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**LifePath**  
options for independence

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# THE GOOD LIFE

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## Volunteer Drivers Deliver Meals and Wellness Checks, Help People in Crisis

By Gary Yuhas, MBA,  
Executive Director



**Gary Yuhas, MBA, Executive Director**

I am writing hoping you are all well and that those affected by recent weather devastation are rebounding. The storms in the last two months have led to deaths in Pennsylvania and New York, and property damage across Western Massachusetts and surrounding areas. For many, the storms may have brought up trauma from Tropical Storm Irene, and some folks are starting the challenging process of rebuilding their lives for the second time in twelve years.

The residents and communities served by LifePath are often disproportionately affected by these events. The valleys and hills creating the boundless natural beauty of our region can be difficult to navigate. Franklin County is one of the poorest counties in the Commonwealth, and those we serve often have limited resources or support systems.

One of the ways that LifePath provides essential support in our community is through our Meals on Wheels program. Our volunteer corps delivers meals to close to 500 persons each day, five days a week, with additional meals delivered to cover weekends. We have 53 drivers and 33 routes with anywhere from 15-20 home stops on each route. A key element of the meal delivery is also to provide a “wellness check.” The drivers must verify that the recipient is home to receive the meal and all looks well. For some individuals, this might be the only social interaction they will receive that day or all week. This check provides reassurance for those who may live far away from their loved ones or who do not have any family support, and a sense of security and community for those receiving the meals. Throughout this summer’s terrible storms, our Meals on Wheels program didn’t miss one route and all of our Meals recipients received their meals!

Our Meals on Wheels drivers are providing an essential service recently highlighted by two events. In one instance, our Meals on Wheels driver Earl Harold heard a loud thud and a call for help as he approached a meal recipient’s door. The resident had fallen, broken her wrist, and couldn’t get her emergency alert button to work. Earl reached for the button and made the 911 call, and waited until emergency help arrived. This was the SECOND time over the past month that Earl provided this type of assistance as part of his day-to-day LifePath Meals on Wheels delivery service!

Rosie Amodeo is another one of our drivers. She recently arrived at one of the meal recipient’s homes to find that the person had fallen. Rosie called 911 and emergency support arrived. She later discovered that the elderly woman had been on the floor for nearly four hours.

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These two stories are just the most recent in a long line of similar situations over many years where our drivers have been able to connect individuals in distress with help and safety. I got to see firsthand the challenges that many of our residents are facing by riding along with volunteer Linda Ackerman on one of her Meals on Wheels Thursday routes. It was a great opportunity to meet Linda, who provides incredible support to LifePath, and to meet residents that LifePath is serving. Many live alone, in rural areas. Our drivers frequently talk about how rewarding the work is and how much they enjoy serving their community, and how they find the connections they make with folks to be very meaningful.

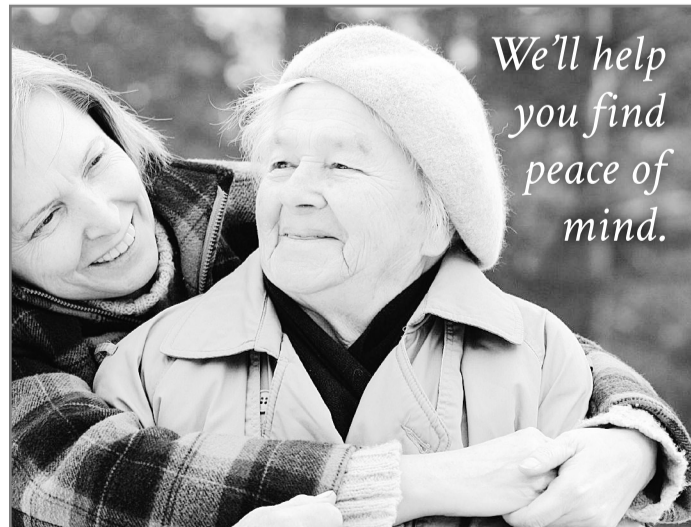
Driving for Meals on Wheels is one of LifePath’s many volunteer opportunities. LifePath is proud to work with our nearly 250 volunteers—twice the number of LifePath staff members! As a non-profit organization, our volunteer corps allows us to

reach close to 5,000 individuals and families in Franklin County and beyond with essential programs that meet fundamental needs. LifePath provides a unique opportunity for volunteers to contribute their time, energy, expertise, and life experience to help serve the needs of older community members and those living with disabilities. Our dedicated and devoted volunteers continually step up to help us initiate new, novel, necessary, and often unfunded programming that supports and strengthens our communities, and provides enriching, engaging, and rewarding opportunities for the volunteer.

As a long-time volunteer myself, I have met wonderful people and can remember a number of touching experiences. I distinctly remember terminally ill patients I met while volunteering with a program called No One Dies Alone, where volunteers sit with individuals close to death. The patients were appreciative in a way that is hard to express in words. Even those who had limited ability to communicate verbally could find ways to acknowledge and appreciate your presence at the most difficult and vulnerable time of their life.

LifePath is currently seeking volunteers for specific programs, such as Rides for Health, Home Safety, Grocery Shopping, PhonePals, Ombudsman, Meals on Wheels, and more. If you are interested in serving your community in a volunteer capacity and would like to know more about any of our volunteer programs, please go to our website: [www.lifepathma.org](http://www.lifepathma.org), or call LifePath Volunteer Resources at our main number: 413-773-5555.

And, a sincere THANK YOU to all of the volunteers serving their communities, both with LifePath, and with the many organizations providing deeply important and necessary support in our area and beyond.



*We'll help you find peace of mind.*

*You care so wholeheartedly and do so much, but sometimes it's hard to do it all.*

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