



Photos by Layla Farmer

Gov. Bev Purdue stands with Nancy Hooper and her daughters, Regina Hooper and Florence France.

FOUR MILLION STRONG

Meals on Wheels celebrates milestone in service to elderly

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Eighty-three-year-old Nancy Hooper received a visit from a distinguished guest Monday.

Gov. Bev Purdue made her way up the steps to Hooper's 28th Street home in the drizzling rain that afternoon, armed with a basket containing Hooper's lunch, the four millionth meal delivered by Meals on Wheels in Forsyth County since its inception in 1962.

"I couldn't be any happier in this moment," Hooper declared as she and the governor sat on the couch, holding hands. "...I feel just like a queen now."

Hooper also expressed her gratitude to Senior Services President Richard Gottlieb.

"There is no greater job in this world than what you're doing," she declared, clasping Gottlieb's hand tightly.

Meals on Wheels Volunteer Bob Stern has been delivering Hooper's meals for the last four years. Stern had to relinquish his duties to the governor Monday, but said he still stopped by "to tease" Hooper about her prominent guest. He and Hooper have become friends over the years, Stern said.

"She's a neat lady," he commented. "I really enjoy chatting with her. She's a very amiable person."

Hooper had nothing but good things to say about the Meals on Wheels program.

"Words will never say it (accurately)," she remarked. "... There is nobody in this world that could be treated any better than I was and I have been (by Meals on Wheels volunteers)."

Hooper's son, Emmanuel Hooper, said it is a load off her three children's minds to know that their mother is well-taken care of by Meals on Wheels volunteers.

"It's great just to know that she's in good hands all the time," he said. "It's a blessing."

Prior to Hooper's special delivery, Meals on Wheels volunteers, staff and supporters gathered at the Senior Services building on Shorefair Drive to take part in a program marking the occasion.

"Four million meals does not just happen with one organization, with one group of people," Gottlieb said. "It takes many dedicated, generous people and a whole lot of partnerships."

Purdue thanked the countless volunteers and donors for their support of the program over the course of its nearly 50-year history.

"You're the silent heroes and heroes of ... North Carolina. The choices you make with your time and your money and your talents make real difference," the governor said. "... We're better because of the time you give and the love you show to help somebody else."

Husband and wife team James and Ruth Corne delivered the organization's one



Volunteers James and Ruth Corne



Gov. Purdue approaches Nancy Hooper's home, meal in hand.

millionth meal in 1992. The couple have been volunteering with Meals on Wheels for more than 30 years, and still make deliveries three to four days a week.

"I just enjoy older people; I just feel like it's something I need to do," said Ruth Corne of her motivation to stick with the program. "... It's such a great feeling to see their faces and their smiles."

Hooper had smiles for everyone Monday, as Senior services staff and members of the media crowded into her

quaint living room. "I'm blessed," she declared, surveying the room. "Words will never express how much I thank each and every one of you."

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