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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**OHIO SENATOR VERNON SYKES VISITS MEALS ON WHEELS OF NORTHERN OHIO
AT VANTAGE AGING**

Akron, Ohio (January 25, 2018) On Friday, January 19TH, VANTAGE Aging (formerly Mature Services) welcomed Ohio State Senator Vernon Sykes, at their Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio congregate dining site on White Pond Drive. VANTAGE is an Akron-based agency that provides programs to help older adults maintain their independence and age in place. At the first of the year, VANTAGE announced their new name and vision--promoting a positive outlook on aging.

According to Senator Sykes, his purpose in visiting the site was to meet with the Meals on Wheels leaders, staff and clients to determine how he can support the program at the State government level. Senator Sykes learned about the Meals on Wheels program when he received nearly 100 paper plates signed by Akron clients during the Meals on Wheels America #SaveLunch campaign.

Please Don't
Take our food
AWAY!!!!

RENEE



“It was an honor to welcome Senator Sykes to our Meals on Wheels program,” said VANTAGE President/CEO Karen Hrdlicka. “We hope that his visit helps raise awareness about the crucial need to continue funding programs that address the needs of seniors. Older adults are a vital part of the fabric of our communities, and

recognizing their value will be increasingly important as the Baby Boomer population grows.”

Annually, VANTAGE Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio serves over 264,000 meals to about 640 homebound seniors and people with disabilities. The program also serves over 30,000 congregate meals each year.

Several Meals on Wheels clients spoke to Senator Sykes about why they need Meals on Wheels. Many expressed that the program allows them to enjoy healthy meals and socialization that would otherwise not be available to them due to income levels and mobility issues. Congregate diner Carol Wright, 60, said, “You go to work, get a job, an education, and when you become a senior—nothing.”

Catherine Madden, 68, another congregate diner, talked about the difficulties of living on a fixed income, from receiving healthy meals to covering necessary health care costs like hearing aids.

After Catherine expressed her concerns about losing Meals on Wheels services, Senator Sykes told her, “I’m going to do everything I can to continue these kinds of programs.”



Photo: VANTAGE Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio Client Catherine Madden, 68, tells Senator Sykes about the need for Meals on Wheels and other programs that assist older adults living on a fixed income.

Leaders at VANTAGE talked to Senator Sykes about how they are working on getting the word out about proposed budget cuts to the Older Americans Act, and the drastic consequences to seniors if cuts are approved. They stressed how federal grants play a large role in meeting the growing needs of seniors in the area.

In aggregate, the Older Americans Act covers 33% of the total cost to provide meals, safety checks, and friendly visits to more than 83,500 seniors. Meals on Wheels programs depend on contributions from state, local, private donations and other resources to cover the rest.

Senator Sykes is a strong advocate on improving life for society's most vulnerable, including prevention of child abuse, Medicaid cuts, housing discrimination against people with disabilities, and making higher education more affordable.

At the Meals on Wheels congregate dining site, Sykes promised he will do everything he can at the state level to continue these programs. On January 19, Sykes Tweeted, "It was such a pleasure to visit the Meals on Wheels congregate dinner site this afternoon in Akron. Meals on Wheels provides an invaluable service to our area. We are lucky to have such dedicated people like President and CEO of VANTAGE Meals on Wheels Karen Hrdlicka and their Director of Nutrition Catherine Lewis-Beverly."

With just small supports, older adults can age in place in their homes. VANTAGE Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio is one of the fastest growing programs in Summit County to address food insecurity in older adults. Federal funding cuts would be devastating to the health and wellness of the seniors served.



Photo: Senator Sykes with VANTAGE President/CEO Karen Hrdlicka (left) and VANTAGE Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio Program Director Catherine Lewis (right).



Photo: Senator Sykes had lunch at the VANTAGE Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio congregate dining site and talked with resident Beverly Epling.

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About VANTAGE Aging/ Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio

Meals on Wheels of Northern Ohio is a program of VANTAGE Aging (formerly Mature Services). VANTAGE provides high quality programs that promote a positive perspective on aging. Our programs include Home Wellness Solutions, Behavioral Health Solutions, Workforce Solutions, Meals on Wheels, and the RSVP volunteer program. For more information visit www.vantageaging.org, or you may call the Meals on Wheels program at 330-785-9770.