



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Jen Paul Schroer, Cabinet Secretary
Sarah Jacobs, Deputy Secretary
Antoinette Vigil, Deputy Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12, 2024

ALTSD Contact:

Joey Long, PhD
Public Information Officer
Joey.long@altsd.nm.gov

New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services celebrates 52nd anniversary of Senior Nutrition Program

Local Program emphasizes importance of nutritious meals to overall health and well-being

SANTA FE – This March, the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) joins the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and senior nutrition service providers across the country to celebrate the 52nd anniversary of the national Senior Nutrition Program with the theme, “Connection in Every Bite.”

Since 1972, the Senior Nutrition Program has supported nutrition services for older adults. Funded by the Older Americans Act, local senior nutrition programs serve as hubs for adults (60 and older) to access nutritious meals and other vital services that strengthen social connections and promote health and well-being.

Nationally, up to half of adults 65 and over are at risk of malnutrition, with more than 10 million facing hunger. According to the US Census Bureau and Feeding America, New Mexico has the highest rate of senior poverty and the fifth highest rate of food insecurity for adults ages 60 and over. In communities throughout the U.S. - including New Mexico - our older adults sometimes lack access to the high-quality and nutritious food they need to remain healthy and independent.

“This annual celebration serves as a reminder of the critical role nutrition plays in maintaining the health and well-being of older adults,” said ALTSD State Nutritionist **Ophelia Steppe**. “Access to proper nutrition helps with maintaining energy levels, managing chronic conditions and supporting overall health. Unfortunately, some older adults face challenges in accessing these nutritious foods due to factors such as limited mobility, fixed incomes, and lack of transportation or nearby markets.”

As part of the Senior Nutrition Program network, ALTSD and New Mexico Grown help older adults throughout the state by promoting healthy eating, decreasing social isolation, and improving access to quality foods. These programs also provide connections to home and community-based services that can support independence and overall health.

“New Mexico’s older adults rely on the Senior Nutrition Programs, not only for the nutritional value of the food, but also for the socialization that they get from attending some of the community meal sites,” said ALTSD Aging Network Director **Denise King**. “During fiscal year 2023, the aging network served over 3.6 million meals to older New Mexicans. The theme of this year’s senior nutrition program month, ‘Connection in every bite,’ means

that ALTSD and the local area agencies on aging are here to connect older adults with the local and community-based food service providers.”

For more than 50 years, senior nutrition services have helped create healthy, strong communities where all members can flourish regardless of age. New Mexicans can join in the celebration of Senior Nutrition Month by participating in themed events over the month of March, such as cooking demonstrations, educational workshops, and resources to empower seniors to make healthier food choices.

To learn more about what the Department offers and to find out how you can support or take advantage of senior nutrition, visit aging.nm.gov. For more information about the anniversary of the Senior Nutrition Program, visit ACL.gov/SNP/celebrate.

The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) was established in 2004 to provide advocacy, support, and resources for seniors and adults with disabilities. The department oversees the state's Area Agencies on Aging to elevate the quality of care at senior centers, offers advocacy through the Long-Term Care Ombudsman volunteer program, and provides intervention through the agency's national award-winning Adult Protective Services. Additionally, ALTSD houses the state's Aging and Disability Resource Center, which offers options counseling, education, and connection to resources. For more information about ALTSD, visit aging.nm.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#), [X \(Twitter\)](#), and [Instagram @NewMexicoAging](#).

###