

# HUNGRY FOR ADS

## Meals-on-Wheels sells space on vans to carry out its mission

BY BRADLEY J. FIKES

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Meals-on-Wheels of Greater San Diego is delivering something else this year along with nutrition to people in need: Advertisements.

The nonprofit has sold four ads and hopes to sell an additional 10 for a total of 14 ads on the sides of its seven vans, said Debbie Case, its chief executive. Each ad, costing \$1,000, will be displayed for 12 months.

Case said Meals-on-Wheels is exploring new ways to raise money, and that the ads are part of that search. For a while, the nonprofit experimented with magnetized signs, but that didn't work out.

"Cars are being made with less metal in them, so they were flying off cars," Case said. "So the (California Highway Patrol) wasn't very happy with us."

The nonprofit started carrying the ads nearly a year ago, Case said, and up until now has relied on word-of-mouth to sell them.

She said donations have decreased slightly, so the agency needs to fill that gap.

"We've seen some falling off from some of our tried-and-true donors," Case said. "We live on the small donors, those who give \$25."

Case said the decline doesn't imperil the agency's mission, but it does make it harder to keep up.

"We're dancing as fast as we can," she said.

Meals-on-Wheels started considering window advertising after receiving vans donated by Harrah's and Sycuan casinos that have "fabulous windows on the back."



**Kimberley Hawkins, with Meals on Wheels, left, hands volunteer Edith Jones food to be delivered around the area Monday at the First Presbyterian Church of Oceanside. Advertising located on the back of the vans helps support the nonprofit.** JAMIE SCOTT LYTTLE | jlytle@nctimes.com

"Our vans travel between 30,000 and 35,000 miles a year, all over the county, and we thought this was a great opportunity," Case said. "We rotate our vans, so the mileage evens out."

The money raised goes directly to the Meals-on-Wheels mission of feeding seniors, Case said.

Meals go to those in need 60 and older, twice every day of the week, including holidays. The nonprofit says its North San Diego County branch served 679 seniors in 2009.

It's not just the meals, Case said; the socialization is important for clients, many of whom live alone and may not see another person the entire day.

Nonprofits say they have pulled in less money since the recession began in December 2007.

Americans gave \$307.7 billion to charities in 2008, an inflation-adjusted decline of 5.7 percent from 2007, according to Giving USA, which tracks charitable giving.

With donations harder to

come by, it's not surprising that nonprofits would look for other revenue sources, said William Sannwald, a lecturer in the marketing and management departments of San Diego State University.

Advertising has long been accepted on public transportation, Sannwald said, so having it on nonprofit vehicles is not a great stretch.

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