



# fiftyfive Forward

WINTER 2015

## “Big Wheels” Deliver Meals On Wheels

State and local elected officials, media personalities, financial supporters, company CEOs and board members joined forces to deliver Meals on Wheels Oct. 8 and 15 as part of a public awareness and volunteer recruitment event at Senior Services, Inc.

All 29 volunteers partnered with a Senior Services ambassador to deliver a meal route. The event raised significant knowledge and concern for the plight of the 900 homebound and isolated recipients of the program.

“More people need to come out and deliver Meals on Wheels and see how it impacts the seniors of Wichita,” said Steve McIntosh of KNSS radio.

“People cannot understand this experience until they do it for themselves,” Rene Steven Brand of Spangle’s remarked to Dawson Grimsley of Davis Moore. “I agree,” Dawson replied. “I’ve told my friends and family (about delivering meals), but it’s hard to convey the importance unless you’ve actually done it yourself.”



**Dawson Grimsley and Rene Steven Brand deliver a meal, while below left, Susan Peters and Ben Pringle visit with a Meals on Wheels client.**

“We need more of our state senators and other elected officials out here doing these events,” Senator Michael O’Donnell stated.

In addition to these four, volunteers included: Susan Peters and Ben Pringle from KAKE TV; David and Jing Redfern; Carol Skaff and Stacy Jones of Cohlma Marketing; Commissioner Karl Peterjohn; Commissioner Dave Unruh; Retired Judge Clark Owens; Mary Short of the St. Vincent de Paul Society; Kansas Representative Jim Ward; Gloria Farha Flentje; Doug Stark of ComfortCare Homes; Fran Kentling of The Active Age; Cassandra Bryan and Morgan Plummer of Cassandra Bryan Design; Kristy Melland and Coleen Jennison from Cox Communications; D.A. Marc Bennett and Dan Dillon; board members Hank Blase, Kyle Schaffer, Robert Miller, Ray Vernon and David Alexander.

## In-Home Respite Program Provides Relief for Caregivers

For those tasked with caring for another 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even a small break can be a godsend.

Recognizing that unmet need, Senior Services, Inc., of Wichita started its respite program in 1987. Sedgwick County provided a grant with the request that the program serve as many people as possible.

“That is how we developed the three-hour blocks of time once a week,” says Laurel Alkire, executive director of Senior Services and the creator of the program. “We started by recruiting workers from our Senior Employment Program. We wanted older people as they share many of the same interests and backgrounds as those they serve.”

In the 28 years since it was founded, respite care has provided relief for thousands of caregivers. On the average, it currently serves 35 families a week.

After 22 years together, Doug Tripp did not hesitate to step into the role of caregiver when his partner, Allan Foster, was rendered incapacitated by a stroke in February of 2004.

“I am 24/7 with Allan,” Doug says. “He can’t take care of anything.”

A certified nursing assistant funded by the Area Agency on Aging comes in twice a week to help Doug give Allan a bath. As grateful as Doug is for that professional service, he is most grateful for the three hours of respite care provided by Senior Services employee Pat Shoemaker each week.

“Pat coming in helps me keep my sanity,” Doug says. “When Pat comes it is my time. Sometimes I go to Cheney Lake, sometimes I just have coffee or do something else. The most important thing is to have a little break.”

Pat Shoemaker regards Doug and Allan as her sons. “I enjoy coming to the house and visiting,” she says.

Pat has been a respite worker since 1996. She currently provides respite for seven people a week. “I have met a lot of good people,” she says.

Two of the people working in the respite program were once clients, and they were so impressed with the service they received they



wanted to pass that gift on to others.

“When my husband was critically ill, they came and sat with him so I could go to Bible study,” says Roberta Willis, who has been a respite worker for four years. She currently has five clients.

“It is a very rewarding program,” she adds. “This gives me a purpose and it gives them a sense of safety and relief. It is so important to the caregivers to get that break and know their loved one is safe.”

For seven years, Carolyn Rutherford cared for her mother. “It was so nice I could go to the store and not worry about my mother,” she explains. Grateful, she has been providing the same service to others since December of 2011, caring for a total of nine people each week.

For 26 years, Dolores Cooper has served as the coordinator for respite care. She takes great pride in the quality of their workers. “We are dependable, and the families know they can count on us,” she says.

Each employee is carefully screened, then receives two days of training on dealing with chronic conditions and spiritual issues. Two inservice sessions are held twice a year to provide additional education. Employees can provide light housekeeping, meal preparation and help with transfers, but primarily they serve as a companion.

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## Duane Smith Honored As Meals On Wheels Volunteer Of The Year

A time-honored adage states if you want something done, you should ask a busy person to do it. That certainly holds true in the case of Duane Smith, volunteer extraordinaire.

For the past 11 years, Duane has delivered Meals on Wheels. He started volunteering with his wife, Pat, and continued on his own when Pat's advanced Alzheimer's forced her placement in a long-term care residence.

"I enjoy the fun in my two routes, and knowing I am helping others," says Duane, who was honored as the Meals on Wheels Volunteer of the Year at the annual meeting of Senior Services.

"After more than 30 years of service, Duane inspires people of all ages to keep moving forward," comments Mike Gadbury, Meals on Wheels volunteer coordinator. "He thrives on helping others - and they energize him in return. Duane's auto tag says it all: 'What if the hokey pokey is what it's all about?' He puts his best foot forward and lends a helping hand wherever it's needed. A wonderful volunteer who shakes it all about."

Duane also volunteers as a reader at four elementary school classes each month, and works in the Ronald McDonald Family Room at Wesley Medical Center five times each month.

Every Tuesday he volunteers in the office of the Alzheimer's Association Central and Western Kansas Chapter, talking with people who call or come in to discuss caregiving challenges. He also volunteers as a speaker for the Association, sharing his expertise from his years as a hands-on caregiver. In 2003, he was named the recipient of the Association's first Caregiver of the Year Award, an honor bestowed annually on an outstanding caregiver. The award is named for him, as well.

Duane worked at Western Lithograph for 36 years, where he rose to vice president of sales. After the company was liquidated, he worked in sales administration for Pioneer Balloon, traveling the country.



Duane Smith, left, was honored as the Meals on Wheels Volunteer of the Year. He is shown with Mike Gadbury, MOW volunteer coordinator.

## Employment Fair Set For March 15

The Senior Employment Program at Senior Services will host a job fair from 9 to 11 a.m. March 15 at the Downtown Senior Center.

Job seekers must apply at the Senior Employment Program, 200 S. Walnut, and complete a two-hour orientation prior to the fair. They are taking applicants Jan. 4 to March 10.

SEP offers help preparing a resume, interview strategies, computer training and quality job leads, in addition to sponsoring the weekly job club and job fair. For more information, call 267-1771 or visit seniorservicesofwichita.org.

## Respite Care

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The program was free for years, but the economy in recent years forced Senior Services to begin a nominal charge of \$4.00 an hour.

"For \$12 a week, the caregivers can go to church, buy groceries or take a nap without worrying," Laurel says. "They all say it is well worth it and wish they could have more."

*(This article by Debbi Elmore is reprinted from the September issue of The Active Age.)*



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*of Wichita*

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## “Aging Gracefully” Series Continues To Draw Crowds

Participants in the first two Aging Gracefully presentations offered by Senior Services, Inc., at the Downtown Senior Center have responded with enthusiasm to the program offerings.

“Excellent program!” “Very understandable.” “No improvement needed.” These were just a few of the responses to the July 23 presentation on “Moving and Aging Gracefully: A Dialogue on Preventative Spine Care” by B. Theo Mellion, M.D., Ph.D., and the Oct. 20 program, “Moving and Aging Gracefully: Preventative Joint Care,” by Tarun Bhargava, M.D. Both programs presented by the Kansas Spine Hospital drew over 100 people.

“Senior Services is awesome! Thank you all for setting up this seminar.”

“Hope the Senior Center presents other programs of this type.”

