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**DONOR OF THE DAY** | By Shelly Banjo

## Power Lunch Helps Feed Elderly

Patricia Wexler is turning a power lunch into a money-making opportunity for charity.

The Manhattan dermatological surgeon is this week helping to raise more than a million dollars for Citymeals-on-Wheels ahead of its annual power lunch on Friday. The lunch is an annual invitation-only event started 24 years ago by the charity's founder and food critic Gael Greene and board member Joan Weill as a response to what had become a male institution in New York: the businessman's power breakfast.

"These aren't the ladies who lunch, this is a powerful group of CEOs, actresses and doctors who come here to network and support the city's elderly," says Marcia Stein, executive director of CityMeals.

Last year, the event raised \$1.14 million for the charity to provide more than 178,000 meals. At Citymeals, 100%

donor's funds go toward providing a meal for the elderly, which is \$6.42 each. Funds for administrative costs are provided by government grants and donations by board members, the organization said.

"Three-quarters of the people who get home-delivered meals are women who live alone," Ms. Stein says. "They have outlived everyone who could have been there to support them and these women can connect with that."

Dr. Wexler started donating to Citymeals nearly 15 years ago when she was taking care of her elderly parents, who were both sick with chronic illnesses from the time she was young. "If I wasn't there to take care of my parents, they wouldn't have survived as long as they did."

In 2003, she joined the board of directors and began to get involved with the annual Power Lunch.

This year, she decided to



*Patricia Wexler*

implement a new payment strategy for the dozens of doctors that seek her out for instructional classes and observations. In lieu of payment to her practice, when doctors come to observe her practice or learn new treatments and procedures, she asks them to donate \$2,500 to Citymeals.

"Helping the elderly isn't as sexy as curing a disease, they can be an invisible part of society," Dr. Wexler says. "But what's the point of keeping people alive by curing diseases if we aren't going to take care of them?"

Last year, CityMeals brought more than 2.1 million meals to homebound elderly across the city who can no longer shop or cook for themselves.

When the organization started nearly 30 years ago, it was serving 6,000 meals a day to people who were, on average, 60 years old. Now, as people are living longer, the charity says it is serving 17,000 meals. The fastest growing group of clients is more than 90 years old.

"Unlike the homeless that we see on the streets, these are our neighbors behind closed doors that I assure you are there and need help," Ms. Stein says.