



**Wharton County
Junior College**

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NEWS RELEASE

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STRIDE AND STROLL

WCJC Senior Citizen Program fundraiser provides meals for area's elderly

By delivering hot meals to the area's elderly and homebound, the Wharton County Junior College Senior Citizen Program provides both nourishment and independence to those who otherwise might be unable to make it on their own.

"If they can get a hot meal once a day delivered to them, they can stay in their own home and not have to move to a long-term care facility," said Caroline Osborne, Director of the WCJC Senior Citizen Program.

By having the meals delivered to their door, homebound residents further receive the added benefit of a daily visit from a cheerful staff member. For those who live far away from their relatives, that can be nearly as important as having something to eat.

"We are able to check up on the resident when we make deliveries," said Dale Martinez, Chief Site Manager for the Wharton and Colorado County Senior Citizen Program.

That's proved to be of critical importance in the past. On several occasions, volunteers have arrived at a home to discover the resident injured and unable to reach a phone. In one instance, a resident suffered a stroke and remained slumped over in a living room chair for an entire weekend.

Had it not been for the meal delivery program, there's no telling how long these emergencies may have gone undetected.

"We go beyond just delivering a meal," Martinez said.

The meal program – also known as "Meals on Wheels" – is offered to homebound residents age 60 or older, pending a medical referral and in-home assessment. It's part of several services provided by the Senior Citizen Program. Others include games, activities, health screenings and educational programs, all of which are held at the LaDieu Technology Center, located on WCJC's Wharton Campus. On-site meals are also served there, with transportation provided. Although all services are donation-based, those who cannot afford to make a financial contribution are still provided with services.

Similar services are also provided outside Wharton County, with centers established in Columbus, El Campo, East Bernard, Weimar and Eagle Lake.

This past year, more than 350 seniors were served in Wharton County alone. And those numbers are expected to grow over time.

“People are living longer and so the need is there,” Martinez noted.

Primary funding for the program comes from the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the Department of Aging & Disabilities Services and local donations. Additional funding is contributed by the Wharton County Commissioners Court.

Osborne anticipates a significant shortfall in federal funding this coming year and is hoping to make up a portion of that loss through the annual 5K Stride & Stroll fundraiser. The inaugural event was held in 2013 and raised more than \$7,000.

“It was a good fundraiser and we have decided to continue it,” Osborne said.

Scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 11 in downtown Wharton, the event includes a 5K run and walk, with all proceeds benefitting the WCJC Senior Citizen Program. Prizes will be awarded in several categories. Registration is \$25 per individual (up until Sept. 30) with a late registration fee of \$30 per runner or walker. Discounts are available for families and groups.

Sponsorships are currently being sought in three categories: T-shirt for \$200, Golf Cart for \$100 and Route Sponsor for \$100. Osborne is counting on local individuals and organizations to chip in and make the event even more successful than last year, with a goal of raising \$10,000.

“There is a great need for this fundraiser,” she said.

For additional information on the WCJC Senior Citizen Program, call 979-532-6430. Registration forms are available at the LaDieu Technology Center, 911 Boling Highway.

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