

Meals on Wheels serves more than food

By Tammy Hayes

"All in all, we get along," Surva Hicks said recently as she prepared meals in the Luther Green Community Center kitchen.

Her low-key attitude belies the importance of the work she's doing as site manager for the local Meals on Wheels program and the number of people who have come to depend on that work.

The Center has been a Meals on Wheels site since the spring of 1993. The program is one of 12 in Wake County and one of eight that provides both delivered and congregate meals.

Each day, Hicks' husband, volunteer Bill Hicks, loads the town-owned van with 14 complete meals. As he makes his rounds with fellow volunteer Claxton Pennington, several senior citizens gather at the Center for food and fellowship.

Since the program began here, the town has paid for the meal preparation, a cost of \$7,700 per year. Federal government funds will take over those payments beginning July 1. The town will continue to provide use of the Center, which it leases from Shiloh Baptist Church, and of the van, which is also used for senior trips.

Meals on Wheels sites receive funding from a variety of sources, said Vivian Keys, executive director of Meals on Wheels of Wake County.

County and United Way appropriations are among those sources, she explained.

Keys is pleased with the program in Morrisville and the willingness of the town to support it initially.

"There's a nice relationship between the town and our program," she said. "I think we've provided for a particular community of elderly people in Morrisville."

To qualify for the federal money, the town spent about \$2,000 in upgrades. They include tiling the floor in the dining room, providing a portable ramp and enlarging the bathroom to accommodate wheelchairs.

Since its inception, Morrisville's Meals on Wheels program has come to mean more than food to participants. Mrs. Hicks not only prepares food, she serves as activities director for the 16 regular visitors to the Center. Activities have included but not limited to decorating and quilting. The group also takes trips to museums, shopping centers or to Crabtree Lake to fish and picnic.

"We would be taking more walks," Mrs. Hicks said. "It's just that it's been so hot. But we try to do something everyday and find things to keep up everybody's interest."

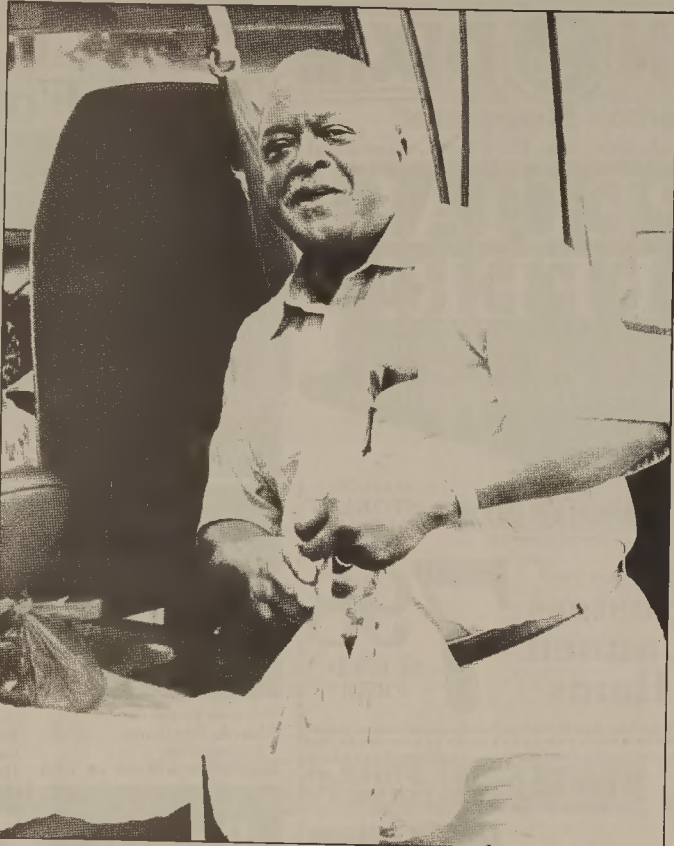
Survey to measure town's quality of life

Morrisville's Economic Development Task Force wants to hear what residents and business owners and managers think about the town's quality of life and economic development.

Approximately 1,000 copies of the survey will be mailed out late this month, reports Mike Allway, the town's community development director. Allway said results of the survey would help the town in planning and accommodating economic growth.

The survey will ask recipients to choose from among 16 categories in ranking the five most important features in the quality of life. They will also be asked to describe the importance of the availability of 25 goods and services, ranging from merchandise such as sporting goods to services such as plumbing.

Respondents will be able to rate eight areas, including roadway systems and employment opportunities, from a quality of life perspective. Town services also will be rated in the areas of road quality, land use planning, police protection, fire protection and recreation.



READY FOR DELIVERY—Bill Hicks, a volunteer for the Morrisville Meals on Wheels program, loads the town van with hot lunches he will deliver to 14 area senior citizens unable to cook for themselves or come to the Luther Green Community Center for lunch.

She admits it's sometimes difficult to keep everyone interested, but she enjoys her position.

"I like seeing faces of people that laugh and enjoy life," she said. "We never have any arguments and everybody seems to like the program."

Mrs. Hicks joined the Meals on Wheels program following retirement because she felt she could make a positive difference in the community.

"They were looking for someone and I had a lot of experience," she said, referring to her work in food services at the MacGregor Village Marriott Hotel. Shortly after she joined the program, her husband volunteered his services.

"I'm proud of him and glad that he's doing it," she said. "The only

time he isn't here is when he's sick or has a doctor's appointment. Other than that he's here everyday."

"I never thought I'd get involved in something that would keep me

this busy," Bill Hicks said with a grin. "At times it's a little hectic, but it wears off."

"We'd rather do this than just sit here all the time. It's a place for everyone to come for fellowship."

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