

County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency

Department of Aging and Adult Services Programs
Senior Nutrition Program



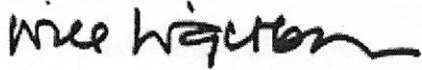
CSFC SSA02 111506

Prepared by: Michael Bobadilla
Management Analyst

Reviewed by: Betty Malks
Director Aging and Adult
Services

DATE: November 15, 2006

TO: Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr., Chairperson
Supervisor Don Gage, Vice-Chairperson
Children, Seniors & Families Committee

FROM: 
Will Lightbourne
Agency Director, Social Services Agency

SUBJECT: Senior Nutrition Program Annual Report

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Accept Annual Report from Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), Senior Nutrition Program (SNP).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no fiscal implications.

CONTRACT HISTORY

Not Applicable.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Acceptance of the report will provide the Children, Seniors and Families Committee (CSFC) with an Annual Report on current and future activities of the Department of Aging and Adult Services Senior Nutrition Program.

BACKGROUND

This report provides CSFC with a summary of past fiscal year activities of the DAAS Senior Nutrition Program. Current activities, accomplishments, future goals, and challenges are included.

Authorized by the Older Americans Act of 1965, SNP has provided high quality, cost efficient, nutritious meals to seniors 60 years of age and older through the Congregate Meals Program and Meals on Wheels Program since 1974 and promotes the role of nutrition in preventative health and long term care.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Negative action will result in CSFC not accepting the annual report from the DAAS Senior Nutrition Program.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The Clerk of the Board will follow the usual procedures for this type of report.

ATTACHMENTS

-
- Attachment A: Senior Nutrition Program Annual Report

Senior Nutrition Program Annual Report FY 05-06

Background

The Senior Nutrition Program's (SNP) mission is to provide high quality, cost efficient, nutritious meals to seniors and to promote the role of nutrition in preventative health and long term care. Authorized by the Older Americans Act of 1965, SNP has provided meals to eligible seniors 60 years of age and older in Santa Clara County through the Congregate Meals Program and the Meals on Wheels Program since 1974.

Funded by Federal Title IIIC funds, the County of Santa Clara, city contributions, USDA funds and participant contributions, the Senior Nutrition Program oversees 34 congregate nutrition sites, three senior day centers and the Meals on Wheels Program.

SNP is comprised of seven staff that includes one(1) Program Manager, one (1) Administrative Assistant, one (1) Management Analyst, one (1) Nutrition Services Manager, (two) 2 Registered Dietitians, one (1) Accountant III, and one (1) Accountant Assistant.

This report summarizes data for FY 05-06, describes accomplishments, highlights outreach efforts, and addresses future goals and challenges for SNP.

Overview

The Senior Nutrition Program provides congregate and home-delivered meal to seniors within Santa Clara County. Of the 37 congregate sites, 17 are cook-on-site programs, 14 are restaurant-catered sites, and 6 are catered by Compass Group USA Inc dba Bateman ENP.

Most of the congregate sites serve lunch meals Monday through Friday. The St. James Senior Center also provides a Saturday Asian meal and a Sunday meal is provided at Northside Community Center. Seven breakfasts and seven lunches, supplemented by milk, bread, fruit, juice, and grocery items are delivered weekly to homebound Meals on Wheels seniors. In addition to their five day weekly congregate program, Yu Ai Kai, also delivers hot meals to homebound seniors in their immediate neighborhood.

The Senior Nutrition Program is recognized for the diversity of its participants and the variety of ethnic meal programs that are provided to serve this population. The range of meals provided include: Chinese, Asian Indian (Traditional and Vegetarian), Korean, Japanese, Mexican, and Portuguese cuisine. This effort is reflected in the numerous, diverse menus used by SNP and is a primary factor for growth in this program. SNP dietitians prepare 29 menus that are distributed over a 5 week menu cycle at cook-on-site programs. They additionally work with contractors to plan and select restaurant site and catered site menus.

All Senior Nutrition Program providers are subcontractors of the County Senior Nutrition Program and subject to the County contracting principles for independent contractors. All contracted services, including site personnel, food service, and related duties, are monitored and evaluated for contract compliance and performance by SNP staff.

SNP dietitians also provide technical training and assistance as required and as needed to ensure health, safety and nutrition requirements are met. Dietitians prepare menus and plan meals that meet current nutrition requirements as well as monitor the daily operations of the sites and the Meals on Wheels program.

Nutrition Education is provided by staff dietitians to program participants at a minimum of four times annually at each site. Meals on Wheels clients receive written materials four times annually. Educational materials are distributed at all nutrition education presentations and are translated into Japanese, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Spanish, and Punjabi as needed.

Education topics included: blood pressure/hypertension, food safety and handling, food and drug interaction, nutrition current events and updates, exercise for older persons, the food pyramid, and others.

Site and in-service training is provided routinely by dietitians to site managers, kitchen staff, and volunteers to go over policies, procedures and to answer questions. In-service training is provided to individual sites depending on the results of site evaluation.

Training topics included: food safety/ handling and preparation, nutrition reports and procedures, use of data scanner and registration instructions, fire safety, earthquake preparedness and others.

SNP administration monitors data reporting requirements. These require accurate electronic capture and reporting of number of persons and meals served as well as demographic information. Each nutrition site is required to electronically report information required by the federal National Aging Program Information System (NAPIS) using a scanner system established by the Council on Aging Silicon Valley (COA) through its Care Access system. SNP staff act as technical support to nutrition providers to ensure that data is captured and reported accurately and timely to COA. This includes installation of hardware and software, training on use of the system, and troubleshooting reporting, hardware and software problems as they occur. NAPIS information is input on a regular basis and updated annually by SNP. Training on use of the system is provided initially and individually to sites as needed.

Meals Served

Both Congregate and the Meals on Wheels programs maintained service levels in FY 05-06 averaging over 1.1 million meals from the prior fiscal year. The need for nutrition services is anticipated to increase as more age eligible "baby boomers" access senior services

Fiscal Year	2004/2005	2005/2006
Congregate Meals (C1)	558,412	561,610
Meals On Wheels (C2)	591,270	593,682
Total	1,149,682	1,155,292

Source: SNP Monthly Report, Care Access "Q" Database

Participant Profile

Congregate and Meals on Wheels participants are asked to complete a 1367 registration form when they first attend a congregate meal site or when they are applying for Meals on Wheels. The registration form provides basic demographic information such as ethnicity/race, age, income, and household status that is required by NAPIS for the Administration on Aging. NAPIS information is reported through a secure server with the Care Access Program administered by the Council on Aging Silicon Valley (COA).

Registration is encouraged, but is not mandatory in order to receive a senior nutrition meal. The 1367 form also includes a nutrition risk screening questionnaire to help assess a person's vulnerability to nutrition risk.

The following demographics were compiled from 1367 registrations updated or entered during FY 05-06:

Ethnicity/Race

Santa Clara County has an ethnically diverse population. SNP provides a number of ethnic meals to its participants reflecting the diverse population of the county. Notably 42% of our congregate registrants list Asian Pacific Islander, Chinese, or Filipino as their primary ethnic origin. Twenty five (25%) of the Meals on Wheels registrants list themselves as of Hispanic ethnic origin and 12% Asian Pacific Islander.

Ethnicity / Race	Congregate Meals	Meals on Wheels
African/American	2.0%	5.6%
Am Indian / Native American	0.5%	0.2%
Arab	0.0%	0.1%
Asian	5.0%	0.2%
Asian Indian	1.1%	0.0%
Asian Pacific Islander	32.5%	12.1%
Chinese	6.2%	1.1%
Filipino	2.8%	1.2%
Hispanic	13.8%	24.5%
Japanese	0.3%	0.4%
Korean	0.9%	0.0%
Laotian	0.0%	0.1%
Pakistani	0.0%	0.1%
Persian	0.1%	0.6%
Russian	0.0%	1.5%
Vietnamese	1.2%	1.0%
White	30.7%	50.8%
Other	0.0%	0.6%
Refused	0.0%	0.0%
Unavailable	0.0%	0.1%
Missing	1.2%	0.0%

Age Range

The median age of seniors receiving congregate meals is 75 years with 40% of the seniors in the 70-79 years range. Sixty four percent (64%) of congregate meal participants range between 70 and 89 years of age

The median age of seniors receiving Meals on Wheels is 83 years with 45% in the 80-89 years range. Eighty percent (80%) of Meals on Wheels recipients range between 70 and 89 years of age.

While the anticipated "age wave" of baby boomers is expected to impact the programs over the coming years, the registrant profile reflects that the majority of our registrants are over the age of 70. Less than 24% of congregate meal seniors and 16% of Meals on Wheels seniors are in the 60-69 years age range.

Age Range	Congregate Meals		Meals on Wheels	
0-59	480	3.6%	6	0.4%
60-69	3111	23.2%	260	16.0%
70-79	5346	39.9%	485	29.8%
80-89	3200	23.9%	731	44.9%
90-99	1082	8.1%	136	8.3%
100+	14	0.1%	11	0.7%
Missing	149	1.1%	0	0.0%
	13382		1629	

Note that age 0-59 will include spouses/caretakers of eligible seniors and disabled persons living in senior housing.

Household and Income Status

Many of our participants live alone and are in low-income households. Over 59% of Meals on Wheels recipients stated that they live alone and 42% of those persons living alone are female. Almost 47% of congregate meal participants and 84% of Meals on Wheels recipients indicate that they are in low income*.

	Congregate Meals	Meals on Wheels
Live Alone		
Female	20.79%	42.12%
Male	11.33%	17.24%
Yes (%)	32.12%	59.36%
Low Income		
Female	27.23%	56.92%
Male	19.60%	27.44%
Yes (%)	46.83%	84.36%

* Low income is self-declared per registration.

Seniors at Nutritional Risk

The Nutrition Screening Initiative (NSI) is a voluntary questionnaire that is conducted as part of the initial registration and updated annually to assess a senior's potential for nutrition risk. Assigned point values are given to conditions that may lead to nutrition risk. Persons with point values 6 points or above may be subject to nutritional risk. The data provides information for staff dietitians to target educational subjects and assist individuals on health counseling.

Risk factors include:

- Illness or medical condition that changes the kind and/or food eaten (2 pts)
- Eating fewer than 2 meals daily (3 pts)
- Eating less than 2 daily servings of fruits, vegetables, and dairy products (2 pts)
- Drinking 3 or more alcoholic beverages daily (2 pts)
- Mouth or food problems making it difficult to eat (2 pts)
- Insufficient money to buy needed food (4 pts)
- Eating alone most of the time (1 pt)
- Taking 3 or more prescribed or over the counter drugs daily (1 pt)
- Involuntarily gaining or losing 10 pounds over a six month period (2 pts)
- Inability to physically shop, cook or feed themselves (2 pts)

While Congregate Meals participants indicated that 20% had between 1-5 nutritional risk points, 11% were at 6 points or higher indicating a definite potential for nutritional risk.

An analysis of Nutrition Screening Initiative (NSI) data completed by SNP staff identified congregate sites with the highest nutrition risk values. As a result of this analysis, an intervention plan was designed by SNP dietitians to provide targeted nutrition education to the sites with the highest percentage of combined risk factors. The targeted nutrition education was incorporated into the annual nutrition education plan.

For those congregate participants with 6 points or more of nutrition risk the following risk factors were identified with the highest average of the responses:

- 53% eat fewer than 2 servings of fruit, vegetables or dairy products
- 41% have an illness or medical condition that changes the type of food eaten
- 33% eat less than 2 meals daily
- 29% involuntarily lost or gained 10 lbs. or more over a six month period
- 30% have tooth or mouth problems making it difficult to eat.

86% of Meals on Wheels recipients were assessed to be in high nutritional risk (6 or more points). Meals on Wheels participants are homebound because of illness or incapacity and have difficulty providing or preparing food for themselves. These individuals are particularly vulnerable to nutrition risk. Meals on Wheels delivery drivers are instructed to report significant changes in a recipient's condition to SNP or COA for assessment or referral to Adult Protective Services, In Home Supportive Services or other adult services programs.

Participant Profile Sources: 1367 registrations, Q database FY 05-06, NSI questionnaires, Congregate Meals Surveys May 06, Meals on Wheels Surveys Aug 06, SNP Nutrition Risk Analysis

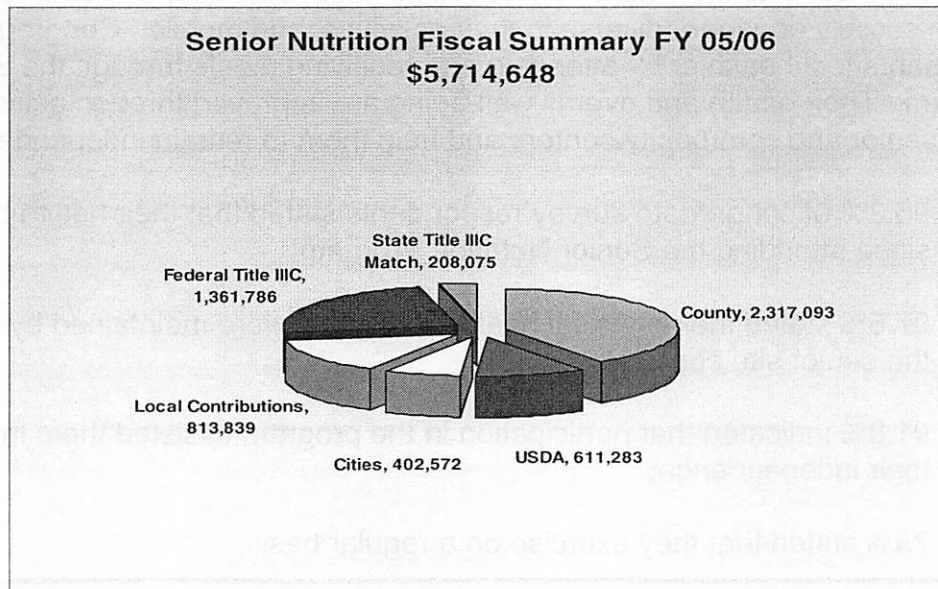
Funding

The Senior Nutrition Program is funded by a combination of Title IIIC Older Americans Act funds (Federal and State matching), County funds, City contributions, USDA funds, and Participant contributions.

The budget for SNP is determined annually based on availability of Federal, State and Local funds. The Older Americans Act provides Federal Title IIIC funds. State and County matching funds are required in order to receive Title IIIC funding. USDA funding, received through the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) provides a per meal reimbursement. The level of city contribution is determined per contract for county/city co-funded senior nutrition programs in San Jose, Campbell, Milpitas, and Santa Clara. The cities of Los Gatos, Mountain View, Palo Alto, and Sunnyvale provide available Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to senior nutrition contractors within their city limits.

SNP expended \$5,714,648 dollars in FY 05-06. Funding was distributed as follows:

Federal Title IIIC Funds	1,361,786	23.8%
State Matching	208,075	3.6%
Participant Contributions	813,839	14.2%
City Contributions*	402,572	7.0%
County Match	2,317,093	40.5%
USDA	611,283	10.5%



* City contributions reflect revenue received directly from the cities of San Jose, Santa Clara, and Milpitas. City contributions from Campbell, Los Altos, Los Gatos, Mountain View, Palo Alto, and Sunnyvale that offset the amount of county funding are not included.

Program Outcomes

Program outcomes are evaluated not only by the number of meals served and number of participants, but also by participant survey responses that are conducted annually to rate the level of satisfaction with service, food, and the impact of senior nutrition services on the health and well-being of the seniors. The FY 05-06 Congregate and Meals on Wheels surveys reflected that both programs received high satisfaction ratings on overall services provided.

The Senior Nutrition Program is rated highly by participants for the services that it provides.

- Overall satisfaction by SNP survey respondents indicated that 95% were very satisfied with the services provided by the Congregate Meals Program and the Meals on Wheels program.

Source: Congregate and Meals on Wheels Surveys FY05-06.

Congregate Meals Outcomes

The Congregate Meals Program provides hot meals at Senior Centers and locations provided by community based organizations (CBO) throughout the County. In addition to meals providing 1/3 Recommended Daily Adult requirement for older adults, nutrition services in a congregate setting enable senior to access an array of health and social services. They have access to services such as legal referrals, health counseling, and transportation services. Congregate participants benefit from the socialization provided by activities such as dancing, arts and crafts, yoga, exercise, and excursions. They remain socially engaged, diverse in their activities, and mobile. Congregate Meals participants feel healthier by attending and receiving meals through the Senior Nutrition Program. Their health and overall well-being are improved through activities provided at the senior and community centers and help them to remain independent.

- 95.3% of congregate survey respondents stated that their health had improved since attending the Senior Nutrition Program;
- 97.6% stated their physical health and spirits were maintained by socialization at the senior site centers;
- 91.8% indicated that participation in the program assisted them in maintaining their independence;
- 75% stated that they exercise on a regular basis;
- 48% indicated that they use other services offered at the senior/community centers;
- 42% list automobile as their primary mode of transportation to the program, 22% use the bus and 11% walk to their sites.

Source: Congregate Nutrition Survey FY 05-06

The following cities, community based organizations (CBO) and vendors provide congregate nutrition services.

- Asians Americans for Community Involvement (AACI)
 - City of Campbell
 - Salvation Army
 - La Comida of Palo Alto
 - First United Methodist Church of Los Gatos
 - Filipino American – Northside Community
 - Indo-American – Northside Community
 - Community Services Agency Mountain View/Los Altos
 - Compass Group Inc. dba Bateman ENP
 - HOPE
 - Live Oak Adult Day Services (Los Gatos, Cupertino)
 - Portuguese Organization for Social Services and Opportunities (POSSO)
 - First United Methodist Church – Sunnyvale
 - West Valley Presbyterian Church
 - Catholic Charities (John XXIII, Eastside, Gilroy)
 - Self Help for the Elderly (Cupertino/San Jose)
 - Indo American Community Center (Milpitas and Sunnyvale)
 - Korean American Community Services
 - City of San Jose (Alma, Berryessa, Evergreen, Hank Lopez, St. James, Willows)
 - City of Santa Clara
 - YMCA Santa Clara Valley (Morgan Hill)
 - Yu Ai Kai
- A total of 561,607 meals were provided, averaging 2,255 congregate meals served daily over 247 annual serving days in FY 05-06;
- 13,382 unduplicated persons were served;
- 25,787 rides were provided by Outreach to seniors attending congregate nutrition sites;
- The average cost per meal was \$6.17;
- The average contribution per meal was \$1.36

Source: SNP Monthly Report, Q Care Access, SNP Accounting

Meals on Wheels Outcomes

The home delivered meals program is provided primarily through a contract with Compass Group USA Inc dba Bateman Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP). This program provides a weekly delivery of 7 breakfasts and 7 entrees supplemented by fresh fruit, juice, milk, bread, and other grocery items to homebound seniors who are unable to provide meals for themselves or have difficulty obtaining food because of illness or disability. Additional neighborhood Meals on Wheels are prepared and distributed by Yu Ai Kai to a limited geographical location.

- A total of 593, 682 Meals on Wheels were provided, averaging 1,626 daily meals annually;
- 1,698 unduplicated persons were served;
- The average cost per meal was \$2.35;
- The average contribution per meal was \$0.46.

Source: Q Care Access, SNP Accounting

Meals on Wheels seniors are receiving nutritious meals equivalent to 2/3 of the Recommended Daily Requirement for older adults; and this program helps participants remain in their own homes.

- 91% of Meals on Wheels survey respondents indicated that they have been eating better since receiving Meals on Wheels;
- 96% respondents indicated the program assisted them in maintaining their independence;
- 93% respondents would recommend MOW to a friend or relative.

Source: MOW survey FY 05-06

Accomplishments

- SNP was recognized by the California Department of Aging that this Area Agency on Aging (PSA 10) had marked increases in the number of meals and seniors served while as a whole there has been a decrease in participation throughout the State. CDA acknowledged SNP in offering multiple menus and a variety of ethnic meals to provide the opportunity of choice in its service area by offering this solution as one of the "Best Practices" for congregate meals in California.
- A satisfactory evaluation rating of a minimum 90% performance based rating of budgeted meals served was established by SNP for congregate sites in FY 05-06. Sites averaged a 98% performance annual rating in FY 05-06.

- The California Department of Aging acknowledged SNP for having the lowest congregate per meal cost and having the 3rd lowest MOW per meal cost in the State.
- 51 outreach activities were completed as part of a continuing effort to promote the Congregate and Meals on Wheels programs.
- Advertisements were placed in English, Spanish and Vietnamese to ensure that the Congregate and Meals on Wheels programs were offered to our diverse population.
- Targeted ads by zip code were placed in community newspapers in areas with high-density senior populations in poverty.
- SNP participated in a nation-wide "March for Meals" campaign that included extensive media coverage to call attention to senior hunger in America and provide awareness of the availability of the Meals on Wheels program. Mayors from 11 cities in Santa Clara County participated in delivering meals to homebound seniors.
- The SNP Meals on Wheels program applied and was accepted in the 2006 Santa Clara County Combined Giving Campaign as a new agency where employee contributions could be made.
- SNP partnered with the countywide Food Safety Net committee that includes other Social Services Agency partners and Community Based Organizations to share and coordinate food resources available in Santa Clara County. A targeted outreach to Brown Bag recipients was coordinated with the Second Harvest Bank that resulted in increased attendance by seniors who had not previously visited a congregate meals program. Information was also distributed to encourage seniors to refer friends or relatives who could benefit from the program.
- In collaboration with the County Planning Department, data was compiled and completed to identify areas underserved by the Senior Nutrition Program by Supervisorial District. This data was presented by the County Planning Department to the Board of Supervisors on September 27, 2005. This data is serving as baseline data to better target outreach and services in the future and has already been used to establish two new congregate sites in FY 06-07. The data also was used to distribute mailers promoting the availability of senior nutrition services in areas with seniors below the poverty level.
- 120 mandated education and training events were provided to senior nutrition participants. Senior Nutrition staff provided education and training on topics that included diabetes, methods to improve eating habits, food safety, osteoporosis, low sodium, hypertension, and modifying meals based on their diet. Participant surveys indicated an 86% satisfaction rating with the education and training presentations.

- Electronic scanner download stations were installed at 10 congregate sites to provide improved access for contractors in providing required reporting data to SNP.
- A MOW trust account was established to recognize and acknowledge donations to MOW. This account will be used in conjunction with the planned establishment of an online internet donation link on the County website. Advertising in local newspapers generated \$2,370 in additional donations in FY 05-06.
- Two new Hispanic and Asian entrees were introduced in the MOW program expanding the menu selection and received positive feedback from recipients.
- SNP piloted proposed changes by the Federal and State statutes in dietary guidelines to determine how increased vitamin and nutrition requirements would affect cost and meal preparation. The results of this pilot were shared with the State to assist in statewide implementation of these guidelines in FY 07-08.

Future Goals

- Two new congregate nutrition sites, Santa Clara Valley Blind Center and Self Help for the Elderly Amber Glow, will be opened in FY 06-07 based on under served areas of seniors in poverty identified by the Planning Department data.
- In January 2007 seven new dinner entrees including 2 ethnic selections will be introduced to the MOW menu to increase choice of dinner entrees and to further expand ethnic variety of meals.
- SNP is continuing its efforts to establish an on-line donation link on the County Internet site. SNP is working with SSA Information Systems staff by participating on the E-Payment requirements validation team to review and validate specifications for the upcoming RFP to select a countywide E-Payment vendor.
- SNP will continue to seek other sources of funding for the program. The challenge of seeking additional funding from city partners continues to be a goal although economic conditions similar to the County affects the cities' ability to increase their funding.
- SNP is exploring available grant funding and is currently applying for a 3 year grant through a Vitamin Cases Settlement Fund (VCSF) for a MOW project that will provide additional fresh salad meals and fruit plates to homebound seniors. The VCSF is a result of a class action suit against several vitamin manufacturers for alleged price fixing of products. \$10 million dollars in grant funds was made available to non-profits and public agencies for projects to improve the health of California consumers. After submitting a Letter of Interest, SNP was one of 85 applicants invited to submit a full proposal out of 397 initial inquiries to VCSF.

Challenges

On October 17, 2006 the Older Americans Act was re-authorized. It gives increased recognition to both the importance of good nutrition and to the critical role that senior nutrition programs play in ensuring that elderly persons receive good nutrition. There is an emphasis on the link between nutrition, health promotion, and disease prevention.

The bill inserted language to express many purposes of the nutrition program:

They are:

1. to reduce hunger and food insecurity
2. to promote socialization of older individuals; and
3. to promote the health and well-being of older individuals by assisting such individuals to gain access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services to delay the onset of adverse health conditions resulting from poor nutritional health or sedentary behavior.

Over the last several years a substantial growth in the elderly population has increased the demand for meal services -- a trend that will continue well into the mid twenty-first century. The oldest of America's seniors, those aged 85 and older, are the most rapidly growing age group.

The Senior Nutrition Program is the most successful in preventing senior malnourishment. The meals and social interaction are essential for seniors to prevent or delay the onset of chronic disease or disability. In turn, the use of more costly alternatives such as hospitalization or long term care institutionalization is delayed. More than three quarters of a million Americans over 65 and living alone have difficulty providing themselves with a steady supply of food and experience some degree of hunger. Dr. J. Larry Brown, director of the Center on Hunger and Poverty at Brandeis University states, "Ensuring adequate food and nutrition is essential to the prevention of chronic disease and disease-related disabilities among seniors."

The ability to sustain current level of services with a projected County deficit is the challenge facing SNP. While the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act specifies the need for senior nutrition service, SNP will need to continue these services without foreseeable increase in funds from Federal, State, or local sources. The continued support from the Board of Supervisors is necessary to reinforce the County's commitment to serving the elderly, frail, and disabled seniors of Santa Clara County.

The Senior Nutrition Program acknowledges the support of volunteers that are vital to its existence. Many of our volunteers are also participants. SNP asked our sites to provide some feedback from their clients to reflect the dedication of our volunteers and provide some insight on how SNP makes a difference in their lives. The following stories were shared by some of our participants.

Volunteer Experiences

Mary was born November 4, 1916 in North Dakota. Mary was married at an early age. She and her family moved to Gilroy and raised two children.

In 1954 she started working for Gilroy Foods and continued for 27 years. Mary's husband passed away in 1977 and the following year her son passed away. Her daughter eventually moved away to Colorado and Mary was left alone. Before she retired in 1981 Mary found out about a senior center opening up in Gilroy. She started attending and volunteering her time to the center. She has been attending the senior center ever since those first days.

Mary continues to volunteer and receive meals at the center although she will be turning 90 in November. The center staff says that she does not miss a single day. She helps set the tables and brings in seniors for lunch. Mary's dedication and devotion to the center inspires staff and other seniors.

∞

A couple, both over 80 years in age, have been participating at the Yu Ai Kai Senior Center senior nutrition lunch program for over 20 years. Although her husband passed away last year, the wife continues to attend the program every day. She has an extensive family, but does not want to rely on them and would rather stay independent. She prefers to visit and laugh with her friends at the center. She appreciates being able to attend the lunch program. She considers the staff and the friends at the center her family.

∞

November 30, 2005 was one of the greatest days of my life. I was finally retiring after a lifetime of hard work. I was looking forward to doing nothing. I was happy, jubilant, and ecstatic. By the fourth month dissolution and depression was setting in. I didn't leave my house much. My eating habits were getting worse, and my doctor told me that I had high cholesterol and was in danger of getting diabetes. All this accompanied my alcoholism.

My doctor suggested that I look up one of the nearby senior centers and attend their nutrition program. I began attending the Eastside Neighborhood Center in March 2006 and now I eat there 3 times weekly. I get a good balanced meal and the people are friendly.

I now give back to the community by volunteering when I'm needed. The ladies in the kitchen are very hard workers and deserve our thanks and gratitude for a job well done. I know how hard the kitchen staff works. I'm also a substitute kitchen helper.

∞

Participant Stories

Stories from Live Oak Nutrition and Services Center at Los Gatos

71 year old man, with recently diagnosed macular degeneration (attending since he was 60 years old), states that he comes for the nutritious vegetables that he would not prepare at home.

∞

60 year old woman with diabetes comes to the center to get a nutritionally balanced meal.

∞

86 year old woman with diabetes and heart problems comes to the center for a balanced and nutritious meal. She took the bus to the center until recently when she fell at the bus stop. She now takes advantage of Outreach paratransit and volunteer transportation services provided at the center.

∞

Story from India Community Center at Milpitas

I live with my friend in Milpitas. Sometimes I go to the ICC center. There I get a balanced diet, and good food. I enjoy the various activities and programs that happen in the ICC center. I am going regularly to ICC. I like to go there to play pool with my friends and chat with them. I take part in the programs too. I enjoy the company at ICC.

∞

Story from Santa Clara Valley Blind Center

A totally blind senior man attended our organization weekly and would eat a banana and piece of bread for lunch due to lack of income and the inability to cook for himself. He lives alone in a small studio apartment and has no family to assist him. He is now enjoying the hot nutritious meals provided by the Senior Nutrition Program for which he is very grateful. Furthermore, he started visiting other sites on the days that we don't serve so that he can have a healthy meal. The Senior Nutrition Program allows him the opportunity to have hot healthy meals he would not otherwise receive.

∞

Story from Alma Senior Center

Ruben, age 70, lives alone in the neighborhood and came to us about 5 years ago. Ruben is a singer and before he was entertaining us with songs before it was evident that he was very ill. He has cancer on his leg and a broken hip from a fall from a ladder. After a lengthy time in the hospital he started attending the site as much as he could. During that time we provided him with a wheelchair and crutches. On days when he couldn't attend we delivered his meals. Today he still has cancer, but he is able to come in daily and has started singing again.

∞