

Mobilizing for Seniors: Toyota Begins Program with Two North Texas-Based Meals on Wheels to Help Serve More in Need

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PLANO, Texas (Feb. 23, 2018) – In the United States, every day more than 10,000 adults turn 65, and one in six struggles with hunger. In the Dallas-Fort Worth Metro area, which has the 10th largest senior population in the U.S., 9% of seniors live below the poverty line and nearly 25,000 households headed by seniors have limited mobility. It's an issue that Toyota, Collin County Meals on Wheels and VNA Texas – Meals on Wheels, are tackling head on.

Toyota is working with both organizations to serve more seniors – the hidden hungry, homebound, aging and unable to access resources like food pantries and grocery stores. Part of the effort includes sharing principles of the Toyota Production System to find improvements in their daily work, including meal production, delivery and volunteer recruitment.

Toyota also deployed a team to advise on the development of technology solutions to promote efficient meal delivery, improve volunteer engagement, and maximize data collection, including health data. The team is working with VNA Texas – Meals on Wheels to build a web and app-based platform, funded through the Lyda Hill Foundation and Toyota. The technology is expected to launch later this year and offer scalability for other Meals on Wheels organizations nationwide.

“Through technology we can help improve the quality of life for seniors, bringing critical services and opportunities to their doors,” said Ryan Klem, Toyota Social Innovation.

Throughout North Texas and across the nation, the number of individuals who rely on Meals on Wheels for their daily nutritional needs is growing. In Dallas County alone, there are more than 6,000 seniors waiting to receive meal service.

“Our aim is to create a solution that can be shared with other Meals on Wheels organizations throughout the country, helping to address the growing need for their services while informing care,” Klem added.

Information gathered during wellness checks will be entered in an app, assisting with timely client follow up and helping to connect clients to vital services. Center for Applied Health Research, part of the Baylor Scott & White Research Institute, is helping to inform and evaluate the program, analyzing the data to help improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable seniors.

“As a health care organization with an 84-year history, VNA is committed to incorporating technology to provide comprehensive care to our growing senior population. Toyota is an ideal partner to leverage their vast expertise with innovative solutions to increase mobility for our homebound neighbors,” said Katherine Krause, president and CEO, VNA Texas. “The work we are doing with Toyota will enhance and expand our partnerships with health care entities to address the social determinants of health in North Texas.”

Toyota also stepped in to join the volunteer ranks. Starting next month, Toyota will deliver meals once a week with Meals on Wheels Collin County to individuals in Plano, part of a year-long volunteer engagement effort.

“This joint effort is a game changer for us,” said Zella Tyson, CEO, Meals on Wheels Collin County. “It allows us to meet needs faster, allocate resources more effectively, and ultimately better serve our current and future clients.”