



Connect deeper to our cause! Meet Esther

By: Michelle Brien, Development Coordinator, Prescott Meals on Wheels

As I sit with Esther and her dog Chester in her living room, she is anxiously awaiting the arrival of our youngest volunteer Max and his mom Jenna, as she has a little gift for him for his first day of kindergarten. Little did she know that his older brother Hunter would be joining them today as well as he starts school next week too; so now, Esther is looking for another gift to give to Hunter so he feels included in the gift giving. This warms my heart as I learn that Esther is on a limited income, but giving a little gift shows her appreciation for all that they give her. Esther tells me, "I miss my family and being around children. I love that Max calls me Grandma Esther!" This statement lights up her face. She is happy in this moment.

Esther moved to Prescott in 1994 with her son who had brain cancer and a daughter who used to live 10 houses from her. They have both passed away, leaving Esther, now age 86, on her own. She has four remaining children, seventeen grandchildren and ten great grandchildren; all of whom live back in California with the exception of one grandchild in Southern Arizona. She loves Prescott and doesn't want to move back to California. This is her home and this is where she wants to remain.



Jenna, Max and Hunter arrive with her lunch from Prescott Meals on Wheels and nothing else matters at this moment. Both Esther and Chester greet them in the kitchen giving and receiving hugs. Jenna and Esther catch up on what's happening with one another while the boys play with Chester. I ask Jenna about her involvement as a volunteer and bringing her boys with her. She replied, "I think it's important for them to help others. Most times, the clients we deliver to are happier to see them than me. Max took to Esther immediately and enjoys their visits. He's not a shy kid and loves delivering meals with me every week. It's our thing that we get to do together in the community, and when Hunter isn't in school, he likes to help too." We take a moment to photograph Esther and the boys and the joy that they bring her is priceless.

After retiring 6 years ago at the age of 80, Esther has endured multiple health issues. After being in remission from breast cancer for 5 years, she went in for a final checkup where they

discovered that she had heart issues and was immediately admitted into the hospital. Esther has had surgery on both of her retinas, both of her knees and has arthritis which makes moving around a difficult task. These circumstances led her to needing the services provided by Prescott Meals on Wheels in July of 2017, as she struggles with preparing food daily. “I sometimes forget to eat and my doctor told me that I wasn’t eating properly. My home aid discovered that I had expired food in the pantry that had to be thrown away,” Esther shares with me. She is also concerned that if she fell, what was she going to do? Who could help her?

Around her neck is a help alert button which she recently received through her insurance, as well as a home care aid 10 hours a month who helps her with chores around the house and grocery shopping. Combined with the daily visits from our volunteer drivers, she feels a little more comfortable and secure that she is okay on her own. She smiles with her eyes and holds her hands to heart as she tells me, “I am so grateful for the meals every day and for the friendly and caring volunteers that I get to visit with. And they love to play with Chester and bring him treats.” She counts her blessings every day and she loves the company and companionship. Before I leave, Esther wants to show me her garden. She grabs a stool to sit on as that is how she is able to trim flowers and tend to her plants. She shows me her prized flower, a 4’oclock, which was grown from seeds from her daughter’s funeral. She is grateful that it continues to bloom and brings her peace.

When we are asked what our tagline, “More than a Meal” means, this is a great example. Knowing that we can bring joy and a smile to someone’s face; that we can offer a sense of safety and comfort to someone living alone with limited movement; that we can provide companionship to someone who may not have many visitors in a day.. all while delivering a hot, nutritious meal. This is what we do, this is who we are and this is why we do what we do.

Together, we can deliver more than meal.



Max, Esther and Hunter