

Prices Impact Meals on Wheels for Seniors, Pets

New initiative aims to develop and sustain food deliveries across the United States.

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The spike in food and gas prices has taken a toll on senior citizens who depend on home delivery programs in order to feed themselves and their companion animals, according to Meals on Wheels Association of America.

Meals on Wheels programs throughout the nation were forced to cut back on their food deliveries to seniors and their pets this summer because of the increase in the cost of food and gas, MOWAA said. Program volunteers aren't able to make as many food deliveries because they can no longer afford to drive all their routes.

In order to sustain pet food programs to nourish the cats and dogs of seniors, a new initiative was recently launched by MOWAA and the Banfield Charitable Trust, or BCT. By creating We All Love Our Pets, or WALOP, food delivery programs throughout the country will have the opportunity to apply for financial assistance to maintain or develop their pet food program.

The BCT provides gas grants to programs to ensure that seniors and their pets can continue receiving meals. Each grant is \$1,000, said Marley Sweeney-Rave, MOWAA spokeswoman.

She said the grants also can be used to expand existing programs by adding services such as helping with vet visits and teaming up with local schools to start food drives for the program to continue to nourish seniors and their pets.

"Most live alone and the only person they see is their Meals On Wheels volunteer, and the only other person they have in their life is their pet," Sweeney-Rave said. "It's important for the well-being of pets to have the WALOP and Meals On Wheels programs."