

## Delivering food and cheer

### Meals on Wheels gives Clara 'something to look forward to'

November 28, 2009

**MARY K. NOLAN**

THE HAMILTON  
SPECTATOR

(Nov 28, 2009)

Somewhere around the third time she forgot to turn off the stove, Clara Hunt decided she'd better give up cooking.

It may have been when she got up one morning and discovered that the burner had been on under her frying pan all night.

The widow, who turns 90 next week, called Veterans Affairs Canada to find out if her benefits included Meals on Wheels service.



Ted Brellisford, the Hamilton Spectator

Not only was she eligible, they told the Canadian Women's Army Corps veteran, but she was entitled to the full seven-day service.

For the past few months, Hunt has enjoyed having lunch delivered to the door of her central Mountain home every weekday by VON volunteers who also bring frozen dinners for the weekends.

The service is funded, in part, by United Way.

Elsie Swick is "the Tuesday lady," a volunteer with Meals on Wheels for 11 years. This week, she arrived around 11:30 a.m. with an insulated bag containing Hunt's turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, peas, soup, crackers, wheat bread and butter.

She stopped to ask Hunt how she was doing, tell her she looked beautiful, lay everything out on the dining room table and say goodbye.

"For the amount I get paid, I have to be fast," joked Swick, who delivers to 11 Mountain homes every Tuesday with a volunteer driver.

There are some dishes Hunt prefers over others -- the farmer's sausage and black forest cake are favourites, the pea soup and mashed potatoes not so much.

"But I like most of their stuff and I wouldn't dream of complaining," she says.

The arrival of the Meals on Wheels volunteer is a welcome addition to a day that begins with a bowl of Cheerios, a cup of instant coffee, a wad of pills and The Spectator, which she often reads before breakfast, starting with the obits. As delivery time nears, Hunt makes sure the front door is unlocked.

"They'll knock and then let themselves in, but they always call my name so I'll know who it is. And I lock up again as soon as they leave."

Hunt says the volunteers are unfailingly cheerful and pleasant.

"It's something I look forward to every morning," says Hunt

Daughter Linda, who shops for Hunt every weekend and talks to her several times a week, finds it a relief not to have to worry about her mother or the stove.

"It means that somebody is there every day, that if she doesn't answer the door or the phone, somebody will get a call," says Linda.

Mae Radford, manager of volunteer services for VON Canada in Hamilton, says clients usually talk more about the volunteer than the meals.

"It's a short visit, just three or four minutes, but it means a lot to them."

[mnolan@thespec.com](mailto:mnolan@thespec.com)

905-526-4689

#### MEALS ON WHEELS HAMILTON

- \* Will serve more than 78,000 meals to 300 clients during 2009
- \* Has been operated by VON for 38 of its 40 years in the community
- \* Service covers the former city of Hamilton and Stoney Creek
- \* Funded by the United Way, City of Hamilton, client fees and Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- \* Meals are \$6 each and adjusted according to ability to pay
- \* Available to people with disabilities and seniors who are unable to manage their own nutritional needs
- \* Delivered by a two-person volunteer team of server and driver, who is reimbursed for mileage
- \* Clients can get five- or seven-day meal service

\* Meals are cooked at St. Peter's Hospital, Macassa Lodge and St. Joseph's Healthcare King Campus. Kosher meals are prepared at Shalom Village

\* Volunteers and backups are always needed and must commit two hours for one day a week

\* Information on meal deliveries or volunteering is available by calling 905-522-1022