

Volunteer Newsletter

319-337-3400 DISPATCHER@TABLE2TABLE.ORG

Same mission, new Mission Statement!

Table to Table bridges the gap between abundance and hunger. Our mission is to increase food equity and reduce environmental harm by collecting and redistributing surplus food through partners to people who can use it.



Partner Spotlight
Shelter House

This month our Partner Spotlight is shining on Shelter House. Table to Table volunteers drop off food at Shelter House Monday through Friday, multiple times on some days. Our volunteers can't help but get to know and love Day Services Manager Tonia Franklin. Tonia has been with Shelter House for 12 years. She used to be a coordinator and worked at the front desk, which she still does sometimes to make sure everything runs smoothly during the day. Along with being the Day Services Manager, you can find Tonia in the kitchen preparing the nightly dinners they serve in the shelter.

Shelter House prepares a cold breakfast and a hot dinner every day for 70 people. It is good to know that if a certain item is not enough for 70 people, they often will not take it. They also have food storage limitations.

Some high needs for Shelter House are supplemental prepared meals, especially microwaveable meals to serve at their additional winter shelter, which does not have a kitchen. They look for meat when we have it and rely on eggs and milk thru T2T. They also need personal hygiene items, toilet paper, and diapers.

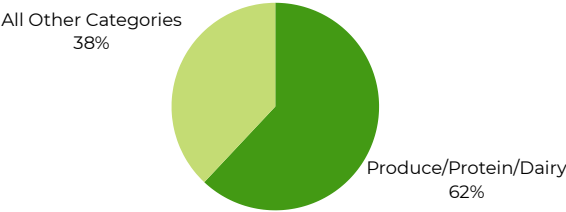
Without T2T, Tonia said they would find themselves in quite a dilemma and she can't even imagine what the bill would be! When eggs reached \$3-4 a dozen, they could still count on them from T2T. Tonia appreciates and adores T2T volunteers and she couldn't stress that enough! She pointed out **how nice it is to be in a community where all the help comes together.** Tonia is also so grateful that T2T caters to all diets and restrictions whether it be gluten free, vegan, no pork, or other health or religious needs. Tonia expressed how amazing it is that T2T exceeds every expectation she ever thought there would be, and she sends a hug to all of you!

Impact Report Data:

Our data shows notable increases & changes:

Starting in 2020, we've seen a consistent reduction from before the pandemic in food donation amounts from grocery retailers and warehouses. However, this past quarter, our food recovery data demonstrates a steady return to pre-Covid donation levels for several grocery partners where donations have grown 30-50% since last year! Notably, increased donations from UNFI and Costco account for 100,000 pounds of that growth.

1.3 million total pounds of food rescued so far this fiscal year!



Mileage Adds Up!

Elizabeth Wagner - Operations Coordinator: All of the data our volunteers record on their route sheet is used for a special purpose! **The 'Starting' and 'Ending Mileage' from each route is entered into our FoodForce software to track and report mileage data for our grant funding.** Table to Table receives grants that helps cover vehicle maintenance and fuel costs, and reimbursement is often reliant on this mileage data! Mileage tracking also helps staff identify fluctuations in van use so we can plan van maintenance schedules accordingly. In 2023, our vans traveled an average of 3,011 miles each month, reaching our peak in October with 3,997 miles/month. **In total, volunteers drove T2T vans over 36,000 miles last year!**

Temperature Matters

Elizabeth Wagner - Operations Coordinator: We also ask that volunteers record the temperature at each stop along their route, using the reading in the cab for the van's refrigerator (or "reefer") unit, or in Vans #5 & 7, a temperature gun reading of the food. This is to check and ensure that our food remains in a temperature-safe environment while it is being transported, and **we need the documentation to show compliance with our food safety and quality guidelines.** Staff also use temperature recordings to determine if a refrigerator unit requires maintenance, repair, or an adjustment to its settings. If you ever notice that temperatures aren't reaching 40°F or below, please do not attempt to adjust the settings in the cab – instead, please let a staff member know when you return from your route :)



Volunteer Spotlight
Kent Strayer

Kent started volunteering on food rescue routes in Spring 2023 as a route sub and gradually grew into the role of helping on **3 regular routes weekly!**

Eager to learn about our processes, Kent often has helpful questions about how and why we do things and is always curious about our reason for assigning different food categories (spoiler: they're not perfect).

Since he started, **Kent has helped rescue over 64,000 lbs. of food** - enough for over 50,000 meals!

Kent's Advice to New Volunteers

What is one thing you would tell new T2T volunteers when they're first starting out?

Everyone involved - the staff, other volunteers and donors - are super nice and helpful. Just do the best you can and remember at the end of the route, you made a difference.

What do you wish other people knew about food waste?

There is 100 million pounds or so of food waste in the US each year. What Table to Table is doing is a win-win: we are helping people who need the food and we are keeping it out of landfills where it contributes to greenhouse gasses.

Fun Facts: What are your hobbies?

Playing the piano (for myself) and doing New York Times games are enjoyable ways to spend some time.

What is your favorite flavor of ice cream (or favorite dessert)?

Homemade apple or blueberry pie with a scoop of vanilla ice cream is hard to beat.

Learn more about Shelter House here.

Volunteer Newsletter

319-337-3400 DISPATCHER@TABLE2TABLE.ORG

T2T Springs Into Local Produce Recovery Efforts
Marquis Heard - T2T AmeriCorps Member:

The first step of T2T’s local produce recovery season is spreading the word to growers that they can donate excess produce to Table to Table, and even encouraging them to **plant with the intention of donating**. One of our goals is to partner with even more local farms & gardens, so **if you know of a farmer or gardener, please tell them about us!**

Last year, T2T received and distributed almost 50,000 lbs. of local produce! This came in through walk-in donations (we take walk-in food donations Monday-Friday 8am-3pm & Saturday 9am-noon), seasonal farmers market rescue routes and twice-weekly Twin County Produce Auction (TCPA), rescue routes, and from T2T volunteers “gleaning” produce from growers’ fields. If you’re interested in helping with any of these volunteer opportunities, please let Jared know or email me at gleaning@table2table.org

We’re encouraging gardeners to “Grow a row,” which means planting an additional row in your garden to donate that produce to T2T. You might not think donating 5-10 lbs. at a time makes an impact in the community, but it does! **In 2023, gardeners donated around 6,000 lbs. of produce -- enough fruits and vegetables to supply 8.5 of T2T’s Free Produce Stands!** To help us spread the word, keep an eye on T2T’s Facebook and share our posts about local produce recovery -- your encouragement makes a difference!



We recently gathered with local growers and gleaning volunteers to appreciate their efforts to connect nearly 50,000 lbs. of fresh produce with our neighbors in 2023! Ideas flowed for the upcoming growing season too :)



Souper Volunteer Event 2024

T2T’s Volunteer Engagement Committee showed appreciation for our *souper* T2T volunteers by providing hot soup to enjoy after their routes every day for a week in Feb. Souper week was kicked off by Rajni with her delicious recipe!

Lentil Soup Recipe

Rajni Vijh - Board Member & Volunteer:

Ingredients:

- 3 T. cooking oil (any kind)
- 1 cup onion, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 T. fresh ginger, grated or finely chopped
- 1 cup finely chopped celery
- 1 cup finely chopped carrots
- 1 (15 oz.) can diced tomatoes
- 1 cup green or brown lentils, rinsed
- 4 cups water
- 2 t. salt
- 1 t. cumin seeds
- 1 T. garam masala
- 1 t. turmeric
- 1/2 t. chili powder or black pepper according to taste



Preparation:

1. In a heavy pot add lentils, water, salt, turmeric, and chili or black pepper powder. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 20-25 minutes, until the lentils are halfway cooked.
2. In a frying pan heat oil over medium heat. Add cumin seeds and onions and cook for 4-5 minutes, until they start to soften. Add garlic and ginger and cook for 2 minutes, until fragrant. Add tomatoes, carrots, and celery and cook for 5 minutes.
3. Add this to the pot of lentils and let everything cook together for another 20-25 minutes, until the vegetables and lentils are tender. You can use a potato masher or a stick blender if you want your soup smoother.
4. Add garam masala to the pot. Taste and season with additional salt if necessary. If your soup is too thick, you can add more water if needed.
5. Serve with croutons, toast, naan, or by itself.

T2T’s Volunteer Engagement Committee (VEC) has been busy the past year! A team of three T2T staff, two VEC volunteers, and one Board volunteer successfully participated in trainings that focused on thinking more broadly on how we can involve volunteers in every level of our organization.

Reporting on the experience is VEC member Marcia Musgrove:

Over the past year, T2T staff leadership and Board have been developing and updating the strategic plan for the organization. One section of the strategic plan focuses on the essential role that volunteers have at T2T. This plan includes a section that focuses on the vision and variety of roles that volunteers have at T2T now and in the future.

Members of the T2T Leadership team and several volunteers have had the opportunity to partner with Service Enterprise (SE), an organization associated with Volunteer Iowa. This is a training and certification initiative that supports nonprofits’ utilization of volunteers. In partnership with SE, T2T has been reviewing current practices, supporting policies, and identifying opportunities to enhance volunteer engagement throughout the organization.

As one of the volunteer members of the T2T Volunteer Engagement Committee, I have learned a lot about the structure, policies and processes that support food rescue and distribution in Johnson County. This partnership with SE will result in expanding the roles our volunteers can play in providing needed services to our community. In addition, seeing leadership’s appreciation of each and every T2T volunteer is heartwarming.

Annual Dinner

Wednesday, April 24
The Celebration Farm, Iowa City

5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Save your seats for our annual fundraiser at table2table.org/dinner

Each year, T2T volunteers, supporters, and partners come together to share a meal and celebrate the impact T2T’s food recovery efforts make in our community.

We’ll have opportunities to volunteer at this event; stay tuned for more info!

Contact Anne Hlavacek with questions: anne@table2table.org



Staff Spotlight
Sheila Boyd

We’re excited to welcome longtime volunteer Sheila Boyd on staff as our part-time financial donor relations manager! Sheila has helped us plan many successful fundraising events and previously served on our Board of Directors. She’s truly a force for promoting food rescue efforts and recognizing our dedicated supporters. Now as a staff member, Sheila has hit the ground running!