

Meals on Wheels marches towards new goal

Walkers raise funds for Meals on Wheels

MENTOR - More than 250 Lake County residents gathered at the Great Lakes Mall March 31 to participate in the 7th annual "March for Meals" event. The Mall was bustling with activity as staff and volunteers from the Lake County Council on Aging greeted supporters in the 8 a.m. hour.

"Every day across Lake County, seniors gather to socialize, exercise and enjoy a hot, nutritious meal at our great senior centers and nutrition sites," said Joseph Tomsick, CEO for the Council on Aging. "For hundreds of other seniors, getting out is difficult, or not possible at all. They are homebound, isolated... they are alone."

March for Meals is an annual fund-raising effort to bring attention to the issue of senior hunger and the local volunteers that make home delivery throughout Lake County possible.

"Imagine what it means when the volunteer driver pulls up. For many homebound seniors, this is their only social contact for the day," Tomsick said.

The Council on Aging delivers close to 2,800 meals every week to seniors across the county.

Brian Rice, honorary chairman for this year's event, counted down for the "march" to commence. Parents, grandparents, small children, fitness buffs, corporate challenge groups and

public officials all began to walk at their own pace.

Leading the march this year was a walking group of 39 from the Visiting Angels, a local homecare assistance company. Forty-eight businesses helped sponsor the event, which also included donated entertainment by "The Dream Team"

Barbershop Quartet, along with Tomsick on the accordion.

"It is a blessing to be part of a team of other drivers who share my desire to build community. I have also formed long-lasting friendships with the dedicated staff at each nutrition site, where the meals are picked up, as well as the professionals at the Lake

County Council on Aging," said Rice.

Walkers were asked to pledge at least \$10. All total, over \$14,000 was raised with all proceeds to be used to support the six nutrition sites in Lake County that serve the Meals on Wheels program.

This year the Council on Aging marks its 40th year in serving the senior population of Lake County.

"We are fortunate to have such a qualified staff and volunteer team that passionately care about the quality of life of Lake County seniors. Our goal is keep seniors safe and independent, and living in their own homes for as long as possible," Tomsick said.

Gazette - 4/13/12