



MEALS on WHEELS
MERCER COUNTY

March 13, 2022

Friends Foundation for Aging
Susan W. Hoskins, Executive Director
Sent Via Email: shoskins@friendsfoundationaging.org

Dear Ms. Hoskins,

Since 1973 Meals on Wheels of Mercer County has steadfastly focused on our mission: to be a premier, comprehensive nutrition program committed to providing nutritious meals and related services designed to promote the independence, dignity, health, and well-being of our homebound seniors, even regardless of their ability to pay. We have actively advocated for Mercer County seniors for nearly 50 years, and we are keenly aware of the needs of this community. Our participants are 60 years of age and older (43% over the age of 80), homebound and are limited in preparing their own meals. They are frail and often invisible to society (60% of our participants live alone) and what Meals on Wheels of Mercer County can provide is a warm, healthy meal that meets their dietary needs, the important wellness and safety check and a warm smile and conversation.

We are asking the Friends Foundation for Aging for \$51,000 to support the cost of providing local, fresh, fruits and vegetables provided by Snipes Farm and Educational Center to homebound Mercer County seniors for our Farm Fresh Produce Program. Over 80% of our participants fall below the federal poverty level and receive a subsidy for their daily meals. They not only have low quantities of food available to them and live in a food desert, but also low quality, since they are limited to what they can cook, and most cannot adequately shop for themselves. Many of these individuals often are forced to eat nutritionally poor snack foods, high in sodium and sugar that negatively affect their ability to maintain or improve their health. Meals on Wheels of Mercer County supplements what food they do have with monthly nonperishable groceries along with Blizzard Bags (shelf stable meals in advance to inclement weather) and the addition of farm fresh produce would substantially help their nutrition.

Their limited income increases their risk for poverty, malnutrition, hunger, illness and even death. Receiving regular, nutritious home-delivered meals tailored to their dietary needs, as well as proper nutrition education and counseling, alleviates their need to choose among food or medications, paying the rent or mortgage or utilities. This helps prevent malnutrition, hunger, and illness and allows the homebound elderly to remain at home, living independently and with dignity. This also relieves their families, communities and other taxpayers of the burden of long-term care in a facility.

**ASSISTING PARTICIPANTS IN MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE, DIGNITY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
BY PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE NUTRITION SERVICES AND HELPING EASE SOCIAL ISOLATION.**

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For the Farm Fresh Produce Program, Meals on Wheels of Mercer County is partnering with Snipes Farm and Educational Center who will provide the sorted and prepared bags of produce and deliver them to Rider University where our daily meals are prepared and disbursed to our volunteers to deliver to our seniors. With this gift, Meals on Wheels of Mercer County and Snipes Farm will be able to provide 250 seniors a bag of produce twice a month for 6 months.

The Snipes family arrived in Bucks County in the 1600's as a wave of Quaker refugees fleeing religious persecution in England and began farming in 1688. Snipes Farm and Education Center has a beautiful vision of a world where everyone has access to healthy food, open space, and the experience of farming, where local economies are strengthened by the preservation of small farms, and where priority is given to sustaining the earth and its natural resources. Much like Meals on Wheels and the Friends Foundation for Aging, Snipes Farm believes giving back to the community is a core responsibility of the organization.

As a result of the pandemic, Snipes Farm has continued to grow more food for the needy than ever before. As a PA designated essential food grower, they provide nutritious whole foods (organically grown vegetables and fruits) to needy families and seniors. Snipes Farm and Educational Center currently have a partnership with Bucks County where they provide low-income seniors with fresh produce. So, we already know they can deliver the bags as we deliver the food for the Farm Fresh Produce Program.

In order to determine program effectiveness Meals on Wheels of Mercer County include both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data is obtained from consistent unsolicited participant and caregiver comments and concerns, as well as a semi-annual participant survey. This semi-annual survey asks for detailed information regarding meal temperatures at delivery, appearance, and palatability of the meals, likes and dislikes regarding specific foods provided, and suggestions for program improvement. We also ask questions regarding the overall impact of MOW on participants' quality of life. The survey also asks for feedback regarding delivery, the volunteers, and office staff.

Quantitative methods include analysis of program service data, such as the number of meals provided monthly and quarterly, trends in reasons participants begin services or leave the program, demographic information of participants (to ascertain any under- or over-served populations). Trends over the past few years indicate a continued increase in the number of participants aged 80 and above, and a slight increase in the number of Asian participants served. Data collected shapes program activities in terms of outreach to the community, planning menu changes, and policy and procedural changes when necessary.

There are no limitations of success for this program and partnership. Meals on Wheels of Mercer County has heard from our participants that they welcome the nonperishable groceries when they arrive and have expressed a desire to have fresh fruit and vegetables. Due to age or disability, many of our participants can no longer shop or prepare their own meals and suffer from malnutrition, poor health from lack of adequate food and the farm fresh produce program could help save their lives.

Meals on Wheels of Mercer County, through feedback and studies, strives to address the multifaceted needs of individuals of diverse ethnic/cultural backgrounds through outreach to underserved populations. Recently, we did a study that found holes in our service to different communities, specifically South Asian and Muslim seniors. Because of that research, this January, we began to focus on further diversifying our meal options to expand our services to a broader community. In partnership with the Muslim Center of Greater Princeton and a local restaurant, Global Grill Halal Meat, we expanded our meals to include a Halal and vegetarian options for our South Asian and Muslim seniors that before, we not able to serve. It is always a priority of the organization to assess and meet the needs of our diverse community.

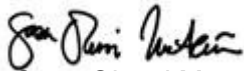
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Meals on Wheels of Mercer County has a 49-year history of providing the crucial service of home delivered nutrition in the Mercer County community. For continuity in funding the Farm Fresh Produce Program the organization continues to actively seek and diversify a base of donors and sources of revenue, including individual donors through our direct mail campaign, congregations, organizations, corporations, foundations, local government, and special events. We have a proven track record of providing quality home delivered nutrition services for a significant period and are strongly committed to continuing this vital service despite any economic and financial challenges. Meals on Wheels of Mercer County recognizes that the need for services will continue to be great, and as history has proven, is prepared to meet this demand.

Senior hunger does not take time off, and it also does not have an end date. We are pleased to continue to flex and respond to our community's crisis; to continue to supply essential meals and interaction to all those who need it in our community. We are very grateful for the opportunity to submit this proposal for \$51,000 for our Farm Fresh Produce Program in partnership with Snipes Farm and Educational Center. Should you have any questions, please let me know, 609-698-3483.

Sincerely yours,



Sasa Olessi Montañó
Chief Executive Officer

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Farm Fresh Produce Program *Budget*

Participants in the program: 250

Frequency: *2 bags of produce per participant per month*

Program duration: *6 months*

Cost per bag of produce: \$15

Snipes Farm cost of supplies for packaging, & packing & delivery labor: *\$4,000 for entire 6-month project*

MOWMC administrative cost: *\$2,000 for entire 6-month project*

$250 \times 2 \times 6 \times \$15 = \$45,000 + \$4,000 + \$2,000 = \$51,000$

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