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*“Each team member is connected by a sincere belief that we can partner to abolish senior hunger and eliminate isolation.”*

—TRIO COMMUNITY MEALS

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# Wrapped Up in Something Big

FeedMore Western New York’s Meals on Wheels program is making a huge impact on food security among local seniors with the help of an Ishida WM-Ai automatic wrapper.

FeedMore Western New York’s (WNY) Meals on Wheels program has dramatically improved efficiency after implementing an Ishida WM-Ai automatic wrapper in their production processes. The road to this solution was not simple, but choosing to work toward eliminating food insecurity and isolation was.

The Meals on Wheels program of Buffalo, New York, USA, was founded in 1969 and has been reducing food insecurity by delivering nutritious meals to senior residents in their area ever since. Being “food insecure” means having limited or uncertain access to safe and nutritionally essential foods. According to the USDA, having “very low food security” is indicated by multiple occurrences of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake,

which may mean missing meals or not having access to enough food to survive. As of 2017, nearly 8 million Americans who are age 65 or older face the threat of food insecurity.

FeedMore WNY partnered with TRIO Community Meals, who is dedicated to providing reliable meal delivery services. TRIO Community Meals has over 50 years of experience providing nutritionally balanced meals to seniors who are homebound or living in senior centers. Supplying healthy meals and friendship to vulnerable seniors is a passion that inspires every devoted TRIO team member. Everyone is united by the sincere belief that by working together, senior hunger and isolation can be eliminated.

FeedMore WNY’s Meals on Wheels program provides 4,000 meals every day to senior citizens throughout Buffalo and 28 surrounding communities. With numerous citizens depending on them, FeedMore WNY and TRIO Community Meals continually seek ways to improve meal quality and production efficiency. They also wanted to reduce employee strain caused by the repetitive motion of manually wrapping every meal. Stretching film, filling trays and carefully wrapping contents with a neat, secure seal by hand is a time-consuming, exhausting process. Hand-wrapping the meals was an all-day task for four people and often led to sore muscles; they needed a better solution to continue serving their community successfully.

Rose Ashraf, Operations Director for TRIO Community Meals, researched several automatic wrappers and said a competitor’s product didn’t make the cut. Continuous problems with operations led the team to return the product. Ashraf continued researching products and suppliers, seeking an automatic wrapper that would

be reliable, easy to use and consistently produce an attractive seal—with the added benefit of local training and support. After reviewing Ashraf's research, the TRIO and FeedMore WNY teams decided the Ishida WM-Ai automatic wrapper was exactly what they were looking for. They chose Rice Lake Weighing Systems because of their supportive service representative and Rice Lake retail products distributor, Gregg Barren.

Ashraf says they've been working with Barren, owner of Independent Saw in New York, since they first began considering the WM-Ai automatic wrapper. Barren has been in the industry since 1987 and working with Ishida products since 2006. He took Ashraf to a site using a similar Ishida wrapper where she tested products used by TRIO Community Meals and FeedMore WNY. She was ecstatic with the wrapper's neat, presentable seal for every tray. The support Barren provides, coupled with the affordability of the WM-Ai from Rice Lake, were also key factors in the decision. During the installation, Gregg Barren worked side-by-side with a Rice Lake representative and discovered minor issues concerning where food was being placed on the trays. "He had a couple good suggestions on packaging and placement of their apples and oranges—I mean literally apples and oranges," Barren explained when describing the WM-Ai tray alignments. Barren added that when it comes to Ishida wrappers, he is like the Maytag Man: Once they are installed, he rarely gets service calls because they are reliable and easy to use. Additionally, Barren provided comprehensive on-site training and visited FeedMore WNY every day for two weeks, ensuring their WM-Ai was operating properly. Ashraf added that Barren has also been quick to respond to any wrapper needs. This support and teamwork enhanced the quality of the delivered meals, which also elevated the senior dining experience.

The wrapper's speed also impressed Ashraf. Able to wrap up to 35 trays per

minute, the Ishida WM-Ai automatic wrapper also has three variable infeed speed options to prevent items from toppling or spilling during wrapping. But the WM-Ai is also easy to clean if there does happen to be a spill. A film pre-stretching function helps ensure a neat, secure wrap every time. Each container is safely and reliably wrapped on its tray, no matter what's on the menu.

TRIO Community Meals and FeedMore WNY's Meals on Wheels program began using the WM-Ai in the fall of 2017, and within two years, they had wrapped and delivered over 1 million meals. While it took some getting used to, the WM-Ai users all agree they love it; Ashraf says their favorite part is that it does everything they need. Before using the WM-Ai, manually wrapping trays was a day-long process that resulted in slow production in other process areas. After beginning to use the WM-Ai, however, the employees who once spent their days wrapping trays by hand can now support other areas of production.

The WM-Ai easily accommodates different-sized trays and containers for a variety of meal options. Ashraf is also pleased with the wrapper's dependability. "It's very reliable, simple to operate, and it works like a machine! Which is what it is," she laughed as she explained Meals on Wheels WNY's success with the wrapper.

With FeedMore WNY's Meals on Wheels program providing six different meal options for various dietary and health needs, the WM-Ai will certainly stay busy. Thanks to Gregg Barren at Independent Saw and the Ishida WM-Ai, FeedMore WNY and TRIO Community Meals are able to efficiently and reliably battle food insecurity in Western New York.

## The Standard in Wrapping

### Challenge:

*The higher demand for TRIO Community Meals and FeedMore Western New York's (WNY) Meals on Wheels programs meant more items needed to be packaged and manually wrapped. Ensuring the food was secure was a slow process that resulted in repetitive motion strain.*

### Solution:

*A tremendous efficiency upgrade with the Ishida WM-Ai not only fulfilled the high demand for meals packaged by TRIO Community Meals and FeedMore WNY, but also increased the productivity rate and relieved muscle fatigue for workers.*

*Ishida WM-Ai automatic wrapper*

