

The upcoming August 26th *Meals and Wheels for Meals on Wheels* annual event at Railtown 1897 State Park is scheduled at a very important time for Sierra Senior Providers (SSP), the non-profit that runs the program and the Senior Center.

Due to a major cutback in federal funding, the Agency is faced with a \$115,000 deficit to an already challenging budget. Area 12 Agency on Aging contracts with SSP to provide Meals on Wheels and pays us less than 1/2 of what it costs to provide the service. The remainder of the funding comes from optional client payments, agency fundraising and gifts.

This budget challenge comes on the heels of another, though recently resolved, financial issue. Through the generosity of an anonymous donor and Subaru of Sonora, SSP was able to finance three new Subarus, thereby stopping a serious reduction to their fleet of delivery vehicles.

So far, no generous benefactor has stepped forward to help with the agency's most recent deficit, so SSP is making cuts. Volunteers and staff continue to work on the upcoming fundraiser with the hopes of raising more than the \$100,000 that is budgeted. The agency continues to provide lifesaving, nourishing meals to a vulnerable senior population, but the SSP Board of Directors is forced to make cutbacks in order to balance the budget. "We hate to make cutbacks to services, but we cannot spend money that we do not have," stated SSP Treasurer Bob Hoyt, CPA.

Affective Aug. 15, SSP will implement the following program changes:

-Meals on Wheels (MOW) will deliver hot meals 4 days per week instead of 5. MOW clients will also receive one frozen meal for the Tuesday non-delivery day.

-The Congregate meal program at the Senior Center will serve hot meals 4 days a week instead of 5. The Congregate meal program will be closed on Tuesdays.

-We will be closing the Tuesday meal site in Tuolumne City.

-The Groveland Congregate meal program will be reduced from 2 days per week to 1 day per week. There will be no service on Tuesdays.

-SSP will furlough staff time by five hours per week as of Aug. 1.

-There will be 20% reduction to our transportation program.

Services like ours are prepared and provided by people for people, so it is a shame that we are going to have to cut staffing and close the Senior Center dining programs on Tuesdays.

We are very grateful to have such a dedicated staff who continue to provide great service, while being affected personally by such a large financial burden.

If you would like to make a difference in the lives of others, SSP is accepting donations to help offset this current financial challenge. Please send your generous gift to SSP 540 Greenley Road Sonora, CA 95370.

The success of the Railtown Meals on Wheels event will go a long way in helping to provide food for those in need. Over the last 10 years, the event has raised more than \$750,000 for meals for seniors. You can help support this year's event with your sponsorship, attendance, auction donation or cash contribution. Contact SSP at 533-2622 or visit the website at sierraseniorproviders.org. Thank you.

Sharon Mele

President, Board of Directors

Sierra Senior Providers