



## Older Americans Act Needs Your Support

The meals provided by Minuteman Senior Services, along with other vital services that help older adults stay in their homes, are made possible through funding from the federal Older Americans Act. In Massachusetts alone, Older Americans Act funding allowed agencies across the Commonwealth to serve 8.6 million nutritious meals to older adults last year. These meals were served at congregate luncheon programs in senior centers, elder housing, and other community venues where seniors gather or delivered to older adults in their home through Meals on Wheels.

Participating in the meals program increases the well-being of older adults and offers a key support to help seniors who have difficulty providing meals for themselves remain in their own homes. Statistics collected by the MA Elder Nutrition programs across the state show that close to 67% of the home delivered meals recipients are aged 80 or older and about 75% report the lunch is their main meal of the day. Approximately 25% of respondents report eating less food on days they do not receive meals. Participants also cited improved health: more than 75% reported eating better, feeling better, or having more energy as a result of the nutrition program. With minimal stigma attached, the program also continues to prove successful in reaching those at highest risk for food insecurity.

When the United States Congress reconvenes later this month, the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act will be introduced. Programs in Massachusetts are particularly interested in retaining the ability to purchase USDA commodity food and receive bonus commodity foods for the nutrition program. Massachusetts is a leader in using commodities to ensure food quality and safety and control meal costs. In 2007, the Older Americans Reauthorization Technical Corrections Act as Public Law 109-116 was introduced by the late Senator Kennedy and Senator Roberts (R-KS). This legislation will be at risk unless it is incorporated into this reauthorization.

With the baby boom population increasing at an unprecedented rate, 2012 is a critical year to guarantee the nutrition and health of community dwelling older adults in the state of Massachusetts and across the country. Minuteman Senior Services, joins with groups such as the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) to emphasize the need to keep the vital community and home based services provided by the Older Americans Act by supporting its' reauthorization. The OAA has enjoyed bipartisan support over its more than 45 year history. The 75,000 older adults who received nutritious meals in the Commonwealth last year, represent the importance of ensuring that there is no disruption in the renewal process.

We encourage the community to learn more about the benefits of area nutrition programs by contacting Minuteman Senior Services at 781-272-7177. And let your voice be heard in support of the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act by contacting NANASP:

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