

Six heroes bring meals to Banner Olive Branch seniors during volunteer shortage



SUN CITY, Ariz. (March 27, 2020) – Facing a massive shortage of volunteers who normally serve 400 meals a day at [Banner Olive Branch Senior Center](#), six volunteer heroes are stepping up to do the same work typically done by 200 volunteers.

Nearly all of Banner Olive Branch's volunteers are 60 years of age or older, placing them at higher risk for COVID-19 and forcing them to stay home. The six volunteers still serving seniors are younger than 60.

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"Those handful of volunteers are making sure we continue to serve meals and distributing perishable and non-perishable food items to the elderly residents in our local communities," said Dawn Gielau, director of Banner Olive Branch. "We have been following all federal and state health guidelines to make sure everyone is safe."

On a normal day, Banner Olive Branch can host anywhere from 100 to 150 elderly residents with meals, meetings and events. With COVID-19 safety precautions, the center is no longer hosting these activities. Instead, the small group of volunteers is preparing and delivering homemade, pre-packaged meals to about 400 senior citizens in the local communities served by the center.

In addition, the Senior Center opens its food pantry from 11 a.m. to noon Monday through Friday, so elderly residents can stock up on necessities such as canned goods, fruits, vegetables and other items.

"We knew it would be a challenge to serve with less volunteers," Gielau said. "But through our partnership with Saint Mary's Food Bank, we've been able to continue serving food to those senior citizens who need it the most."

Banner Olive Branch is accepting monetary donations:

- **Online:** give.bannerhealth.com/olivebranch
- **Mail:** Banner Health Foundation/Olive Branch, 2901 N Central Ave., Suite 160 Phoenix, AZ 85012
- **Phone:** Call 602-747-4483 to make a gift by phone

Banner Olive Branch Senior Center has been serving the Sun Cities and surrounding communities since 1988. The senior center offers a variety of social and educational programs, as well as support services, including a home-delivered meal program, daily congregate lunches, health and wellness classes and a pantry program supported by donations from the community. For information about Banner Olive Branch Senior Center, visit www.BannerHealth.com/olivebranch.

For further information: media@bannerhealth.com

<http://bannerhealth.mediaroom.com/olivebranchmeals>