

Demand still hungry for Meals on Wheels

CT. Post -- Margaret Ely, Staff Writer

Published: 11:00 p.m., Friday, August 13, 2010

Every year, state aid finds its way directly to senior's doorsteps -- and their stomachs.

Despite fluctuating gas prices and grim financial times, money provided by the state Department of [Social Services](#) is given to various nonprofits throughout Connecticut to provide hundreds of seniors with hot Meals on Wheels, five days a year.

"It's one of the best places the money can go, because it's directly helping clients," said [Jonathan Reiner](#), director of grants and contracts for the [Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut](#). "It's the only balanced nutritional meal they get."

Parameters set by the state give 'homebound' seniors over 60, those who cannot leave their home or cook due to physical disabilities, a delivered lunch Mondays through Fridays. The agency provides the state-aided grants to various nonprofits, which then provide the meals.

Reiner stressed while the flow of money may seem complicated, methods have been relatively straightforward for years.

"Each provider works closely with a state nutritionist and use a manual," Reiner said. "It's one application and evaluation process."

He also said in order to allocate funds; each provider receiving aid must provide a budget.

"I'm not going to lie, with gas prices it's a balancing act," Reiner said. "I can't tell you what's going happen if gas hits four dollars, they haven't budgeted for it."

Although similar programs exist all across the United States, these particular state-funded programs are not associated with the Meals On [Wheels Association of America](#). In the Valley, the food is made and delivered by TEAM Inc., through it's Elderly Nutrition Program. Seniors in Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Derby, Milford and more benefit. [Lindley Food Service Corporation](#) in Bridgeport provides the delivered meals.

"There is a wide range of food," said [Kevin George](#), TEAM elderly service manager. "We just had a food service meeting with a dietician. We have a huge menu."

Along with Meals on Wheels, the grants provide free meals in a group setting, aimed at those who are no longer homebound.

For TEAM, these group lunches are served as part of the [Senior Community Cafe](#) program at the Senior Center and [Griffin Hospital](#) in Derby; [Doyle Senior Center](#) in Ansonia; and the [Rev. A. Callahan House](#) in Seymour.

George said while requests and meals are provided year round, there is generally a spike in the winter months from October to January.

For more information on TEAM's services and eligibility, visit www.teaminc.org