



**NEWS**

**September 25, 2008**

Contact: Laurie Petrie, Communications Director, 513-345-3393

**Emergency food boxes going out to needy seniors**

**Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio and its Meals on Wheels providers are arranging for an estimated 3,000 boxes of food to be delivered Friday to seniors in need. Volunteers will be packing the food at 5 p.m. today at the Derringer Company, 5530 Fair Lane, Fairfax.**

The delivery is part of an ongoing extra effort that kicked into gear last Tuesday to get shelf-stable meals to as many elderly and disabled people as possible, including all the residents of entire lower-income housing complexes that went without power for days.

Home-delivered meals are part of Council on Aging's mission to help seniors remain safe and independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

Seniors and people with disabilities have been hard hit by the blackout and aftermath. Many lacked a way to keep medications chilled, lost power to emergency response devices, or needed to recharge batteries on medical equipment. While food pantries are overwhelmed with people whose food has spoiled, many seniors cannot take advantage of that help.

"Even if they have a way to get to a food pantry, they can't stand in lines for hours," said Suzanne Burke, Council on Aging CEO. "We're doing everything we can to deliver food to seniors, especially those who can't afford to replace spoiled food or have been eating food that is not safe."

The food box project took shape this week when Tracey Collins, Executive Director of Cincinnati Area Senior Services – a regular Meals on Wheels provider — reported that clients badly need staples that will last several days. On Wednesday, Hamilton County Commissioners approved a motion by Todd Portune to allow up to \$150,000 from the Senior Services Levy to be used for emergency food replenishment. The food boxes contain a nutritionally-balanced array of items designed to last for five days.

With help from the United Way, the Kroger Co. has agreed to provide the food at cost and volunteers from Council on Aging, Cincinnati Area Senior Services, the United Way, and the Emergency Preparedness Collaborative are assembling to pack the boxes today at the Derringer Company in Fairfax. Derringer is a major provider of home-delivered meals through Council on Aging.

The food will be delivered Friday morning by Council on Aging's regular home-delivered meals providers, including Cincinnati Area Senior Services, Wesley Community Services, Senior Independence, Community Services West, Deupree Meals on Wheels, Santa Maria Community

Services, North College Hill Community Senior Center, Colerain Senior Center, Harrison Senior Center and Mayerson Jewish Community Center.

Last week, Council on Aging coordinated the delivery of thousands of shelf-stable meals to seniors who were without power. The help extended not only to COA's home-care clients, but also to other residents of senior apartment buildings and to seniors who called asking for food. In addition to providing for thousands of regular home-delivered meals clients, Council on Aging delivered more than 5,000 meals to needy seniors who are not clients.

"It's still extremely important for people to check on seniors or disabled people in their neighborhoods, especially those living alone, and to offer whatever help is needed," Burke said. We know that has already been happening. It's wonderful to see how people have been reaching out."

Most of the extra meals came from Derringer Co., but because they were themselves without power, COA ordered nearly 1,500 self-heating meals from another source.

Under normal circumstances, Meals on Wheels are delivered chilled or frozen to homebound seniors, and can be heated in a microwave oven. (This preserves their nutritional value, but hot meals are also delivered to those who are especially frail or don't have a microwave oven.) The emergency meals were in a special self-heating package (no equipment required) or shelf-stable, ready-to eat.

In other counties served by Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels providers have been working hard to keep up normal delivery despite power outages. In Butler County, for example, Partners in Prime delivered hot meals to clients without electricity and opened its doors to any senior who could come to the senior center for a meal.

In Warren County, Warren County Community Services continued to deliver meals despite being without power themselves. Care managers and police made home visits to seniors without power in rural areas of the county.

The food box effort is focused on Hamilton County because of the large concentration of seniors living in poverty there. According to census data, about 1 out of every 4 seniors in the city of Cincinnati are living below the official poverty level.

#

### **About Council on Aging**

Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio (COA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults and their families.

Since 1974, COA has been designated by the state of Ohio as the Area Agency on Aging for Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton and Warren counties. COA plans, coordinates, funds and administers programs for an area that is home to more than 252,000 adults age 60 and older.

COA promotes choice, independence, dignity and well-being of older adults through a range of services that help them remain in their homes for as long as possible.

One call to COA links people to the wide variety of agencies, information and programs that serve older adults.

***For Answers on Aging:***  
Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio  
175 Tri County Parkway, Cin, OH 45246

513-721-1025 Toll-free 1-800-252-0155  
E-mail: [info@help4seniors.org](mailto:info@help4seniors.org).  
Website: [www.help4seniors.org](http://www.help4seniors.org)