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Meals on Wheels America Kicks Off 13th Annual March for Meals with Release of Groundbreaking Research Study

More Than a Meal Research Study conceived by Meals on Wheels America, conducted by Brown University and funded by AARP Foundation, shows impact of meal service delivery on the health and well-being of adults 60 years of age and olderAdd in press release sub-title here

ALEXANDRIA, VA—Meals on Wheels America today releases the findings from a research study it commissioned Brown University's Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research to conduct with funding provided by AARP Foundation. The release of this groundbreaking study commemorates the start of the organization's 13th March for Meals – a nationwide celebration of local Meals on Wheels programs throughout the month of March.

"The Meals on Wheels network faces tough choices forced by limited funding, rising costs, unprecedented demand and need, and increasing for-profit competition," said Ellie Hollander, President and CEO of Meals on Wheels America. "Thanks to Brown University and AARP Foundation, we have the research-backed evidence that confirms what we've all known for decades anecdotally through personal experience: that Meals on Wheels does in fact deliver so much more than just a meal."

"The findings in this study show the great value of Meals on Wheels America's work as their volunteers provide not only a needed meal but a friendly face and safety check," said Lisa Marsh Ryerson President of AARP Foundation. "The report reinforces our resolve at AARP Foundation to address the interrelated issues of senior hunger and isolation by pursuing both immediate relief and longer-term solutions."

Meals on Wheels America contracted Dr. Kali Thomas, PhD, principal researcher at Brown University's Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research, to design and execute the 15-week pilot study involving more than 600 senior participants to compare the experience and health outcomes realized by older adults who receive three different levels of service: daily traditional meal delivery, once-weekly frozen delivery and individuals on a waiting list for meals.

"As a former Meals on Wheels volunteer and the granddaughter of a recipient, I have witnessed firsthand the valuable benefits this service provides to those fortunate enough to receive it," said Kali Thomas, PhD, Principal Investigator, Brown University. "We structured this study as a randomized control, blinded study and what we found in the data is significant evidence that seniors derive several benefits beyond nutrition alone from this service."

Key findings include:

- Those receiving and/or requesting Meals on Wheels services are significantly more vulnerable compared to a nationally representative sample of aging Americans.
- Those who received daily-delivered meals experienced the greatest improvements in health and quality of life indicators over the study period compared to the other two groups (individuals who received frozen, weekly-delivered meals and the control group).
- Those receiving daily-delivered meals reported greater benefits from their home-delivered meal experience compared to the group receiving frozen meals.
- Those who lived alone and received daily-delivered meals were more likely to report decreases in worry about being able to remain in home and improvements in feelings of isolation and loneliness over the study period, compared to the other two groups.

For more information, visit www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/MTAM.

Throughout the month-long March for Meals celebration, local Meals on Wheels programs in virtually every community across the country will be holding events, speaking out and recruiting supporters to bolster the vital services they provide to vulnerable seniors. This valuable research will support these programs in making the case for much-needed funding and resources, whether to elected officials, private funders and foundations, or donors. To find a local March for Meals celebration near you, visit www.marchformeals.com.

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About Meals on Wheels America (Formerly Meals On Wheels Association of America)

Meals on Wheels America is the oldest and largest national organization supporting the more than 5,000 community-based senior nutrition programs across the country that are dedicated to addressing senior isolation and hunger. This network exists in virtually every community in America and, along with more than two million volunteers, delivers the nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety checks that enable America's seniors to live nourished lives with independence and dignity. By providing funding, leadership, education and advocacy support, Meals on Wheels America empowers its local member programs to strengthen their communities, one senior at a time. For more information, or to find a Meals on Wheels provider near you, visit www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org.

About AARP Foundation

AARP Foundation is working to win back opportunity for struggling Americans 50+ by being a force for change on the most serious issues they face today: housing, hunger, income and isolation. By coordinating responses to these issues on all four fronts at once, and supporting them with vigorous legal advocacy, the Foundation serves the unique needs of those 50+ while working with local organizations nationwide to reach more people, strengthen communities, work more efficiently and make resources go further. AARP Foundation is AARP's affiliated charity. Learn more at www.aarpfoundation.org.

About Brown University's Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research

The Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research is one of 11 nationally renowned research centers at Brown University's School of Public Health. The Center studies the diverse health and social service needs of elderly and other persons with chronic illnesses. Since the 1980's, its findings been valuable guides for government agencies making decisions regarding policy aimed at improving health and healthcare for our aging and disabled populations.

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