

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:** Rebecca Roberts

[robertsr@elderaffairs.org](mailto:robertsr@elderaffairs.org)

850-414-2142

## **In Case You Missed It: Governor Ron DeSantis Delivers the 100,000<sup>th</sup> Meal to Seniors in Viera, Florida as Part of the Department of Elder Affairs Restaurant Meal Initiative**

*The Pilot Program for DOEA's Restaurant Meal Initiative Delivers its 100,000<sup>th</sup> Meal Through the Meals of Love Program*

**TALLAHASSEE** – Governor Ron DeSantis assisted in the delivery of the 100,000<sup>th</sup> meal to homebound seniors through a pilot program established by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) in partnership with the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) and the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA).

As of June 6, the DOEA Restaurant Meal Initiative has delivered over 600,000 meals to seniors throughout the state. The Meals of Love Program, serving Central Florida, was one of the first areas to begin delivery. Meal number 100,000 was delivered with the assistance of Governor DeSantis to a husband and wife living in the Viera neighborhood with food prepared from el Leoncito restaurant.

“Governor DeSantis has helped to facilitate this process and allowed restaurants and food establishments to become emergency meal vendors for Florida’s seniors who are homebound or self-isolating for protection,” said Richard Prudom, Secretary for the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. “We’ve ensured that any older adult who received a meal from a congregate site that is now closed for safety, continues to receive a home-delivered meal and food reassurance through this program.”

Meals of Love is the restaurant initiative serving homebound seniors in Brevard, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties through the Senior Resource Alliance (SRA) located in Orlando. The SRA has provided up to 2,500 restaurant prepared meals in one day.

“Drivers deliver more than a meal,” said Senior Resource Alliance CEO Karla Radka. “They deliver hope and human contact to vulnerable seniors and in many cases the meals include a small note, a puzzle, or a letter to keep seniors engaged and aware that they are not alone.”

“This program saved my kitchen staff,” said restaurant owner Mike Sanchez. “Without Meals of Love we had 3 staff and now we have 12 full-time staff in the kitchen alone. We’re able to keep operations going and our former unemployed servers are now delivering.”

4040 Esplanade Way, Tallahassee, FL 32399-7000

Phone: (850) 414-2000 | Fax: (850) 414-2004 | TDD: (850) 414-2001

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DOEA's 11 Area Agencies on Aging throughout the state continue to work with local volunteers and other local service providers to ensure meal delivery to Florida's most vulnerable population. Meal delivery by volunteers and other local organizations also combats social isolation of seniors by providing the simple interaction of food delivery to the doorstep of an elder.

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***About the Florida Department of Elder Affairs***

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the State Unit on Aging, helps Florida's elders to remain healthy, safe, and independent. The Department provides most direct services through its Division of Statewide Community-Based Services, which works through the state's eleven Area Agencies on Aging and local service providers to deliver essential services to a vital segment of the population. For more information, please visit [www.elderaffairs.org](http://www.elderaffairs.org).

