

April 7, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the pleasure of working with Kitchen Angels over the past 18 months. I am a Registered Clinical Dietician employed with the Veterans Administration here in Santa Fe and I work with a cohort of predominantly elderly Veterans. I am a member of a primary care team consisting of a Physical Therapist, Certified Nurse Practitioner, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and a doctorate-level Registered Nurse. We collectively provide primary care services to homebound Veterans who, due to one or more chronic debilitation medical conditions, can no longer come to the VA clinic to receive medical care. We provide all of our services in the comfort of the Veteran's own home to improve their quality of life and to help them maintain their independence for as long as medically possible.

Nutrition is an integral part of health and when high-quality nutritious food is lacking, the Veteran's overall health picture deteriorates. Nutrition is the first true medicine to promote wellness. The expression "you are what you eat" could not be more appropriate. I have seen firsthand that what we choose to put into our bodies can either help or harm us.

Many of the Veterans I see in the home care setting are food insecure and all suffer from various disease states which negatively impact their health. Common diagnoses for this population include diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, dementia, congestive heart failure, chronic kidney disease, and abnormal weight loss. Many are edentulous and need a soft diet. Meals on Wheels, which is a vital and wonderful organization serving needy individuals, unfortunately does not have the resources or capability of individualizing the meals they serve to cater to the highly variable individual needs of their clients. Kitchen Angels, however, does have this capability. It is a true blessing to the Santa Fe community, to myself as a Clinical Dietitian, and to our entire Home Based Primary Care Team to be able to refer our medically complex, homebound Veterans to Kitchen Angels for the provision of meals. "The proof is in the pudding" as they say, and this could not hold more true than for the lab work of Veterans pre- and post-Kitchen Angels meals.

Analyzing lab values and translating them into a comprehensive, individualized nutritional plan of care for each patient is integral to my role as a dietitian. Because of Kitchen Angels, I have seen patients' lab values change for the better. One Veteran, for example, saw his hemoglobin A1C (a marker of blood glucose control in diabetes) drop from 10.4%—which is far too high—to 7.5%—which is within recommendations in a matter of months after he began receiving Kitchen Angels meals. This was truly amazing and his physician was very pleased with these results. His current A1C in fact is 6.1%, which is actually considered within the "pre-Diabetes" range. These improvements must be credited in large part to Kitchen Angels nutritious meals.

Several of my other referrals have not only gained needed weight after significant, undesirable loss, they have also seen their Diabetes-related labs improve significantly, including their kidney function improving. With these improvements, Veterans are able to live longer, healthier, and

at a higher quality of life than without them. These improvements are due in large part to what they put into their bodies as far as food. I cannot say enough how grateful I am for the Kitchen Angels program and I hope one day to be on their team of dedicated volunteers. They truly live up to their name and each and every Veteran I have referred to them has expressed their overwhelming gratitude to this agency for improving their health.