

to Feed Vulnerable Seniors

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UNI Student Organizes Safe Way to Feed Vulnerable Seniors

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When social distancing and concerns of a rapidly spreading virus began taking the country by storm, local Meals on Wheels programs turned their focus to keeping older Americans safe and fed in communities across the country. According to the Meals on Wheels website, nearly all local programs are experiencing an increased demand for meal requests. In fact, four in five programs reported that new meal requests have doubled since March 1. The fight to keep vulnerable seniors safe is at the forefront of the Meals on Wheels program.

Chandler Dewees, a student at the University of Northern Iowa and member of the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance Student Association, saw a need in his community when the pandemic struck. Chandler, along with Peg Moses from Horizons Meals on Wheels, with support from Can Shed in Cedar Rapids, began a project to help combat hunger by finding a way to support local Meals on Wheels programs. The increased demand for a safe way for seniors to get fed coupled with an increase in food insecurity inspired Chandler to step up in his community

“With COVID happening and everything being shut down, I wanted to do something for the community that would benefit the people most affected,” states Chandler.

Can Shed partnered with Hy-Vee and Horizon’s Meals on Wheels in a fundraiser supported by Carlos O’Kelly’s, the Cotton Gallery, UNI Nonprofit Leadership Alliance projects, Pay it Forward with Impact, and Copyworks. For every can people donated to Can Shed, 3 cents went to the local Meals on Wheels program while the other 2 cents covered labor cost. The goal of this fundraiser was initially to raise \$5,000 in proceeds for the Horizon’s Meals on Wheels project. The fundraiser blew past the

\$5,000 goal and has brought in over \$28,000 in donations.

For Chandler, a community offers numerous ways to engage with individuals, especially for the more vulnerable populations involved. Through his time at UNI, Chandler has been exposed to the numerous needs within a community through his nonprofit leadership classes.

“It’s pretty amazing how excited people get over a bunch of cans but it’s great to see them involved and [for them] to know they are making a difference.”



Chandler saw a need in his community and he fulfilled it. He knew that he wanted to help out the area’s vulnerable seniors during a time when the world was so dependent on healthy, young people to help out.

“A lot of people in Iowa rely on Meals on Wheels and they do such great work. It was a privilege to work with everyone involved.”

To help ensure no senior is left behind and to help make an impact in your community. Visit the mealsonwheelsamerica.org website to learn how Meals on Wheels delivers so much more than just a meal.

#EngagedUNI #BetterTogether #UNITogether



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