

Red Cross volunteers bring more than meals to shut-ins

By LAURIE PELLICHERO
Special to The Times

In January 2002, when Joan McKee could no longer prepare meals for herself, her daughter Mickey contacted the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey to enroll her mother in the organization's Meals on Wheels program.

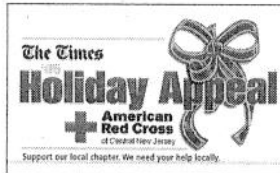
Mickey thought this would give her mother a measure of independence in her Princeton home while ensuring that she would receive a warm meal every Monday through Friday.

But she ended up receiving so much more.

"I've been involved with many different volunteer groups, but I've never encountered more caring and extraordinary volunteers that the Red Cross Meals on Wheels volunteers," said Mickey McKee. "My mom truly looked forward to the Red Cross volunteers coming. She knew who was coming on what day."

Joan McKee and the Meals on Wheels volunteers developed a special friendship to a degree that Mickey was not aware of until after her mother's death this past November.

"Mrs. McKee was grace-filled," said Linda, a 15-year-old Meals on Wheels volunteer. "It was a joy to visit her. I was



bringing her the meal but she was giving me so much more."

On one of her deliveries, Linda said she brought a videotape of "The Sound of Music" and watched it with Joan.

Mickey learned that volunteers would make Joan the last delivery on their route, just so they could spend some extra time with her.



Joan McKee

"I knew they were special people," said Mickey. "One volunteer even helped me when I had to transport my mom to the hospital."

"These volunteers reached out to me when I really needed help after my mom passed away," she said. "More than just the food, Meals on Wheels is all about the people who deliver."

Volunteers for the Red Cross Home Delivered Meals programs deliver well-balanced, nutritious meals to those who are homebound and/or unable to prepare meals for themselves. Most programs can also accommodate clients with die-

tary restrictions.

Areas served include the Princetons, Hightstown, East Windsor, West Windsor, Cranbury, Plainsboro, Rocky Hill, Trenton, Hamilton, Ewing and surrounding communities.

The American Red Cross of Central New Jersey delivered more than 47,756 meals to 359 eligible Mercer County residents last year.

If you, or someone you know, can benefit from the Red Cross Home Delivered Meals programs, call toll-free (877) 808-2800.

Funds from this year's Times' Holiday Appeal will be used to support the services and programs of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey.

The Times deducts no overhead expenses. All money goes directly to the designated non-profit agency.

To make a donation in support of the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey, please make your check payable to The Times Holiday Appeal and mail or hand deliver it to: 500 Perry St., Box 847, Trenton, NJ 08605. To make a donation online, visit www.redcross.org

All gifts will be acknowledged. Anonymity, if requested, will be granted.

For more information about the American Red Cross of Central New Jersey, please call (609) 951-8550 or visit the Web site at www.niredcross.org.