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# THE GOOD LIFE

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## Locally, A United Front in Support of Meals on Wheels

By *Lynne Feldman*,  
*Associate Executive Director, LifePath*



Lynne Feldman

On Tuesday, January 28, we welcomed some special guests to tour the Meals on Wheels kitchen in Erving, MA. State Senator Jo Comerford and her District Director, Elena Cohen, along with State Rep. Susannah Whipps, joined state government officials Secretary Robin Lipson of the Executive Office of Aging and Independence (AGE) and executive staff from AGE and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) for a tour of the facility and a chance to meet the LifePath Meals on Wheels staff and volunteers.



*Left to right: State Senator Jo Comerford, Director of Health Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Eliza Lake of EOHHS, Kitchen Manager Charlie Cornish of LifePath, Senior Director of Home Care and Community Programs Lynn Vidler of AGE, Chief Housing Officer Emily Cooper of AGE, Secretary Robin Lipson of AGE, Nutrition Program Director Jane Severance of LifePath, Chief Operating Officer Whitney Moyer of AGE, State Nutrition Program Director Kelly Slattery of AGE, Associate Executive Director Lynne Feldman of LifePath, and State Rep. Susannah Whipps.*

The group asked many questions about the service and how it helps. LifePath Kitchen Manager Charlie Cornish explained to the visitors that the kitchen serves around 500 people a day with about 700 meals delivered via 32 routes to older people who may not be able to prepare a healthy meal for themselves. Everyone receives a hot, noontime lunch and those who request it can also receive a chilled, prepared supper meal. The meals are designed by registered dietitians to be nutritionally balanced and healthy.



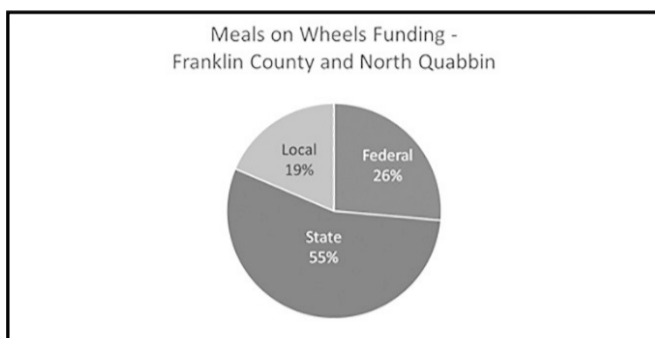
*Kitchen Manager Charlie Cornish gives a tour of the kitchen to the guests.*

There are approximately 20 staff members and 60 volunteers who make this happen each day. We also discussed the important role of the volunteer delivery drivers in checking on people each day, and how they have been there in many cases when someone was in need of help.



*Volunteer driver Dan Richter arrives to pick up his meals, which he delivers in the towns of Charlemont, Heath, Rowe, and Hawley 3-4 times a week.*

The U.S. Congress has funded Meals on Wheels for over 50 years, primarily through the Older Americans Act allocation, and included it in the current year's budget. The visit came the same day a Trump administration executive order pausing federal grant programs was set to go into effect. That order was temporarily blocked by a federal court, but funding remains in limbo. LifePath will continue to provide meals as usual, but given the threats from the federal government to continue to interfere with funding, we are also preparing for potential changes should they be necessary. If the Meals on Wheels program loses federal funding, we will need to cut services and place people on waiting lists.



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Meals on Wheels is a great example of how federal tax dollars can create a much bigger impact by engaging volunteers, collecting donations and grants, and preventing people from needing costlier services such as nursing home care. In surveys of local recipients, 84% say Meals on Wheels helps them to live independently and 95% would recommend the meals. For 30%, there would be a shortage of food in the house if it weren't for the meals.



*State Senator Comerford with Assistant Kitchen Manager Bryanna Nadeau.*

Our state and federal representatives have expressed tremendous support for our programs. State Senator Comerford, State Rep. Whipps, and U.S. Representative Jim McGovern, have all visited and helped deliver meals or made other contributions. On behalf of Meals on Wheels recipients, we are grateful for their support and engagement. We also appreciate the state officials' interest in program operations. In Franklin County and the North Quabbin, there is a united front of support to make sure no elder goes hungry, faces malnutrition, or is left without someone to check on them in our community, and this also requires federal funding support through the Older Americans Act and Community Development Block Grant programs.



*State Senator Comerford and Secretary Lipson.*