

# The Volunteer Times

Volume 2, Issue 3

Johnson County Human Services

Fall 2009

## Help Spread Some Holiday Cheer

The holidays are right around the corner, and we're looking for volunteers who would like to help us make the season especially bright this year.

**Thanksgiving** – We will again partner with Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church to provide baskets to our clients. In the past, the church has donated and delivered as many as 200 totes.

**Holiday Gifts** – Would you like to bring a smile to someone in our community? There are three ways you can help with our Holiday Gift Program:

1. Sponsor one or more clients. On Monday, Oct. 19, we'll begin sharing client names with volunteers and will e-mail or mail a wish list to you. Purchase and wrap your gifts and deliver them between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 11, to the Human Services office at 11811 S. Sunset Drive in Olathe.

2. Help us receive and organize gifts as they come in. We'll need you anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 11, at the HS office.

3. On Saturday, Dec. 12, rev up your "elf mobile" and help deliver gifts to two or three clients in the vicinity of your home. Meet at the HS office at 9:30 a.m. You should be finished by noon and able to continue with your own holiday preparations.

To volunteer, contact Benita Webber: call 913-715-8859 or e-mail [benita.webber@jocogov.org](mailto:benita.webber@jocogov.org).



## Mark Your Calendar for "Spooktacular" Senior Quest

A day of spooky fun is coming up, and you're invited! Senior Quest 2009, Johnson County's largest, most comprehensive annual information fair for older adults, will be Tuesday, Oct. 27.

Themed "Senior Spooktacular," the event will feature exhibits, free health screenings, bingo, entertainment, demonstrations, prizes, and valuable information about services available to older adults.

It will be 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Overland Park Convention Center, 6000 College Blvd., Overland Park. Admission is free.

- Free parking
- Open to everyone, regardless of city residence
- Costumes encouraged

Last year, more than 2,500 people discovered that Senior Quest is a "fang-tastic" way to spend a festive day while gaining lots of useful information.

Senior Quest is co-sponsored by Johnson County Government. 🍊

### Reminder!

If you are a Meals on Wheels volunteer and have questions or need to request a substitute, contact Elvina Kroemer or Debbie Summers. Call 913-715-8895 or e-mail

[elvina.kroemer@jocogov.org](mailto:elvina.kroemer@jocogov.org) or

[debbie.summers@jocogov.org](mailto:debbie.summers@jocogov.org) 🍊

## Seeds That Feed the Need Garden Wins National Award

Congratulations are in order for the Roeland Park Community Center and its many volunteers, who planted, weeded, watered, and tended the Seeds That Feed the Need Garden. The project has received the National Association of Counties Achievement Award for innovation that contributes to and enhances county government.

For two years, the garden has enabled the center to distribute fresh produce to residents seeking assistance through its food pantry. 🍊

## Helping Hands Can Use Extra Hands, Too

Every season brings new challenges for our clients, and fall is no exception. Would you be interested in raking leaves, cleaning gutters, or addressing holiday cards? Tasks you may find simple can be challenging for senior adults and residents with a disability. Said **Murlee Kerr**, a client, “The Helping Hands volunteer kept my yard looking nice this summer. I really appreciate his work.”

To join our Helping Hands team, contact Benita Webber: call 913-715-8859 or e-mail [benita.webber@jocogov.org](mailto:benita.webber@jocogov.org). 🍊

## Discover Your Inner Martha Stewart

Are you handy with a glue gun or a whiz with watercolors? Your craft project can take the warm glow of the holiday season to one of our clients. We’re looking for volunteers to make holiday cards that will be distributed through case managers. No religious messages, please.

Or you can help us make dining a positive experience by dressing up our Meals on Wheels lunch sacks. Scouts, youth groups, and anyone who likes to craft is invited to make napkin rings, design cheerful card attachments, or create whimsical favors. 🍊

## Calling All Friends, Family Members, & Co-workers

Our Meals on Wheels volunteers are a dedicated group of men and women who deliver hot, nutritious meals Monday through Friday to homebound seniors.

We’d like to invite your friends, family members, and co-workers to join this elite team of community-minded individuals. We continually have routes become available, and soon we’ll be delivering our “blizzard meals,” shelf-stable foods that can be eaten by clients when deliveries are suspended due to inclement weather.

**It’s easy.** You just pick up prepared meals at your neighborhood community center and make deliveries between 10:45 a.m. and noon on a designated day.

**It’s flexible.** You can volunteer once a month, once a week, or as your schedule permits.

**It’s rewarding.** Read what two couples have to say about Meals on Wheels:

### Margaret and Eldon Miller, Olathe route

“We can’t say enough about the program. We enjoy receiving the meals and visiting with the volunteers. It’s been a blessing because we’re not well enough to do the things we used to, like seeing our grandchildren. Sometimes the volunteers bring a child along; we enjoy that.”

### Dorothy and Jack Miller, Blue Valley route

“We enjoy seeing the volunteers’ cheerful faces. Everyone is always so up. We like to meet them at the front door and visit with them. We enjoy the meals, the service, and the quality. They are really good! And they try to make you happy.”

If you know of people who have time to spare for a good cause, have them contact Benita Webber: e-mail [benita.webber@jocogov.org](mailto:benita.webber@jocogov.org) or call 913-715-8859 to schedule an orientation session. 🍊

## Volunteer & Program Coordinators

- ◆ Benita Webber • Volunteer Services 715-8859
- ◆ Elvina Kroemer • Meals on Wheels 715-8895
- ◆ Jane Hurst/ Cherie Asante • Roeland Park Community Center 4850 Rosewood Drive 826-3130
- ◆ Julie Marshall • Blue Valley Multi-Service Center 7500 W. 149th Terrace 897-3991
- ◆ Stevie Morris and Janet Hoggatt • Spring Hill Multi-Service Center 401 N. Madison St. 592-2304
- ◆ Linda Rogers • Gardner Multi-Service Center 510 W. Main St. 856-7405
- ◆ Cindy Muehlberger • North Central Multi-Service Center 12425 W. 87th St. Parkway 715-6650
- ◆ Jodi Hitchcock • De Soto Multi-Service Center 32905 W. 84th St. 583-1152
- ◆ Barb Gerhard • Catch-a-Ride 715-8900
- ◆ Karen Mitscher • SHICK 715-8855

## Nutrition Center Staff

- ◆ De Soto • Maxine Klamm 585-1762
- ◆ Gardner • Shari Elsen/Frances Hutton 856-3471
- ◆ Lenexa • Marcia Atkinson/Steve Constance 888-6141
- ◆ Merriam/Shawnee • Rita Voss/Mary Avila 677-2048
- ◆ Olathe • Marcia Jennings/Diane Schoenfeldt 764-1985
- ◆ Overland Park • Rita Halvordson, Evelyn Cline, Susan LaRue 648-2949
- ◆ Roeland Park • David Wood/Hazel Hoover 826-3139
- ◆ Spring Hill • Gloria Hicks 592-3180
- ◆ Blue Valley • Don Sears (meal pick-up only!) 980-3633



## Up Close and Personal: Profile of a Volunteer

### *Volunteer John Griffith Called “Angel of Mercy”*

Johnson County’s Utility Assistance Program has seen a dramatic rise in calls from people who are behind with their gas, electricity, water, and wastewater bills. Many of those calls are handled by John Griffith, a volunteer at the North Central Multi-Service Center in Lenexa.

“It takes great courage to call us,” says Toni Hull, Utility Assistance coordinator. “People are anxious; they’re in trouble. They don’t know where their next meal will come from, let alone how they will pay their bills. But John treats everyone with genuine concern, care, and compassion.”

John, who also volunteers for Catch-a-Ride, is a retired network design engineer at Sprint. He works with Toni three days week.

“I look forward to the time John is here in the office,” Toni says. “He’s thorough and accurate. He’s a delight to work with and he gives hope to the callers. Even if we can’t help, he tries to find other resources for people.”



## Food Pantries Stretched Thin by Increased Need

In these times of layoffs, foreclosures, and economic uncertainty, the Johnson County Outreach Centers are receiving more requests for food assistance from area families. Individuals, social groups, youth groups, and businesses can help by donating the shelf-stable foods or products listed below. Drop-offs are accepted at any Outreach Center (see above locations). Items cannot be accepted at the Sunset Drive Office Building.

Canned tuna  
Canned fruits  
Canned vegetables and soups  
Canned ravioli and pastas  
Dried spaghetti and pasta  
Rice  
Beans  
Peanut butter

Jelly  
Juices  
Dish soap  
Toilet paper  
Toothpaste and brushes  
Dental floss ●

## Do You Know the Signs of Elder Abuse?

Every year, thousands of older adults are neglected or abused by their caregiver, child, spouse, or partner.

As a volunteer, you might dismiss a client's sudden moodiness as the early stages of dementia or chalk up bruises and injuries to someone's increased frailty. Please don't! Abuse is real, it happens in our county, and we hope you'll report it. Symptoms you might observe:

**Physical abuse:** repeated bruising, scarring, or burn marks; repeated broken bones, sprains, or dislocations; signs of restraint, such as rope marks on wrists.

**Emotional abuse:** frequent changes in mood and personality; withdrawal; rocking, swaying, and mumbling; agitation and aggression.

**Neglect:** noticeable weight loss; dramatic changes in appearance and hygiene; increasingly unsanitary living conditions; clothing unsuitable for the season.

If you sense that something is not right, contact your program coordinator (numbers are listed on page 3). You'll be glad you did. 🍊

## Why Be a Volunteer?

Studies show that people who volunteer have:

- ✓ lower mortality rates
- ✓ greater functional ability
- ✓ lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer
- ✓ less incidence of heart disease

What's more, older volunteers are more likely to enjoy these health benefits than younger volunteers. Cheers! 🍊

## Kudos to Volunteers at the Roeland Park Community Center

Jane Hurst, center manager, and Cherie Asante, assistant manager, are delighted with the help of two volunteers. They say:

“Margie Heine went above and beyond her volunteer role during the summer food and school supply distribution programs. Thank you, Margie! We appreciate you!”

“Candace Koehler has been a tremendous help as a new front-desk volunteer. We appreciate her willingness to do just about anything requested, her talent, and her friendly personality. We're glad to have you on board!” 🍊

## A Note About Volunteering During the Winter

The Farmer's Almanac predicts a colder-than-normal winter, with big snowstorms from mid-December through early- to mid-January. We ask all volunteers to remember that their safety comes first:

- ✓ Cancel appointments with clients, and reschedule, if possible.
- ✓ Cancel your Meals on Wheels route if you do not feel comfortable driving due to inclement road conditions (and Meals on Wheels has not already been canceled).
- ✓ Do not attempt to climb steps that are icy or snow-drifted. 🍊

*Your safety is important to us!*

