

Spike in NorCal seniors relying on subsidized meals

By Jocelyn Wiener, Sacramento Bee

GREENVILLE – Lee Marshall loves the mountains surrounding this small community three hours northeast of Sacramento. Even so, it can be hard to maintain a sunny outlook.

On a recent Friday, while waiting for his next Social Security check to arrive, Marshall said he had 24 cents to his name. He had been without the propane he needs to cook or have a warm shower for several weeks. His car broke down months ago and, because he uses an oxygen tank at home, he can't climb underneath to fix it. He is almost 70, and if he wants to get anywhere, he often hitchhikes.

"That's the kind of thing I go through because I don't have any money," he said.

Five days a week, Marshall and his 13-year-old chocolate Lab, Lucas, wait in their trailer six miles outside Greenville, population 1,129, for a Plumas County employee named Art Davis to bring lunch. For dozens of seniors scattered around this breathtakingly beautiful yet impoverished mountain valley, the small plastic tray Davis delivers holds the only nutritious meal they'll get all day.

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