

## **ACC Steps Forward to Preserve Sacramento County's Meals on Wheels Program for Seniors**

SACRAMENTO -- Operation of Sacramento County's popular Senior Nutrition Services: Meals on Wheels for frail, homebound seniors and its "All Seasons Cafes" for those able to get out to dine, has successfully been transitioned to the Asian Community Center of Sacramento Valley (ACC).

For now, the program will remain identical in all respects save for its official name, now Meals on Wheels by ACC. The menu and delivery cycles will remain unchanged initially, but going forward, there are plans to eventually incorporate new recipes and items into menus. The program provides hot and frozen nutritious meals and personal contact to seniors through its home-delivered meals program. It also serves hot nutritious lunches to active seniors throughout Sacramento County at one of 22 All Seasons Cafe sites.

Combined, about 2,000 seniors are served by both the delivery and cafe sites. Approximately 1,300 of those seniors are frail and homebound.

Roughly 300 volunteers donate their time and talents as drivers, meal preparers and office support. As it did with the County, funding for Meals on Wheels by ACC primarily relies on federal Older Americans Act grant money through the Area 4 Agency on Aging. Sacramento County and the cities of Sacramento, Galt, Elk Grove, Folsom, Citrus Heights, Rancho Cordova cover a smaller portion of funding through Community Development Block Grant or other funding sources. The gap between these funds and the total cost of program operations comes from donations from clients and the public.

Service cutbacks motivated county officials to approach the nonprofit ACC earlier this year as part of an overall plan to privatize some county services to save money. ACC then conducted an exhaustive study to ensure its ability to seamlessly assume management of the program, which has been in place for nearly 40 years through the county and other local agencies. When that study was complete, ACC began transitioning management of Meals on Wheels in July.

“Essentially, once the study was completed, the final decision was made because it was the right thing to do,” said ACC Chief Executive Officer Donna Yee. “Far more seniors than many people may think depend on Meals on Wheels not only for healthy, nutritious meals, but for simply enjoying personal interaction with meal deliverers.”

An important factor in the selection of ACC by the Area 4 Agency on Aging was ACC’s extensive experience providing services to senior citizens. It already operates a transportation program, nursing home and independent living community, as well as supportive wellness and social programs for older adults.

In July, ACC hired Rithy Thong to manage the program. Thong is a state of California licensed administrator for residential care facilities for the elderly and has a master’s degree in gerontology, public policy and administration from the University of Southern California’s Leonard Davis School of Gerontology.

“Meals on Wheels programs have been around awhile and operate throughout the country. In light of emerging demographics in our nation, it’s more important now than ever to maintain the highest standards of quality for this special service to frail elders. For many seniors, it allows them to remain in their homes and retain a vital level of independence that allows them to avoid residential care,” Thong said.

Founded in 1972, the ACC’s central mission is to promote the general welfare and enhance quality of life for older adults by identifying, developing, and providing culturally sensitive health and social services. For more information about ACC, visit [www.accsv.org](http://www.accsv.org). For more information about Meals on Wheels by ACC, visit [www.mowsac.org](http://www.mowsac.org).

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