

October 13, 2026

3rd Annual

Garden State Conference on Food Security



**Office of the
Food Security
Advocate**

Closing the Gap for Older Adult Food Access



Heather deJong

Panelist

**Deputy Executive Director
Meals on Wheels of Ocean County**

Heather deJong is passionate about her work with seniors, allowing them to age safely and independently where they are most comfortable: home.

She serves as Deputy Executive Director for Meals on Wheels Ocean County, where she helps implement organizational strategy, strengthen community and stakeholder relationships, build capacity, and advance the mission of More Than Meals – Community, Care, Connection.

A results-oriented nonprofit professional with more than 20 years of experience, Heather brings extensive expertise in administration, finance, budgeting, development, grant writing, marketing, community engagement, advocacy, event planning, and strategic planning. Her work includes cultivating partnerships with elected officials, community leaders, funders, and local organizations to expand awareness, build consensus, and support programs that serve older adults across New Jersey.

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In addition to her leadership role with Meals on Wheels Ocean County, Heather provides grant writing and development support to Meals on Wheels and Habitat for Humanity organizations throughout New Jersey.

She also serves as Treasurer of the Meals on Wheels New Jersey Association, where she is advocating for legislation that prioritizes community-based organizations in nutrition service contracts under the Older Americans Act.

Heather is also active in public service, having served as a Council Member in the Township of Brick for three terms, including two years as Council President. Her combination of nonprofit leadership, civic engagement, and advocacy gives her a unique perspective on the needs, strengths, and opportunities of Meals on Wheels programs and the communities they serve.

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Malikah Morris

Panelist

**Deputy Director,
Burlington County Department of Human Services**

Malikah C. Morris serves as the Deputy Director of the Burlington County Department of Human Services.

In this role, she oversees Community Outreach, Community Development, Food Security, and Housing Services, directing systems and initiatives that support more than 450,000 residents. Ms. Morris has led several transformative efforts in Burlington County, including the establishment of the Burlington County Housing Hub, serving as a principal contributor to the development of the County's first emergency shelter, and implementing inaugural housing, health, and utility resource fairs that have collectively supported thousands of residents. She has also directed major food access initiatives, including the County's emergency food distribution partnership that served over 48,000 residents during the pandemic and earned Burlington County recognition as the first government recipient of the Feeding South Jersey Champion Award. In 2025, she strengthened long-term food access infrastructure by piloting the Burlington County Food Hub.

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Panelist

**Deputy Director,
Burlington County Department of Human Services**

Her commitment to equity extends across multiple domains. Ms. Morris has led initiatives that improve maternal health outcomes, expand domestic violence services, enhance public building accessibility, support youth-centered prevention, and advance diversity within law enforcement recruitment.

Her initiatives are known to contribute meaningful and measurable improvements in community health and well-being.

Ms. Morris earned Bachelor's degrees in English and Spanish from Hampton University; a Master of Public Administration, with specializations in International Public Service and Community Development, from Rutgers University; and a certification in Diversity and Inclusion from Cornell University. Her leadership in human services, public affairs, and community development has received recognition locally and nationally, including her selection to South Jersey's Inaugural Top 30 Under 35.

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Cathy Rowe

Panelist

**Executive Director
NJ Advocates for Aging Well**

Cathy Rowe joined NJAAW as Executive Director in May 2021.

In her role as Executive Director, Dr. Rowe has partnered with many organizations to bring an aging-in-all-polices lens to New Jersey. She is the chair of the Lifelong Strong NJ campaign and has a leadership role in the Age Friendly NJ Statewide Collaborative efforts and works in partnership with several organizations serving NJ's older residents. Dr. Rowe organizes NJAAW's annual conference, the largest age-focused conference in the state and produces NJAAW's YouTube show and podcast, Aging Insights.

Previously, Dr. Rowe served as Coordinator for SOMA (South Orange/Maplewood): Two Towns for All Ages, bringing both South Orange and Maplewood into the AARP Network of Livable Communities.

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She has spoken extensively on aging issues in Trenton, at conferences, symposia, and webinars.

In 2020, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging presented her with a “Best Practices for Socially Engaging Older Adults Award” for the “Repair Café” she established – the first of its kind in NJ. Her earlier work includes food insecurity, chronic illness management, government health programs, and private health insurance

Dr. Rowe earned her DrPH in Health Policy and Management from Columbia University, where she received a Fellowship in Public Policy at the School of International and Public Affairs. Her BA in Economics is from Bates College.