month lease as discussions about a two-year lease extension at our current headquarters at 1777 Capitola Road have stalled.

You can read more about the situation by [CLICKING HERE](#).

We are committed to preserving older adult services for our 1,500 participants. We will keep you updated as we learn more. Rest assured that home-delivered meals will continue to be served and congregate dining sites will continue to operate.

In the Press

Click the headlines below to read local and national news about Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County and older adult services.

- [Elderday Adult Day Health Care's grand opening marks a milestone in Santa Cruz County](#)
- ['Close to the Line': Why More Seniors Are Living in Poverty](#)
- [Diving into the mental health of older adults](#)

Nutrition Corner



You've heard the saying: "An apple a day will keep the doctor away." While it will certainly take more than a daily apple to keep you healthy, it is a step in the right direction. Apples are delicious, easy to carry for snacking, low in calories, a natural mouth freshener, and inexpensive

Apples are a source of both soluble and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber such as pectin helps prevent cholesterol buildup in the lining of blood vessel walls, thus reducing the incidence of atherosclerosis and heart disease. The insoluble fiber in apples provides bulk in the intestinal tract, holding water to cleanse and move food quickly through the digestive system.

It is a good idea to eat apples with their skin. Almost half of the vitamin C content is just underneath the skin. Eating the skin also increases insoluble fiber content. Most of an apple's fragrance cells are concentrated in the skin. As they ripen, the skin cells develop more aroma and flavor.

—Caren Dix, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Apple Facts:

- **Keep the Cardiologist Away:** The Ohio State University reports eating one apple a day for four weeks lowered blood levels of oxidized LDL, the "bad cholesterol," by 40%.
- **The Skinny on Muscle Health:** Ursolic acid, a natural compound found in the apple's skin, may prevent muscle wasting that can result from aging or illness.
- **Cancer Fighters and Antioxidants:** Apples are rich in antioxidants, especially quercetin, known to inhibit cancer onset and cell proliferation. Research suggests powerful antioxidants in apples and apple products play an essential role in reducing risks of prevalent diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's.

Apple Nutrition Stats:

One medium 2-1/2 inch apple, fresh, raw, with skin, typically includes:

- 81 calories
- 21 grams carbohydrate
- 4 grams dietary fiber
- Soluble fiber
- Insoluble fiber

- 10 mg calcium
- 10 mg phosphorus
- 0.25 mg iron
- 0.00 mg sodium
- 159 mg potassium
- 8 mg vitamin C
- 73 IU vitamin A
- 4 mcg folate

The nutritional value of apples will vary slightly depending on the variety and size. Source: USDA Nutrient Data Laboratory

Cinnamon Apple Chips Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 cups unsweetened apple juice
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 Red Delicious apples

Instructions:

1. In a large skillet or pot, combine apple juice and cinnamon stick; bring to a low boil while preparing apples.
2. With a sharp knife, slice off 1/2-inch from top and bottom of apples and discard (or eat!). Stand apples on either cut end and saw gently crosswise into very thin (1/8-inch) rings, rotating the apple as necessary to get even slices.
3. Drop apple slices into boiling juice; cook 4 to 5 minutes or until slices appear translucent and lightly golden. Meanwhile, heat oven to 250 degrees F.
4. With slotted spatula, remove apple slices from juice and pat dry. Arrange slices on cake-cooling racks, being sure none overlap. Place racks on middle shelf in oven; bake 30 to 40 minutes until apple slices are lightly browned and almost dry to touch. Let chips cool on racks completely before storing in an airtight container.

Chips de manzana canela receta

Ingredientes:

- 2 tazas de jugo de manzana sin azúcar
- 1 palo de canela
- 2 manzanas Red Delicious

Instrucciones:

1. En sartén u olla grande, combine el jugo de manzana y canela en rama; llevar a ebullición bajo, mientras que la preparación de las manzanas.
2. Con un cuchillo afilado, corte de 1/2 pulgadas desde la parte superior e inferior de las manzanas y de descarte (o comer!). Manzanas de pie a uno y otro extremo que cortó con cuidado y vio a lo ancho en anillos muy finos (de 1/8 pulgadas), rotación de la manzana como sea necesario para obtener aún rodajas.
3. Los trozos de manzana gota en el jugo hirviendo; cocinar 4 a 5 minutos o hasta que las rebanadas aparecen translúcidos y ligeramente dorado. Mientras tanto, caliente el horno a 250 grados F.
4. Con la espátula ranurada, quitar trozos de manzana a partir de zumo y seque. Coloque las rebanadas de pastel sobre bastidores de refrigeración, asegurándose su superposición. Colocar sobre bastidores estante del medio en el horno; hornear 30 a 40 minutos hasta que las rodajas de manzana estén ligeramente doradas y casi seca al tacto. Deje enfriar los chips de bastidores completamente antes de guardarla en un recipiente hermético.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Your kindness is transforming our community.

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Community Bridges is an exempt organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; EIN #94-2460211. Donations are tax deductible in excess of the value of any goods or services provided in exchange for your contribution.

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