

# 55 Senior Services OF WICHITA Forward

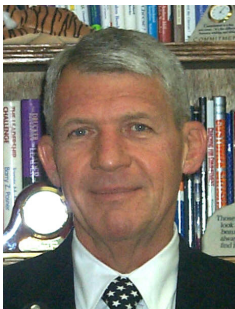
Winter 2020

## 2020 REFLECTIONS FROM SENIOR SERVICES' BOARD CHAIRMAN

On January 1, 2020 I felt optimistic thinking of all that Senior Services, Inc. of Wichita would accomplish this year. We had just completed phase one of our major renovation of the Downtown Center & Meals on Wheels kitchen and were looking forward to the next phase. We were also celebrating 50 years of service to our community. As we were absorbed in evaluating our future and engaging in strategic planning, we were (as was the whole world) hit with this major crisis, the Coronavirus pandemic. We were mandated to shut down all 4 Senior Centers, thus isolating our members while our Senior Employment Program could no longer interact with jobseekers face to face. However, the bright spot in all of this is our staff, volunteers, donors, and the community at large stepped-up in a major effort to preserve our mission to deliver Meals on Wheels, and groceries through the Roving Pantry, to our most vulnerable clients confined to their homes.

I am honored to have served this past year with such a devoted group of people. These individuals have been so unheralded, unselfish and diligent, often putting themselves at great personal risk to serve our seniors. I struggle for the right words to express my appreciation (and the appreciation from the seniors we serve) that I can only think of this: **THANK YOU, THANK YOU**. Here's praying that this New Year brings us all closer together as we pursue our common goal to preserve and boost the mission of Senior Services. My grandmother's guidance of encouragement, experience, and hope still inspires me and can keep all of us focused on moving forward to better days ahead. Her insight and sacrifices came from experiencing the first world flu epidemic of 1917, the Great Depression, and two world wars, "This, too, shall pass. Keep the faith."

Let us all keep the faith. Happy & Safe Holidays to all!



Yours truly,

**Ray Vernon**

**Board Chairman 2021**

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS



90 years young and living with a lung disease, Covid-19 has temporarily stopped this bridge player's card playing days. With a daughter working in the medical field, Barbara has been taking strict precautions. She relies on Senior Services Roving Pantry program to bring groceries to meet her nutritional needs. The social network that she formed before the Coronavirus isolation has made a huge difference on her well-being and attitude. Barbara reflects on how drastically her life has changed since the pandemic started.

### QUOTES:

"I used to play bridge at Senior Services and was in bridge clubs"

"Now I only leave my house to get the mail and pick up prescriptions"

"Other than Senior Services volunteers and staff, no I don't see any other people"

"My daughter is a doctor and does not want me to go to any store"

"I miss it...{senior centers}"

"I have a lot of friends that call me. One of my friends was really down and depressed but we'll get through this"

"I really appreciate Senior Services!"

"My kids can't be here, and I have no other way to get groceries"

## DRIVE BY PARADE HONORS CENTURIAN

On September 29th members of the Northeast Senior Center gathered in the parking lot of Grant Chapel AME Church for a surprise drive by parade to help Aulene Ray celebrate her 100th Birthday. "Big" sister Darnett Wilson (who is 101 years old) traveled from the Kansas City area to help Aulene celebrate. Reporters from all 3 news stations as well as numerous friends and family were present to mark the grand occasion. Friend and fellow center member Cynthia Nero organized the procession "Aulene is such a lovely person with an amazing life! She deserved to be recognized."







# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



## RENE WHITE

*has volunteered for over 27 years and even recruited Intrust Bank coworkers to deliver Meals on Wheels along with her!*



The opportunity to learn from seniors happens when you volunteer.

I decided to volunteer 27 years ago because my great grandmother was an inspiration to me and she received Meals on Wheels.

One of my first routes, a gentleman would make lemonade or bake homemade pies when I came with his meal. We would sit and chat.

**Human interaction is just as important as the meal.**

I once found a woman on the floor. The safety check is crucial. Who knows how long she would have laid there if I hadn't stopped by.

I would tell any senior in need this is a nutritious meal.

The pandemic in 2020 didn't stop me.

## DORIS WILSON

*retired Beechcraft employee of 36 years, is a proud Meals on Wheels volunteer. Here she contemplates the impact of Covid on seniors, as well as finding inner fulfillment.*



I was having my morning coffee, and saw on the news they needed volunteers

I'm a giving person

I could see isolation was affecting {the senior} mentally

I get all my seniors a Holiday card and an apple and orange

One older gentleman had several strokes, and when I deliver the meal he laughs "I can't see what it is but I'll eat it"!

We don't know what they are going through. I just try to say words to uplift them

**If I can make a difference in someone's life, then I'm making a difference in mine**

I ALWAYS take a few minutes to talk to them

## DEAN & MARILYN WASSER

*have delivered Meals on Wheels for over 25 years and continue through the pandemic. At 88 & 87 years young the Wassers prove that age is just a number.*



### DEAN'S QUOTES:

It is personally fulfilling to see the clients.

**Meals on Wheels keeps them out of nursing homes.**

During icy weather I wear steel grips on my shoes when out delivering.

We've been blessed and are grateful we can help others.

### MARILYN'S QUOTES:

Many seniors on the route have become like personal friends.

Some clients are from our church. We bring them flowers and let our church family know how they are doing.

**We've heard thousands of GOD BLESS YOUs over the years.**



**While Others Stayed Home These **HEROS** Went Out To Support Their Community**



## BIG SHOES TO FILL...SAYING GOODBYE TO VALUED STAFF MEMBERS



**Opal Smith**  
**Roving Pantry**  
**Coordinator**

**You don't know Opal Smith. But you can find her at Dillons at 5:00am. She's been there shopping for 41 years.** "We've only missed one day in my four decades here, and that was because the power went out at the store!" says Opal. Rain, sleet, or snow; Roving Pantry deliveries soldier on. Once, when the road conditions were icy, the National Guard stepped in to help. Roving Pantry is so important, it was classified as an essential service throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Senior Services started the program in 1969 as a home food delivery service. At that time, many seniors had no way to pick up food to meet their daily needs. Opal has been stretching the dollars of her clients since the days when gasoline was \$0.86 cents a gallon. "I love bargains and shopping for deals. In a way, I advocate for the seniors so they get the most for their money, even when they can't make it out of their homes to the grocery store." Opal developed coupon clipping systems to make their bucks go farther.

After being at the helm for such a long tenure, and planning to retire at the end of September 2020, Opal Smith leaves some big shoes to fill. When asked to describe her 41 years on the job, and why she has such commitment to the mission, she said, "Senior Services has always been good to me and treated me with respect".

As for the biggest challenge in her career, she shares of a client that judged her not on her shopping ability or customer services skills, but on the color of her skin. "I was doing a delivery one day, I walked up to the front door and the client said 'you need to go around to the back door because you are black'. And I smiled and said 'no ma'am'. So I put the groceries back in the truck and left. She called me when I got to the office and said 'this black lady came to my house and wouldn't go to the back door'. So I told her 'that was me'. We worked out our differences and the woman stayed on the program for years."

Opal has forged many strong bonds over the years. "One of my clients, Cleo, was so demanding about what she wanted! I had to set some boundaries. Turns out, we became the best of friends." While Opal can typically execute any request from a client, one of Cleo's requests was undeliverable. "She asked me to find her a man!" laughs Opal!

As for what's next, expect Opal to stay busy. An entrepreneur that's always had two jobs, Opal will devote her time and energy into her thrift store Opal's House of Treasures. You can visit her at the intersection of Central and Estelle in Wichita where you are sure to find some great bargains.

**Now you know Opal Smith.**



**Opal and her assistant Don in the early years of Roving Pantry.**



## BIG SHOES TO FILL...SAYING GOODBYE TO VALUED STAFF MEMBERS



**Diane Nutt**

**Director**

**Orchard Park  
Senior Center**

**“I wanted my daughter to get an education and I thought, the best way to inspire her was to go back and finish college myself.”**

And that’s exactly what Diane Nutt did! After 25 years as a Pharmacy Technician Diane took a leap of faith and returned to Wichita State completing her undergraduate degree and her Master’s. “One of my instructors suggested I get a Master’s in Gerontology. My mother was a senior, and, after working with seniors, I developed a true passion for them.” Knowing that work at Senior Services would pay less than her expertise in pharmaceuticals, Diane forged ahead and started an unpaid internship in 2010 at the Downtown Senior Center. After the internship was completed she was hired as the Information & Outreach Coordinator in Meals on Wheels, then in 2012 she came to Orchard Park Senior Center as Interim Director, a position that became permanent a few months later.

It was a challenge at first. Center members were attached to the old director and used to doing things a certain way and there were bound to be challenges. “My first thought was I’m going to earn their trust.” Because Senior Services rents senior center space at Orchard Park Recreation Center Diane formed a strong working relationship with the Recreation Director “I advocated for the floors to be cleaned and polished. I went through the center, cleared out old

files and equipment and hung up new curtains. The members then accepted me as the Center Director.”

In the years since coming to Orchard Park Diane formed a strong bond with her members “their life stories are inspiring and their ethics are strong. All generations have something to learn from them.”

March 2020 saw the temporary closing of all 4 senior centers due to Covid 19. Diane acknowledges the challenges, especially for seniors living alone: “I have a gentleman who has no family and is extremely active at the center. He had open heart surgery and had just returned to the center when we were forced to close our doors. I talk to him every day trying to keep him engaged and positive.” Diane reflects on the importance of staying connected to community, “I think more people understand how detrimental social isolation can be. For senior center members we are their lifeline to the community. ”

Although health challenges are prompting Diane’s departure she says she plans to stay active herself “I’m not one to stay home.” Diane also knows where her community is and intends to stay connected to them “I’m not leaving Senior Services. I’m joining Orchard Park Senior Center and continue to see my friends!”



**Diane with her family & Orchard Park center members at the 2015 St. Patrick’s Parade.**

## BIG SHOES TO FILL...SAYING GOODBYE TO VALUED STAFF MEMBERS



**Liz Buggs**  
**Meals on Wheels**  
**Social Services**  
**Specialist**

**Liz Buggs was destined to work in Meals on Wheels.**

Growing up Liz was extremely close to her grandmother. "I was her favorite" she laughs. This special bond instilled in her an affinity for seniors. As Liz grew up her grandmother grew older eventually developing dementia. Age and memory issues led to a fire at her farm in rural Oklahoma. A Meals on Wheels volunteer arrived and pulled her grandmother out of the house. Liz was extremely grateful. "I knew at that point I had to get involved with Meals on Wheels so I became a volunteer while I was living in New Orleans."

Liz has spent her professional career helping disadvantaged seniors. While living in New Orleans she worked for the Department of Welfare working with the challenging hoarder population. "I advocated for them and helped them get much needed support like mental health services."

Returning to her hometown of Wichita Liz worked for the YWCA and a woman's shelter. In 1990 she was hired by Senior Services as a Case Manager in the Meals on Wheels program. "My first position as a case manager was a one year grant that wasn't



**Liz and Volunteers**

renewed" she says. "As it turned out our Volunteer Coordinator was ready to retire so I was able to move into that position." At the time Meals on Wheels was delivering an afternoon and an evening meal so Liz gained a copilot. Coworker Mike Gadbury filled the second Volunteer Coordinator position. This partnership lasted several years as Liz and Mike formed a close relationship. "Mike is my best friend!" she says. Mike retired from Senior Services 3 years ago but has remained close to Liz and others in the department.



**Liz and Mike**

When asked to recall some of her best memories and challenges Liz says "I remember an extreme hoarder we served years ago. She was in need of home health care but no one would enter the house. All of us in Meals on Wheels went over and cleaned her house so she could get the care she needed. I've endeared myself to the program because we go the extra mile."

Another example of Liz's keen sense of service happened when a client called to cancel her meal delivery one day. "She called to say she wasn't feeling well and I noticed she began slurring her words. I said to her 'I think you may be having a stroke'." Liz called EMS while keeping the client on the office phone. EMS rushed to the house and took her to the hospital. As it turned out, she had a stroke that, without the support of Liz and Meals on Wheels, would have been fatal. Liz's quick instincts saved her life and the client's



family was overwhelmingly grateful.

Liz's specialty has always been working with challenging situations. She has a unique perspective that helps her be successful "I can be a difficult person so I use my feisty energy to direct other difficult people." She has also learned the key to long term success working in social services "the need is always greater than the resources. You can't save everyone so save the ones you can."

The last 4 years Liz has served as a Social Services Specialist bringing her back to working directly with clients. Not a fan of mornings she plans to sleep in as soon as retirement begins. The holiday season

will bring quality time with her kids and grandkids but after that she says "give me a couple months and I'll be back to deliver Meals on Wheels as a volunteer."



Program Director Sherri Flippo & Liz  
at Liz's Retirement Party



For the 13th year running, the Meals on Wheels national network is participating in **The 2020 Subaru Share the Love Event**. Over the past twelve years, Subaru and its retailers have helped Meals on Wheels deliver more than 2.3 million meals nationwide to seniors in need.

Why does Subaru support Meals on Wheels? Too many seniors are struggling to stay independent and healthy. One in four seniors lives alone in isolation and one in seven seniors might not know when their next meal will arrive. This is simply unacceptable, which is why **Senior Services** provides the nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety checks to the homebound seniors of Wichita. This vital support keeps seniors in their own homes, where they want to be.

## HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

November 19, 2020, through January 4, 2021, for every new Subaru vehicle purchased or leased, Subaru of America donates \$250 to the customer's choice of participating charities. Meals on Wheels is one of four national participating charities and has been since the inception of the event. Through this event, as a member of Meals on Wheels America, **Senior Services** will receive a share of the donations from Subaru vehicles sold at participating Subaru retailers.

This season Share the Love with anyone you may know who is in the market for a new car. **If they choose a new Subaru, remind them to select Meals on Wheels as their charity of choice.**





200 S. Walnut  
Wichita, KS 67213-4777

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit #542  
Wichita, KS

## LEAVE A LEGACY - Gifts For The Future Of Senior Services

There are several ways to support the programs of Senior Services. In addition to general donations you can also leave gifts through estate planning and planned giving opportunities.

Here are several types of gifts common for many not-for-profit charities:

**CASH & SECURITIES**

**MATCHING EMPLOYER GIFTS**

**GIFTS OF EQUIPMENT, INVENTORY OR OTHER ASSETS**

**BEQUESTS & MEMORIALS**

**IRAs & OTHER QUALIFIED RETIREMENT PLANS**

For more information on planned giving contact  
Chris Heiman at 316-267-0302 ext. 216  
or via email at [chrish@seniorservicesofwichita.org](mailto:chrish@seniorservicesofwichita.org)



Visit Us At: <https://seniorservicesofwichita.org/>

