



A Day in the Life of a Relief Driver

By: Lakisha Hayes, IM Intern

A recent visit to the central Meals on Wheels (MOW) site for Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston led to an eye-opening view of the day-to-day activities of a MOW relief driver. So what exactly does a relief driver do? A lot more than one may think.

A typical workday begins with a meeting of all four relief drivers, Laura, Harris, Patricia, and Waymon, at 8:30 a.m. After the relief drivers learn which regular drivers would be out that day, the relief drivers decide who is going where, and find directions to their routes. The two lead relief drivers are Harris and Patricia, and their daily activities are immense which includes counting all the food to be distributed that day.

The lead relief drivers also assist the supervisors in distributing boxes of frozen meals for certain routes. Since each driver has anywhere from about 20-60 deliveries to make each day and there are over 40 routes, this daily task of counting and organizing is immensely time consuming. On this particular day, a peach, a slice of bread, and milk, which came in bulk and was counted and placed in a bag for each senior, accompanied each meal.

All drivers use their own cars to deliver meals, and they are reimbursed for mileage expenses. As Pat was counting food, she received notice from one of the drivers that his car was inoperable. She discussed the fact that even if something like this happens, the driver's route must still be completed, each senior must receive his or her meal for that day. She then left to pick up the driver, took his food to be delivered, and drove him on his route that day.

After making sure that everyone had the correct distribution of food for their routes, and any questions were answered, Harris prepared for his temporary route, and headed out to the area. His route for the day was in the Port of Houston area, in a neighborhood off McCarty Rd. and I-10, a very poor area.

The seniors were so nice when he delivered their meals, and they expressed their thankfulness for the program, and how it contributes to their daily lives. They are very clear on their dependency of the meals they receive.

The MOW clients develop personal relationships with their drivers, and many of them asked about their regular driver, making sure she was okay. Harris informed them that she would be back the following day, and she just had a personal matter to take care of.

Even though Harris had never met any of the seniors on this route before that day, there were more than a few in which it appeared as if he knew them very well.

He revealed the fact that though he does not know these people, they treat him as if he is a friend they've known for years, and he feels highly rewarded for meeting such wonderful, joyous people everyday.

It is very evident that a MOW relief driver has a lot of responsibilities, including maintaining relationships established with senior clients, and ensuring the greatest success of the program at the highest standards. With each of the relief drivers, the seniors are top priority, and they enjoy making life for them just a little easier. For volunteer opportunities with MOW and other programs at IM, visit www.imgh.org.