

Delivering meals to seniors in need

SUBMITTED BY
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is part of a monthly series, "Cheers for Volunteers", which highlights local volunteers and their organizations.

SACKVILLE, N.B. – This month, we cheer Paulette and Bill Durant for their work as volunteer drivers with the Meals to Seniors program, coordinated by the Drew Nursing Home for the Sackville area.

The Drew has been making meals for this program for more than 30 years and took over the coordination of the program from the Red Cross in April 2018.

Paulette and Bill, who have been drivers for about 20 years, can't say enough positive things about the program, which delivers one hot meal every week-day to those limited by age, infirmity or ability. The Drew's food service manager/dietician supervises the nutritionally balanced meal preparation which takes into consideration special diets and client preferences.

Every Wednesday, Paulette and Bill have shown up at the Drew kitchen door at 11 a.m. to collect meals they deliver. The plastic meal trays, which are recycled, are placed in large thermal bags to keep the food warm.

After dropping off meals at a couple of cottages at the Drew, Paulette and Bill head up to the lake in Middle Sackville and then back into town, almost to the train station.

In addition to the provision of nutritious, full-course meals, another benefit Paulette and Bill see about the Meals to Seniors program is that the drivers have regular contact with their clients. They can ensure folks are ready if bad weather is coming and alert the Drew if there are any concerns.

How did they get involved in doing this work?

"I still remember the day I decided I would do this," says Paulette.

Nancy Burrige, who was working with the local Red Cross at the time, came to Tantramar Regional High School where Paulette was teaching. She spoke at a staff meeting about the need for volunteer drivers for the Meals to Seniors program.

"I decided right then and



Paulette and Bill Durant have been volunteer drivers for about 20 years with the Meals to Seniors program, coordinated by the Drew Nursing Home. **CONTRIBUTED**

there, that's what I would do when I retired!" says Paulette. "I feel so good about this work. I didn't realize there was a need to provide nutritious food to those unable to prepare meals for themselves."

"Sackville has a reputation as a caring community."

Paulette Durant

And, what about Bill?

"I came along with Paulette to help out one day when the weather was bad and I've continued on ever since. It works out well to have two people doing the deliveries, especially in the winter when conditions can be tricky," Bill adds.

What makes Meals to Seniors special? For Paulette and Bill, it's about the staff at the Drew responsible for the program.

"The kitchen staff are so pleasant and wonderful," says Paulette. "They really care about the food being prepared. Each meal tray has the client's name and menu on it and the staff organize the trays in the order in

which they will be delivered."

"And," adds Bill, "some of the workers at the Drew are former students of ours so, of course, I enjoy teasing them!"

After some soul searching, Paulette and Bill decided to take a break from volunteer driving for the Meals to Seniors program, with Christmas Day being the last time they delivered meals on their route.

Both Paulette and Bill do other volunteer work at the Drew. They help out with the weekly bingo games and Paulette also goes in twice a week to help residents eat.

"Sackville has a reputation as a caring community," says Paulette. "I'd like get more young people involved in volunteering in our community," adds Bill, "more high school and university students."

Joanne Estabrooks, Drew Nursing Home food service manager and Meals to Seniors coordinator, is very appreciative of the volunteer drivers.

"In fact, we are having a volunteer driver recruitment coffee party Thursday, Jan. 16," says Joanne. "We really need more drivers so please join us to find out about this opportunity to help our community. People are welcome to drop in any time between 9:30 and 11 a.m. that

morning to learn more about this vital program, which assists our seniors in keeping healthy."

"Current volunteers are also invited," Joanne adds. "It's an opportunity for us to celebrate and thank them."

If you would like to sign up for the Meals to Seniors program or know of anyone who could benefit from the program, contact Joanne at 506-364-4909 or at office@drewnursinghome.ca.

The service is not just for seniors. Anyone limited by age, infirmity or ability can order.

If you receive Home Care Services through the Department of Social Development Long Term Care Program, you may qualify for a subsidized rate. Ask your social worker or call 1-866-426-5191.

And, if you'd like to become a volunteer driver get in touch with Joanne as well. If you prefer, you can start off as a spare driver to fill in when the regular drivers are unavailable.

Paulette and Bill, we extend our heartfelt thanks to you for delivering meals to our seniors for so many years. We greatly appreciate how much of your time and energy you have donated to help ensure our seniors in need are getting the food they require.