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Pet have their meals delivered too

By Katie Hull • khull@communitypress.com • July 31, 2009

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A healthy and well-fed pet helps make for a happier owner.

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Wesley Community Services' Meals-On-Wheels program provides senior citizens with a nutritionally balanced meal each day, and now with the help of Jams Co. and SPCA, Pet Portions allows for seniors to receive free cat or dog food for their pet too.

The program began in June 2006, when Meals-On-Wheels delivery drivers began to notice something in some of their clients' homes.

"We found out that some of our Meals-On-Wheels clients who have a dog or a cat were sharing their Meals-On-Wheels with their pet," said Stephen Smookler, executive director at Wesley Community Services.

Smookler said that employees at Wesley Community Services knew that the meals they delivered were beneficial for the seniors but they were not proper food for the pet.

"One of the biggest problems with seniors is that they don't take in enough food, so (sharing with their cat or dog) would cut down on the food they take in," said Smookler.

He said there are somewhere between 75 and 100 Meals-On-Wheels recipients receive pet food for their cat or a dog, which is about 20 percent of their clients.

Wesley Community Services understands the importance of a pet in their clients' life, he said, because often times much of their life may revolve around the animal.

"If you're living alone and you have medical problems then that dog or cat is your whole world," said Smookler.

He said that pets bring comfort to seniors and help prevent them from feeling alone.

"Many of our seniors don't have any family members so the pet really is their social connection," said Smookler.

Marleah Nichols, 72, lives in Bridgetown and has been a Meals-On-Wheels for about five years. She also receives Pet Portions.

Nichols' 4-year old pet terrier Caesar receives free Jams dog food from Pet Portions every two weeks, she said.

Nichols has always owned a dog, and can not imagine living without one.

Since she lives alone, Caesar is a major part of her life.

"It's companionship," she said.

When Nichols first took Caesar into her home from the SPCA, he was not in very good health.



Marleah Nichols, 72, plays with Caesar, her 4-year-old pet terrier, who has accompanied her in her Bridgetown home for about three years. Nichols has been pleased with the Pet Portions program, which delivers free Jams dog food to her home every two weeks, and keeps Caesar very happy.

(Katie Hull/Intern)

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"He was sick when I got him and he started in on the food from Wesley right away," said Nichols.

With the food from the program, Nichols has seen an improvement in Caesar's health and energy level.

"It's really convenient," she said. "Plus, it's a good brand of dog food."

"If (the pet) is not doing well, it makes (the owner) unhappy," said Smookler. "So if we can keep the pet fed then we think we've helped our client."

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