

Volunteers continue to ensure clients are safe

Editor's note: People on the front line of service during this pandemic are working above and beyond the call of duty to take care of our communities. The Sun's Above and Beyond series features them and those they serve in these trying times.

By MADISON GUYTON

With a mask, gloves and a heart full of faith, retiree Alicia Anderson gives her time to others in need by delivering Meals on Wheels.

Mrs. Anderson is the volunteer coordinator of the Hill Country Bible group and has been working with Meals on Wheels in the Georgetown area for four-and-a-half years.

"[Volunteering] is something that all of us have been waiting to do to serve our community," Ms. Anderson said. "Our families are raised, we're retired from our jobs. There's time for us to give back to the community."

Mrs. Anderson admits that COVID-19 caught the



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Gary Anderson helps his wife Alicia Anderson deliver a meal to Jeanne Ruth. Like other Meals on Wheels volunteers, Ms. Anderson is committed to ensuring the clients she serves are doing well, especially during the pandemic.

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center by surprise, but leader Kelsey Ward quickly devised a plan to help limit contact by providing clients with food to last two weeks. Mrs. Anderson described giant trash bags full of non-perishable food being given to clients.

"Several coordinators and center staff set up an assembly line and took gigantic garbage bags and filled them with canned meats, pantry goods and all kinds of staples that would get them through the next two weeks. Then we came in on Thursday, and we gave each person their own bag so that that would tide them over. They were huge and heavy."

Mrs. Anderson said she and her co-volunteers are taking proper precautions to minimize exposure while delivering meals, but through the fear of the virus, her faith remains in God to keep her and the clients she serves safe. Some

Meals on Wheels customers leave a cooler on their front doorstep for volunteers to deliver their food in and limit contact. Others have worn masks and gloves for protection.

"I said to another client who's in his 60s something about handling the food and I said, 'Do you trust me?' and he said, 'If I don't trust you, who would I trust?' and I go, well, 'God first.' But there's got to be a trust on their side, as well as on our side."

The love and care was clear in Mrs. Anderson's voice when she said how grateful she is to be able to give back to her community and check on her elderly neighbors. She said her first thought when walking up to a client's home is hoping they are OK. The pandemic has not wavered Mrs. Anderson's volunteerism, it has simply updated it.

"[Volunteering] gives back to our hearts and souls because of the people we interact with. There's a total relational aspect that is so precious outside of this

time period. Not only are we giving to them, they're giving back to us."

Mrs. Anderson's customers feel the same. Georgetown resident Jeanne Ruth, 82, and her husband have been receiving Meals on Wheels from Mrs. Anderson and her husband, Gary Anderson, for the past several months.

"[Meals on Wheels] have helped us a great deal. It's been a huge blessing for us," she said. "All of the people there are so kind and considerate, even through all that we've been through, they've never stopped. And we have calls from the main office all of the time to check on us to see that we're doing OK."

Mrs. Ruth said she appreciates the human interaction she gets from Meals on Wheels deliveries.

"It helps to have other people coming to the door, talking to us, even if it's only for a couple seconds." Mrs. Ruth urges people to donate any amount that they can to Meals on Wheels to keep them well funded.

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