

BUTLER COUNTY

## Meals service wins acclaim

Butler County Meals on Wheels focus of monthlong celebration.

By Wayne Baker  
Staff Writer

HAMILTON — Some residents who rely on the area's Meals on Wheels program were greeted by an additional visitor Monday when they received their meal delivery.

A mix of social agency workers, elected officials and residents helped to deliver meals during a special event held as part of the 14th annual March for Meals — a month-long, nationwide celebration of Meals on Wheels and the home-bound and vulnerable people who rely on the safety net.

Hamilton Mayor Patrick Moeller attended Monday's event and he called the program vital for those who need the nutritious meals delivered each day.

"Meals on Wheels accomplishes many goals ... nutritious meals for seniors, keeps seniors in their homes as opposed to nursing homes, provides face-to-face contact between those who deliver meals and the recipients for health and safety checks, and saves millions of dollars in Medicare and Medicaid expense," Moeller said. "It is a quality program run by quality people."

Amy Wylie, vice president of Community Based Services at Community First, said she was glad to see the community respond and interact with the recipients when they went out with drivers on their routes.

"As one of the largest providers of this service in Butler County, we delivered 145,501 meals last year. This year, we are delivering about 3,300 meals per week," she said.

"We touch lots of lives with this program, and the impact is enormous for the community."

The drivers used to be all-volunteer, according to Melissa Knueven of Community First.

"About a year ago, we transitioned into making them paid employees in order to maintain more consistent drivers and wellness checks with recipients," she said.

Mitchell Willis, director of development for Shared Harvest Foodbank, said the Meals on Wheels program does more than deliver food.

"It's a wonderful blessing when you're greeted at the door by a smiling face waiting to share words of kindness with you," he said.

Liz Hayden, Hamilton's business development specialist, saluted the drivers during Monday's event.