



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

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For Older Residents, Fresh Home-Delivered Meals Fuels the Body and Spirit During the Pandemic

Great Plates Delivered marks one year of helping older adults stay home and healthy while providing local businesses an economic lifeline

Redwood City – This Sunday, May 9, marks one year since the first older San Mateo County residents at high risk for COVID-19 received meals delivered to their home.

The scale of the service called [Great Plates Delivered](#) is captured in the numbers:

- More than 2,300,000 meals delivered
- 81 local participating restaurants and caterers
- \$52 million generated in local economic activity

The most important number of all: **4,500 older adults served.**

“I am elderly with mobility issues and this has been a blessing not to have to stand in line or shuffle around in a large grocery,” said Claudia, a resident of South San Francisco’s Buri Buri neighborhood. “The delivery people have great upbeat attitudes and are often the only real people I see during the day.”

Three meals are delivered daily free of charge for qualified participants. These are generally adults age 65 and older at high risk of COVID-19 who meet income and other requirements.

“An absolutely marvelous service to an elderly friend who needed help,” is how Carol of Half Moon Bay described the program. “And they brought her a bouquet of flowers on her birthday! That was above and beyond and made her day. Having a little bit of human contact with the delivery person each day made a big difference, too.”

Meals are prepared by local restaurants and caterers, businesses among the hardest hit by shutdowns aimed to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

“Great Plates Delivered of San Mateo County is a lifeline, without which my small woman-owned business would not have survived,” said Marissa Tsangaropoulos, owner of Fete Fraiche, a Redwood City boutique caterer.

“The program has afforded me the opportunity to bring back staff with steady hours and pay, expand local sourcing and, make a difference in the health and quality of life of the seniors we serve,” she said.

Pamela Keith said her Burlingame catering business – CuisineStyle – was “faced with certain closure” before she signed up to provide meals to vulnerable seniors.

“I speak with many of our seniors each week, and I feel proud to say the Great Plates Delivered program is giving our seniors something extraordinary – meals that sustain their health and wellbeing during this unprecedented time, and the incalculably valuable knowledge that we’re getting through this, together,” she said.

A Boost for the Economy

The primary goals of Great Plates Delivered are to keep older adults safe and ensure they have access to nutritious meals. Importantly, it’s also a big win for local restaurants and caterers.

For example, nearly nine out of 10 participating establishments surveyed in January 2021 reported they would have failed without Great Plates.

Between 330 and 550 full-time-equivalent jobs have been saved or created. Great Plates accounted for 72 percent of all current revenue and that non-Great Plates business was less than a quarter of its pre-pandemic normal, according to the January 2021 survey.

“Great Plates Delivered is a major success story that has simultaneously accomplished two of our key priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic: keeping our older adults safe and supporting our local small businesses,” said Supervisor David Canepa. “I am proud how quickly our County launched this program and how it has matured into an initiative that works with dozens of partners to serve over 10,000 meals each day.”

How It Works

Residents can find out if they are [eligible online](#) or by calling San Mateo County Aging and Adult Services at 1-800-675-8437.

Once enrolled, participants do not directly order meals. Instead, San Mateo County will reach out to the food vendor to arrange meal delivery and will discuss any food allergies or dietary restrictions that must be accommodated. Deliveries are contactless for safety, and all individuals delivering meals are subject to background checks.

Participating restaurants and caterers range from neighborhood cafes featuring adobo and lumpia dishes to large caterers with extensive menus offering Japanese, Hawaiian and Central American favorites.

One lists its menu as “A mix of Burmese, Italian, American, Indian, and Peruvian options.”

Another: “International cafe cuisine serving a varied menu with eggs, pancakes, Salads, Paninis, Crepes, Wraps, Pastas, Tacos.”

The County directly reimburses restaurants, so there is no cost to participants, and the County in turn is reimbursed by the federal government.

“Every meal that I have received has been fresh, and nicely prepared. The salads are fabulous!” said Barbara, a Half Moon Bay resident.

Great Plates also offers peace of mind for loved ones. Deanna, a resident of San Mateo’s Shoreview neighborhood, said, “This place has really helped my mom during the pandemic. I’m very grateful to them.”

For more information on eligibility and how to sign up as a participating food provider, please go to <https://www.smchealth.org/post/great-plates-delivered-faqs>

Note:

The Great Plates home deliver program is currently funded through Friday, May 7, 2021.

Since last year, funding has been authorized on a month-to-month basis by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The County will alert clients and the public regarding the funding status.