



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Thanks to viewer tip, Stolen Meals on Wheels Truck Recovered

An evening news viewer recalled seeing the truck in her neighborhood, called police, and helped Meals on Wheels recover their stolen truck

(February 21, 2007, Houston, TX) Because of the awareness of an evening news viewer the Meals on Wheels truck which was stolen on Monday with 85 meals inside was recovered by Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston officials this morning. The truck is now back at IM offices with only slight superficial damage; four meals remained in the truck.

Left as a voice mail, a caller reported to IM that after she returned home and saw the news coverage of the missing truck she recalled seeing it in her neighborhood. She went back to investigate if the truck she saw was truck #7, the missing Meals on Wheels truck, and after confirming her suspicions she called police. IM is currently trying to contact this vigilant citizen.

"We are very grateful to the Houston news media, law enforcement officials, and all of the members of this community. The news media for their swift and compassionate coverage, law enforcement for their tireless work, and all Houstonians for the awareness that eventually led to the recovery of our stolen truck. The outpouring of support for this program only strengthens our resolve to continue providing quality service to the seniors of our community" Lou Keels, IM Communications Manager.

Now, instead of diverting funds to purchase a new truck, IM can remain focused on providing service to the more than 3300 seniors we bring nutrition to daily and the increasing needs of the senior community in Houston.

Within the next three years Harris County will be home to more than 500,000 senior citizens. It's estimated about ten percent of them will need some type of in-home assistance, such as Meals on Wheels.

Our program, Meals on Wheels for Greater Houston, is constantly facing a wait list of more than 1,000 seniors; this means seniors have to wait approximately 6 - 9 months to receive our service. Despite increased fundraising and sponsorship efforts, and increased community support, it is extremely difficult to keep up with the needs of the senior population. If current trends don't change, in three years our waiting list could bloat to 5,000 seniors or more.

Meals on Wheels programs are essential to the health and well-being of our seniors who rely on this program to help fill in the gap when they can no longer adequately care for themselves. According to latest census polls, Harris County had 252,895 residents who were 65 years of age or older, representing 7.4% of the county's population in 2004; an increase of 28% over the last decade. Nationally, at least 80% of older Americans have at least one chronic condition, and 52% have two or more such conditions. 31% of those 65 to 74 years old and 41% of those 75 years old and older had household income below \$20,000.

Without programs such as Meals on Wheels for Greater Houston, many seniors would have to leave their homes and be forced into institutional care at a cost that is significantly higher to taxpayers than those to operate Meals on Wheels programs; in Harris County the average cost of nursing home care is \$45,000 per year compared to \$1200 for a year of Meals on Wheels service.

Additional information about Meals on Wheels, including volunteer and donation opportunities can be found online at www.houstonmealsonwheels.org or by calling 713.533.4900.

Editor's Note: Interviews with any IM staff, volunteer, or service recipient can be obtained by contacting Lou Keels, 713.533.4973, 832.483.6202, or lkeels@imgh.org.