

**Remarks for Marcus Lampros**  
**March 5, 2008**  
*Senate Special Committee on Aging, Washington, D.C.*

Senator Smith, Chairman Kohl and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Marcus Lampros and I am a volunteer for Loaves & Fishes Centers, Inc. in Portland, Oregon. Our senior meal program serves 1.3 million Meals-On-Wheels and congregate meals to elders in northwest Oregon and Southwest Washington annually. We accomplish this service with a \$9 million operating budget, 45% of which is supported from governmental sources. We are one of the few programs in the nation that does *not* have a waiting list for meals.

Loaves & Fishes Centers' Board of Directors has been planning for the aging of the baby boomers for the past 15 years, constructing a state-of-the-art kitchen in 2003 and upgrading meal sites. We are experiencing significant demands for nutritional support and project that we will *double* the number of meals we serve by 2019. Our kitchen, one of the largest nonprofit facilities in the nation, can prepare 10,000 meals daily or more than 2.5 million meals each year.

I became involved with Loaves & Fishes Centers when a senior, who was a community leader in our neighborhood, asked me to volunteer to deliver Meals-On-Wheels in 1990. Thelma Skelton had created a senior meal program prior to the Older American's Act and prior to the establishment of Loaves & Fishes Centers. Thelma influenced me as a young man to truly be part of my community. I have been active in the meal program since then and it was my honor in 2006 to chair a capital campaign to build a new meal site in Southeast Portland named Thelma Skelton Loaves & Fishes Center.

Let me tell you about our typical client. She lives alone in her own home, and often lacks the income to buy all the food she needs to maintain an adequate diet. Once accustomed to cooking for a large family, she is no longer motivated to cook or care for herself. She's lonely and isolated and lacking transportation to access basic services. She may be experiencing mild dementia. Due to long-term poor nutrition she may have mental issues that cloud her judgment. Loaves & Fishes Centers' 35 meal sites, which typically serve low-income seniors, are gathering places where our elders can remain connected to the community.

Our community-based Meals-On-Wheels program gives homebound seniors the option to remain healthy and independent and in their own home. Meals-On-Wheels clients lack access to food because of an impairment or disability not always because of a financial need. Without this valuable basic service of a hot meal and daily visit by a volunteer, hospital discharge planners and case managers would be forced to place elders in very costly care facilities.

Loaves & Fishes Centers depends on 7,500 volunteers every year to serve and deliver meals. Many of them are seniors themselves, giving back with purposeful and meaningful work in their communities. Each day, 500 volunteers work at our local meal sites and deliver hot meals to homebound seniors.

As a business owner I believe Meals-On-Wheels provide a conduit to the community. It provides individuals the ability to directly volunteer in their neighborhood and for their city. This

volunteerism grows in numbers as local companies see how simple it is to make a difference. At my business, Lampros Steel, we have adopted a route in our neighborhood. Each Wednesday someone from our office delivers meals to 20 homebound seniors. During our first delivery, one of my employees commented, “You mean to tell me someone has been driving around this area for the last 10 years delivering meals and we haven’t even noticed?” I am proud to say as an individual and as a business owner our participation in the largest volunteer organization in the city brings us all a sense of satisfaction.

Someone from my accounting department calculated that if each of the 7,500 Loaves & Fishes Centers volunteers worked four hours a week, 50 weeks a year at \$15 an hour it calculates to 1.5 million *free* hours or \$22 million of *free* labor per year! This, in itself, tells all of you and prospective donors that we are a good investment.

Throughout my 18 years of service with Loaves & Fishes Centers, I have seen approximately 100 people spend the last years of their lives at home. I delivered meals to Joe and Helen for 10 years. Joe was disabled and in a wheel chair and Helen was healthy and caring for him—they were very poor. One day, Helen died suddenly leaving Joe all alone. Joe, in tears, told me that his wife was all he had and now that she was gone he would have to move to a nursing home. I told him that he could stay at home if he found a roommate – pointing out to him that he had a spare bedroom. In turn, this person could help pay the rent and take care of the incidental things Joe needed. Most of all I would still be there to deliver his meals. Joe lived at home for another five years.

Another meals recipient, Judy, would leave her door open and let me come in and put her meal on a TV tray. All day long she knitted sweaters and scarves for her relatives, always sitting and sleeping in the same chair throughout the day. Once a day someone would come by and check on her—not spending too much time. Last summer she turned 100 years young and finally had to move to an assisted care home. Without hot meals each day, Judy would have had to move many years before.

I also deliver to little Isabelle who stands just 4’9”. Recently, as she walked wearily to unlock the security door to let me in with her meal, she fell right before my eyes and hit her head on the glass door. Isabelle knew that if she was to stay in her home, she would have to get up and unlock the door to let me in. With a black eye and bump on her head, she did just that! I am still checking on her and delivering to her each week. She is my longest stay-at-home recipient—I have been delivering to her for more than 12 years!

These are just a few stories of the seniors I see each week. Without our volunteer services most of the people we deliver to would have to find nursing homes or other government services to fulfill their daily needs. I am very proud of our organization and believe that it is the model for the entire country. By sharing my stories with friends and relatives, it seems each week someone I know wants to volunteer to make a difference. Loaves & Fishes Centers, The Meals-On-Wheels People in Portland Oregon is the difference. We are laying the foundation for a future generation, an unprecedented numbers of elderly. With our help each one will have the opportunity to spend more time in their own home as they grow older.