

25

YEAR IMPACT REPORT 1996-2021

The hallmark of
our work is
connecting the
surplus food
available today
to feed people
today.



Presented by



For us to let anyone go without, when food is plentiful, is to say, “You don’t deserve to eat.”

A letter from the director

As we wrap up our 25th year, we celebrate how far we’ve come and all that we’ve done together. Let me start our reflection on the past by painting a picture of the present.

Every pound counts...

- In early 2022, 141 million dollars in emergency food assistance was cut from the State of Iowa budget, reducing benefits for every Iowan in the program. Meanwhile the USDA estimates that grocery prices have gone up by 11% in 2022.
- **Here on the ground, we’re seeing more neighbors seeking emergency food assistance than at any point in the last three years.**
- I recently read an account from a woman in another county who was turned away at her local pantry because she was a SNAP participant and they assumed she shouldn’t need more support. She writes, “I suddenly felt embarrassed and asked if she was sure. Like, hey, I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t really need the help.” The common experience is that SNAP helps but is just not enough. Then there are those who don’t qualify for the program at all. **We won’t turn away our neighbors.**

No one should feel embarrassed for trying to feed their family. As a society, we should be ashamed at the lengths our neighbors must go in order to access enough to eat. These folks are resourceful and resilient, prioritizing what little they have in ways that are most effective for their families. To make it work, many sacrifice a number of meals per week. Meanwhile, ever-tightening budgets limit affordability of the most nutritious foods.

...and we’re working harder for every pound

Food rescue organizations across the country have experienced unprecedented fluctuations in food donations.

- Supply chain disruptions and inadequate staffing leave stores with bare shelves and fewer staff to pull food for donation. We must stop at donors more frequently to capture every available donation. **More pick-ups mean more coordination, more volunteers, more fuel.**
- We have to maintain the capacity to say “yes” to more last-minute donations. Last month we got a call from a truck driver who had 700 pounds of ground beef, ribs, and roasts to offload in the next hour. **With our new location and more staff, we readily accepted this valuable donation that we might have had to decline three years ago.**
- We’re harvesting directly from farms, working with more processors, and adding many smaller food outlets to our routes. **The most requested foods are also the most costly to recover.**

What does all this mean? *Table to Table is working harder and investing more to capture every pound, and it is well worth the investment.* Many of our partners would have to more than double their food purchasing budgets without our daily deliveries.

Your investment in Table to Table these past 25 years has fueled the flexibility and ingenuity of our team and our programs today.

Will you consider an additional gift this fall as we weather these new challenges and continue to build connections between abundance and hunger?



In gratitude,

Nicki Ross

Nicki Ross
Executive Director

Thank you,



Silver Sponsor of T2T's 25th Year

T2T Founders

Preben Borch
Agape Cafe

Dianne Bowers
Mercy Hospital

Theresa Carbrey
New Pioneer Food Co-op

Captain Robert Hall
Salvation Army

Ron Hall
Mercy Hospital

Rev. Dot Hasler
New Horizons Church

Meg Kiekhaefer
Free Lunch Program

Suzanne Koury
University of Iowa
Hospital and Clinics

Frank Lalor
Retired Community Member

Tracy Tinning
Iowa Memorial Union

**Carole Campbell
Yack**
Crisis Center

“In the beginning we didn’t have much, but we had heart!” —Frank Lalor



ON OUR FOUNDING, 25 YEARS AGO:

“May this date, then, December 16, 1994, always be remembered as a monumental moment for addressing hunger locally—today, tomorrow, forever.” —Frank Lalor

A simple question begins a food rescue and distribution solution.

After watching C-SPAN coverage of a congressional hearing on food waste and hunger in America, Frank Lalor visited the Free Lunch Program of Iowa City and met its director at the time, Meg Kiekhaefer. Frank asked Meg *if they could use more food.*

“I was excited about it,” Meg remembers. “I said, ‘We’re always short on food, we could use it.’ He asked, ‘Could some of the other social service organizations use food?’ I said, ‘Well, yeah!’”

In 1995, Frank and Meg brought together community activists, dietitians, chefs, and potential donor and recipient agencies.

In October, they held their first meeting. All agreed that rescuing food in the Iowa City area was worth pursuing. They defined four initial goals:

- Distribute food to those in need, especially food that would otherwise go to waste,
- Identify organizations in the area that serve food,
- Determine how to collect and distribute this food, and
- Research how to secure funding.

In April 1996, Table to Table was granted nonprofit status in the State of Iowa and opened its first office in Old Brick in a space that was formerly a storage closet. With a small desk, a phone, and an answering machine, this space served as a home base for coordinating food deliveries.

Meg Kiekhaefer became the first T2T director. Volunteers used their personal vehicles—mostly station wagons and vans—for collection and distribution of food. T2T rescued 44,000 pounds of food that first year.



In T2T’s early days, Frank would check the office answering machine from home for any messages about new food donations. One day, Frank’s son, Jerry, was in the kitchen while Frank checked messages. Jerry says his dad hung up the phone, turned around, and clapped his hands, exclaiming, “Hot dog, we got one!”

We still share that sentiment. There’s nothing quite like the excitement of a new food rescue opportunity.

Just three ingredients in our recipe for food rescue success

Lessons learned from our first director Meg Kiekhaefer and current director Nicki Ross

Over the years, we’ve turned fortune and goodwill into nearly 30 million pounds of recovered food. What were the ingredients of that success?

Collaboration

In the early days, T2T leaders had a simple edict, as Meg says: “Don’t step on toes.” To seek collaboration and fill unmet needs has become one of our core values. Nicki adds, “We build our operation around what partners want and need without duplicating their good work.” Once it became clear partnership was our goal, new partners of all kinds turned to Table to Table.

Coordination

Very quickly we learned that scheduled routes worked more efficiently than a one-off approach. Logistical coordination to pair resources and needs makes the most of each food donation. Nicki notes, “Expert coordination increased overall efficiency.” And Meg adds, “Better utilization of volunteers, always in short supply.”

Community

Warmth, kindness, and gratitude have built a community invested in food recovery, and volunteers are at the heart of that. As Meg has seen, “Volunteers were and continue to be shining ambassadors. Their personal connections with the donors and nonprofit staff on their routes are priceless.”



T2T staff on a glean at Trowel & Error Farm in 2022.

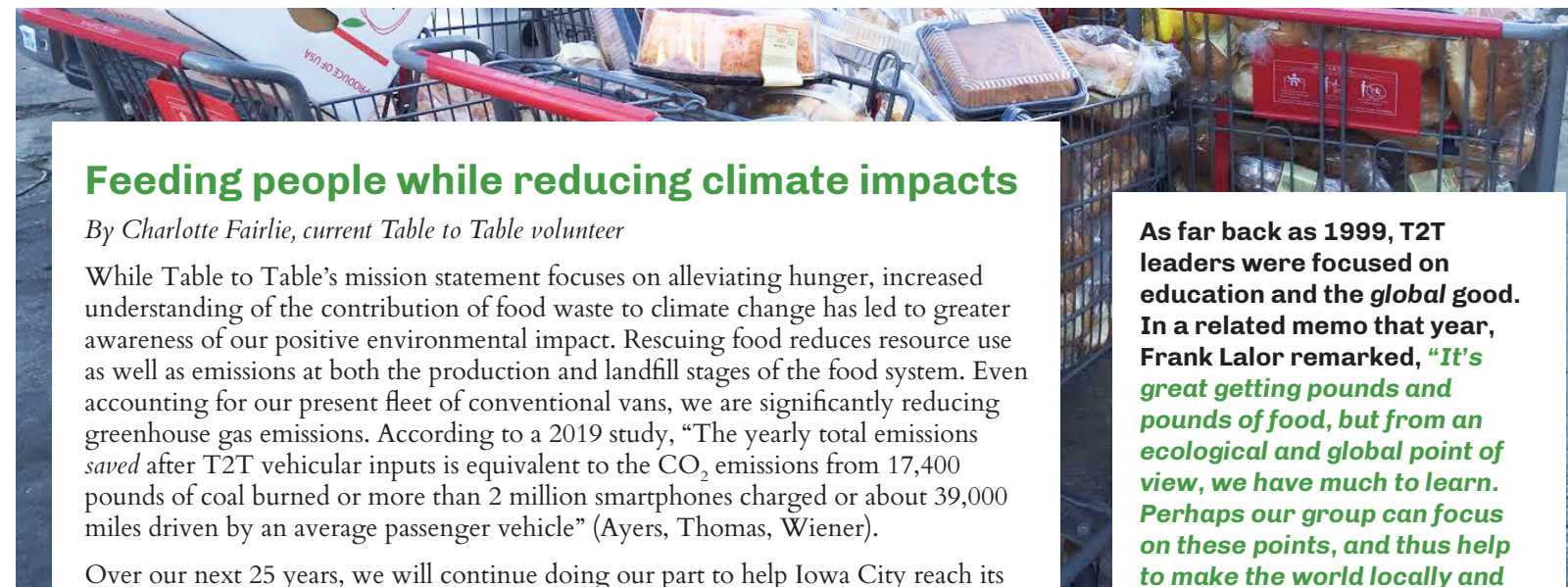
Feeding people while reducing climate impacts

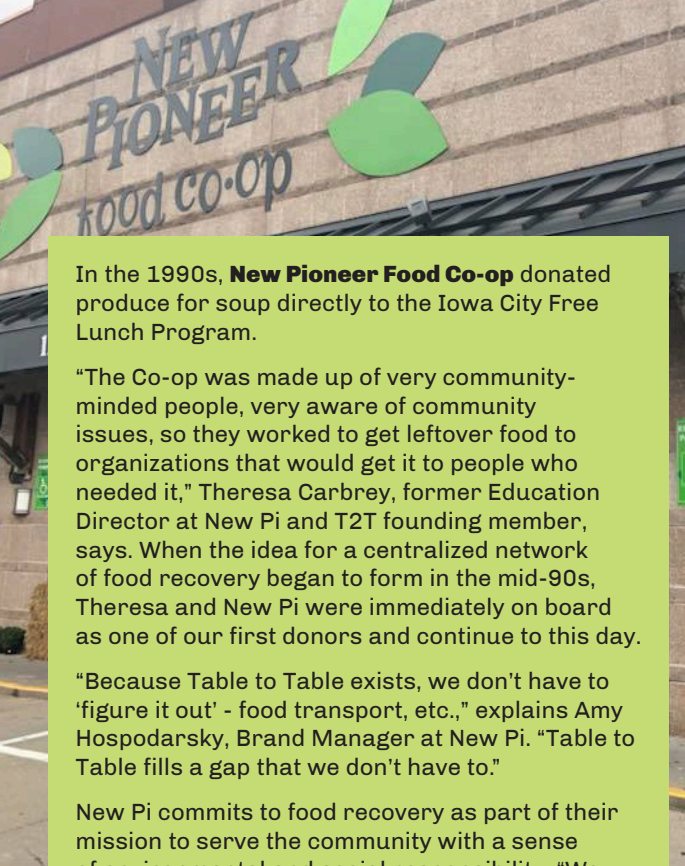
By Charlotte Fairlie, current Table to Table volunteer

While Table to Table’s mission statement focuses on alleviating hunger, increased understanding of the contribution of food waste to climate change has led to greater awareness of our positive environmental impact. Rescuing food reduces resource use as well as emissions at both the production and landfill stages of the food system. Even accounting for our present fleet of conventional vans, we are significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. According to a 2019 study, “The yearly total emissions saved after T2T vehicular inputs is equivalent to the CO₂ emissions from 17,400 pounds of coal burned or more than 2 million smartphones charged or about 39,000 miles driven by an average passenger vehicle” (Ayers, Thomas, Wiener).

Over our next 25 years, we will continue doing our part to help Iowa City reach its goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

As far back as 1999, T2T leaders were focused on education and the global good. In a related memo that year, Frank Lalor remarked, “It’s great getting pounds and pounds of food, but from an ecological and global point of view, we have much to learn. Perhaps our group can focus on these points, and thus help to make the world locally and globally a better place.”





In the 1990s, **New Pioneer Food Co-op** donated produce for soup directly to the Iowa City Free Lunch Program.

"The Co-op was made up of very community-minded people, very aware of community issues, so they worked to get leftover food to organizations that would get it to people who needed it," Theresa Carbrey, former Education Director at New Pi and T2T founding member, says. When the idea for a centralized network of food recovery began to form in the mid-90s, Theresa and New Pi were immediately on board as one of our first donors and continue to this day.

"Because Table to Table exists, we don't have to 'figure it out' - food transport, etc.," explains Amy Hospodarsky, Brand Manager at New Pi. "Table to Table fills a gap that we don't have to."

New Pi commits to food recovery as part of their mission to serve the community with a sense of environmental and social responsibility. "We were founded with values that include being responsible stewards of the food we eat and the land we use," says Amy. "Table to Table helps us reduce food waste and gives people access to natural food products."

"Our mission marries up so closely with T2T," Amy continues. "We do appreciate how important it is that T2T exists - we did then, we still do now."

"Success breeds success. Once a relationship develops between food donors and food recipients, a bridge has been built. We're on our way!"
—Frank Lalor

Rescuing rejected truck loads with help from Lineage Logistics

On a Wednesday in mid-September 2017, a call came into the office. On the line was a food transport driver: "I have a truck full of yogurt that was just declined by the customer." Why? "It wasn't what they ordered." How much is a truck full? In this case, *eight pallets* - nearly 9,000 16-oz. containers. Not only that, but this yogurt's sell by date was still six-eight weeks away. What a windfall and a scramble to deliver it all!

Several times a year we get a call from a driver with a rejected load. We have to be prepared to accept it immediately, or else it's more expedient for the driver to dump it at the landfill. Thanks to a partnership with Lineage Logistics donating cold warehouse space starting in 2020, we can say yes to most of these calls. Lineage accepts the donation on our behalf, giving us time to plan distribution logistics on a schedule that is most helpful to partner agencies. By finding ways to accept these offers, we've recovered chicken, oranges, Brussels sprouts, beef, milk, and more.

25 YEARS OF DISCOVERING An abundance of food rescue opportunities

Route-based food rescue: "It's a big puzzle."

Table to Table's route-based food rescue is a unique model that matches food donations directly to recipients during each three-hour route. In traditional models, the food is brought back to a warehouse where recipient partners place an order and pick it up later in the week. Or these partners pick up food donations directly from a store, using their own resources, and all donations from a store go to a single recipient agency. Sometimes it's not enough food and sometimes it's more of one item than a single agency is able to use.

Route-based rescue matches the right amount of food to the right partners immediately. The benefits of this model are many; it reduces waste by getting food to tables more quickly, allows partners to choose what fits their needs, and increases variety for the entire system. Food rescue efforts in similarly-sized communities using other models are usually unable to reach the efficiency or food donation totals that we experience here in Johnson County. Our daily delivery schedule increases food donations and allows recipient agencies to refill their limited storage repeatedly during the week.

In our early years, consolidating local food rescue to Table to Table wasn't easy. "It took convincing," says David Wellendorf, T2T Volunteer & Transportation Manager from 2002-2017. "You needed to convince the donor and recipient that this will work while looking at your logistic means to make sure you don't oversell your ability...It's a big puzzle."

We asked David, how did you do it, in the beginning?

"Tenaciousness." That's how it happened, he says. "And we loved it."

David, what kept you engaged and loving the work?

"The volunteers—Are you kidding? The passion of each person coming in and saying, 'I want to make a difference.'"

The volunteer route-based model is essential to food rescue success. This year, volunteers provided over 20,000 hours of service at Table to Table.

Developing and maintaining a stable workforce of volunteers is critical to the success of the T2T operation.

As David says of those early years, "Logistically we could've set the world on fire, but our logistical abilities outpaced the money we could bring in." Volunteers were critical, but by 2016 not having enough staff or space to manage those complicated logistics was holding the organization back. That year, T2T recovered nearly two million pounds of food with three staff in a 700-sq. ft. basement office -- a truly remarkable feat, but unsustainable.

Fortunately, T2T had proven that this crazy idea could work, and with the support of our community grew our resources to make large scale food rescue sustainable. In 2002, T2T was running two routes each day. Now, we run about 45 routes a week. How? With the same community dedication and partnerships that launched Table to Table 25 years ago--only now with six staff, 100+ food donor partners, 50 recipient partners, and 150+ regular volunteers.

Large-scale warehouse donations increase variety

Currently each week, T2T picks up thousands of pounds of surplus food from local warehouses, UNFI and US Foods. Now accounting for 31% of the food we rescue, this food isn't even short-dated and serves as a source for more organic, gluten-free, and vegetarian foods. Getting this program up and running didn't happen on its own. Picking food up at this scale would require several trips in our smaller transit vans, so in the early days, John's Crane let T2T use a 16-ft. truck weekly for free. When T2T outgrew that truck, we moved to renting a large truck twice a week to pick up warehouse donations. In 2017, staff David Wellendorf and Emily Meister developed a partnership and with a significant donation from Frontier Natural Products were able to lease a dedicated 22-ft. refrigerated truck. Since then, this truck has made more than 350 trips transporting nearly three million pounds of food.



Made & donated in Iowa, direct from producers

Iowa food producers have become an integral part of the Table to Table recovery network and a valuable resource for fresh foods. T2T now partners with 10+ local producers who expand our offerings to include fresh produce, Old Capitol tofu, Kalona Supernatural organic milk, Oasis hummus, DeLuxe Cakes and Pastries and more.

After their weekly retail deliveries in Johnson County, Hansen's Dairy, based out of Hudson, Iowa, delivers milk from their family farm directly to T2T. Their fresh-off-the-farm dairy products are highly desirable for recipient agencies.

Echollective Farm, a local organic vegetable farm, not only invites T2T volunteers to glean produce from their fields, but also delivers extra produce directly to T2T. "In 2021, Echollective Farm donated nearly twenty thousand pounds of produce to local nonprofits, and we truly could not have done this without the support of Table to Table... Giving us one accessible, easy place to donate produce is truly invaluable," writes Molly Schintler, farmer at Echollective. "Without Table to Table, our food would reach far fewer members of our community."



"We decided we'd roast a batch of coffee each week to donate. Frank Lalor would come by each week to pick it up," says Steve Dunham, coffee crafter at **Cafe del Sol** of Iowa City. That was 1996. Over the past 25 years, Cafe del Sol has continued to donate fresh coffee batches to Table to Table, not only to distribute to recipient partners, but also to share with volunteers and staff, fueling them for the day's food rescue routes.

"When we see volunteers and staff out in the community, we always say thank you. You're providing a valuable service to the community," Steve says. "What an impact you all are making on redirecting these resources."

"Coffee is the one commodity that we're able to donate," Steve adds. So they do.



From gardens and gleaning to free produce stands, making fresh fruits and veggies more accessible

Finding ways to increase access to fresh produce has been a part of the operation since the early days. In 2001, AmeriCorps service member Rosemary Randolph started nine gardens in multiple Iowa City neighborhoods. These gardens grew 2,000 pounds of produce during the growing season.

In recent years, T2T has partnered with local farmers to harvest produce remaining in their fields - referred to as 'gleaning.' "I knew that would be a really good fit for me—working outdoors to rescue food with a great group of people," says Karen Jackson, T2T volunteer.

Gardeners are also encouraged to donate their excess homegrown fruits and vegetables to T2T or even "grow a row" to donate.

With increased fresh produce from gleaning and garden donations, T2T organizes neighborhood Free Produce Stands in partnership with local pantries and neighborhood centers, reducing barriers to fresh produce access. "We can harvest hundreds of pounds in a day and then distribute it for people to have fresh food on their tables that night," Karen says.

Last summer, a recipient sent us a note that read, "I just wanted to let you know those tomatoes made 149 cups of blanched chunks to make lots of soup and sauces for lasagnas and spaghetti for the 18 people we share homemade food with."



THROUGH 25 YEARS OF CARE & SERVICE,

Volunteers are the heart of T2T

Meet one of the original volunteers: Lynette Richards

What drew Lynette Richards to Table to Table? “The fact that food can be on people’s plates *that same day*.” Lynette volunteered rescuing food in the late 1990s and served on T2T’s Board of Directors until she moved away from Iowa City in the early 2000s. “It was one of the hardest things to leave behind,” she says.

Lynette’s Honda Passport was her food rescue mobile: “I’d fill it up, I’d give away all the food, then I’d finish picking up more food. Sometimes I would come back with nearly a ton in total.”

“I would go to Eagles Grocery, Blooming Prairie, Bruegger’s Bagels, New Pioneer Food Co-op, sometimes Hy-Vee, and sometimes the University food service. We would drop food off at United

Action for Youth, Domestic Violence Intervention Program, preschool programs, and homeless shelters,” she remembers. T2T didn’t have any refrigerated storage at the time, so, “We had to find a place to deliver what we collected that day. We couldn’t bring anything back.” To this day we only have the equivalent of six household refrigerators of cold storage because we aim to get the food out as quickly as possible.

“At T2T you get food from a variety of places, so when you put it together, you can make a healthy meal. It’s very usable,” Lynette continues. “You get excited when you get one food donation because it goes with something else you got, and it will make a nice meal for somebody.”



A preschooler at HACAP Head Start enjoys a lunch made entirely of food from that day’s T2T delivery.

AmeriCorps service members lend a hand at T2T

“My AmeriCorps experience helped me broaden my awareness of the multitude of resources present and those still needed in our community,” says Andrew Winkers, who served part of his AmeriCorps service term with T2T when his service in Iowa City Community Schools was interrupted by the pandemic. Andrew was the first AmeriCorps service member to join the T2T team in 2020 and opened the door to an invaluable resource. In the past three years, AmeriCorps members have supported food rescue operations, implemented a new software system, trained volunteers in safety and equity, expanded access to fresh, local produce, and more!

Andrew was impacted by “seeing how far-reaching Table to Table’s food rescue activism connects and sustains the community by making resources available that would otherwise go to waste.” Andrew adds, “And the importance of seeking connections to build a community that cares.”



“There is much repetition in food rescue. A person or group needs to see each day, each food rescue as a life-engaging process benefiting humanity.” —Frank Lalor

Meet a current volunteer: Rajni Vijh

“This has given me a look into how much food is being rescued and how much the need is,” says Rajni Vijh, a current T2T volunteer. Rajni began volunteering in September 2020 on a food rescue route. “We got 3,000 pounds of food,” she remembers about her very first day. “I remember telling everybody, ‘This is my first time and we have saved so much food from being wasted.’ We were just packed to the brim!”

When an injury kept Rajni from food rescue on routes, she wanted to know other ways she could help. She’s taken on an array of roles. She prepares the fleet for routes and keeps a food-safe environment in the warehouse. She takes on data entry and office tasks.

In addition, she joined the software committee to help advise on procuring new software to track volunteers, donations, and route schedules. She adds, “All my life I’ve been in IT, so that’s close to my heart.”

Next she wants to learn more about



gleaning in farm fields. “I’m a ‘whole picture’ person,” she says of helping in so many areas. So, she also recently joined the Board of Directors.

“In general, my nature is to help. This fits right into my mission: help where the need is,” she continues. “I’m really passionate about what I do here. I think everybody believes in the cause.”

25 YEARS OF COLLABORATIONS

Connecting food to our neighbors

To gather and share food is where we find commonality and connection.

T2T Recipient Partners (2022)

Food Banks and Pantries

- CommUnity Food Bank
- Coralville Community Food Pantry
- Food Pantry at Iowa
- Goosetown Food Pantry
- HACAP Food Reservoir
- Hills Pantry
- Iowa City Compassion
- Kirkwood Community College Food Pantry
- North Liberty Baptist Church Pantry
- North Liberty Community Pantry
- North Liberty Library
- North Liberty Summer Lunch & Fun
- Resurrection Assembly of God Pantry
- Solon Community Pantry



CommUnity Crisis Services + Table to Table: A 25-Year Dynamic Duo!

“There’s so many ways we work together that I truly don’t think we would function without this partnership,” says CommUnity [formerly The Crisis Center of Johnson County] Manager Krystal Kabela.

CommUnity provides groceries for 700–900 local households weekly. What does Table to Table’s partnership mean for CommUnity, in one word? Krystal and CommUnity Warehouse Coordinator Matt Himschoot respond in unison: “Food!” CommUnity is the biggest food distribution organization in Johnson County, and, “Table to Table provides a large amount of our fresh ready-to-eat meals, produce, and bread,” says Matt.

Half of the food CommUnity distributes in our county comes through T2T. “We wouldn’t operate on the same scale without Table to Table, nor as ‘cheaply,’” Krystal says. Food recovered from retail can be a huge resource for food pantries, but it takes a lot of logistics and resources to collect it each day, and then a different set of resources to distribute it to our neighbors. That’s why T2T was founded with partners like CommUnity in mind, and our partnerships are critical, so each organization can focus on what they do best.

Each year, CommUnity connects more than a million pounds of T2T’s rescued food to our neighbors. They do that through a combination of a grocery-shopping-model food pantry, home delivery from their food bank, and a mobile pantry that hosts distribution events in 11 neighborhoods in Johnson County.

We continue to find ways to collaborate. After T2T added a 22-ft. truck to our food rescue fleet, T2T volunteers began to pick up CommUnity’s weekly food orders from the food reservoir in Hiawatha. “It’s not as easy to make that happen without T2T’s partnership,” says Krystal.

“T2T has come to CommUnity’s aid on more than one occasion. They were absolute lifesavers when the derecho hit and took out the power. Without their refrigerated truck, we would have lost thousands of pounds of food from our coolers and freezers,” Director of Development Julia Winter remembers.

Last year in preparation for CommUnity’s annual Project Holiday, which delivers holiday meals to 1,500 local families, arrangements for a large truck to pick up frozen meat fell through at the last minute. Matt called T2T, somewhat in a state of desperation. T2T staff said: “No problem; come get the truck.”

“Had that not been available to us, we would have been in trouble. Project Holiday may not have existed in the manner that it did,” Krystal says.

This summer, the food rescue work at T2T has outpaced our current vehicle resources, so CommUnity has shared their van with us so we don’t miss any opportunity.

As Julia concludes, “We are so grateful to share walls and a mission with T2T! Our neighboring spaces are mutually beneficial and ensure we’re able to get food to the people who need it most. Our partnership is closer than ever and we’re excited to see where the future takes us.”



“Table to Table is such a vital partner because we are able to provide fresh—and not only fresh, but local—produce,” Hai Huynh, community projects coordinator at Coralville Community Food Pantry, says. “Our partnership [with T2T] has allowed us to give more to the community. It’s opened the door to provide more food, and culturally-appropriate food.”

Hot Meal Sites

- Agape Cafe
- Iowa City Free Lunch Program
- Meals on Wheels of Johnson County
- Salvation Army

Housing

- Catholic Worker House
- Domestic Violence Intervention Program
- Ecumenical Towers
- Shelter House
- Successful Living

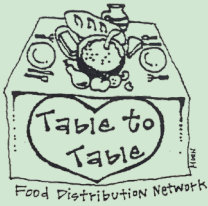
Youth Programs

- Faith Academy
- Good Shepherd Center
- HACAP Head Start Programs
- Home Ties Child Care Center
- Little Creations Academy
- Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County
- United Action For Youth

Other Social Services

- Escucha Mi Voz Iowa
- Iowa City Free Medical Clinic
- Open Heartland
- The Senior Center
- University of Iowa Mobile Clinic

A Look Back ... 25 Years of Table to Table



1996
Table to Table's first year: We rescue 44,000 lbs. of food.



1997
Table to Table purchases its first vehicle, a green minivan. Our original logo goes on the window.

2000
T2T moves into the 700-sq. ft., three-room basement office in Old Brick. It's the T2T office until 2016.

2001
T2T starts a community gardens project, coordinated by AmeriCorps service member Rosemary Randolph, with nine gardens.



2001
T2T's fifth birthday: We reach one million pounds of food rescued so far.

2002
Bob Andrlik takes on the Executive Director role. Entire staff: a director and part-time operations manager & bookkeeper.

2011
We rescue over one million lbs. of food in one year for the first time. 70 volunteers made this possible on 44 food rescue routes, servicing 25-30 local recipient agencies.

2016
Interim Director Julie Johnston facilitates a move from Old Brick to S. Capitol St., where T2T gains warehouse and fleet maintenance space, a larger parking lot, and cold storage for the first time.

2017
Nicki Ross becomes Director. T2T transitions to three full-time and one part-time staff members to facilitate growth opportunities with new donor and recipient partnerships.



With significant grant support from Frontier Natural Products, T2T leases its first "straight truck" to access more than 600,000 pounds of wholesale food donations each year.

2018
T2T starts sharing facility space, transportation, and food storage with Field to Family to mutually reduce costs.

2021
T2T and Field to Family move together to our new Pepperwood Plaza location.



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FOOD RESCUE NETWORK



25 years of building vital connections between abundance and hunger in Johnson County
Read our story inside

