



Spring 2025



### Volunteer Program Stats

- Route volunteers completed 2,386 hours of food recovery in Q2.
- Staff/AmeriCorps completed 63 routes this quarter.
- 17% of routes filled by subs which is on par with the same quarter last year. This is one of our highest absence rates during the year and has to do with seasonal volunteer availability.
- Jared onboarded 14 new volunteers in February who completed their first shift



### Volunteer Spotlight

Allow us to introduce Chris Irvin, a dedicated Patient Access Specialist who has committed 11 years to volunteering with Table to Table.

Chris's journey with Table to Table began when he was working at Hy-Vee. Table to Table Volunteers frequently came into his store, and one day they left a brochure. "I had one day off during the week and decided to call," he recalled. That decision set him on a fulfilling path that has kept him engaged ever since!

Now, Chris volunteers on Saturdays, where he enjoys lively conversations with his fellow volunteers in the Saturday morning group. He humorously noted how the pounds of food collected really add up during their routes—an impressive testament to their efforts!

Last year, Chris embarked on an adventure to Portugal, Spain, and Andorra, where he savored unique foods he never would have encountered back home. He braved trying shark, sea anemone, and gooseneck barnacles, expanding his culinary horizons in ways he never imagined!



### Software Update

Elizabeth has begun implementing dashboards targeted to different program and fundraising needs. Jared now has a "Volunteer Scheduling" dashboard that helps him determine what routes still need to be filled, which volunteers are training that week, and manage volunteer groups.

In addition, we have been able to use standard reports to make allocation and daily route restructure decisions. For example, we have a report that will tell us the average pounds from each route and partner by day of the week. When we are short volunteers or weather impacts the regular route schedule, staff can use this report to determine which donor partners will take priority that day. This is the same data that will help us respond to changes to come.

### Service Enterprise

Table to Table has been involved with the Service Enterprise program over the past year. The focus of this program is the agency's engagement with its volunteers. It consists of an agency assessment of its current state followed by planning, revisions and implementation of measures to improve volunteer feedback and involvement.

Foundations for success in volunteer engagement include leadership involvement, resource allocation, onboarding/orientation of volunteers and recognition. T2T has been working diligently to assess current state and revise current processes to meet these standards. Upon successful completion of this program, the agency earns recognition and certification as a Service Enterprise agency.



## Service Enterprise Cont.

One aspect of the assessment and planning phase is to ask volunteers for feedback and recommendation. This was done through a survey which was developed by T2T volunteers and T2T leadership. It was sent out earlier in March through email. The information that was received will be used in the upcoming year as we plan and continue to develop volunteer engagement at T2T.

## Supporting Food Access: A Message for Our Volunteers

First, let us take a moment to thank each of you. Your dedication, kindness, and time are the driving force of our work, and we are so grateful for everything you do. You are the ones who make the difference, ensuring that the food we rescue finds its way to those who need it most, and that our mission continues to thrive.

As we move forward together, it's important that we all stay aligned and clear on how we support community members when they approach our vans for food or information. In the past, when economic conditions changed or SNAP benefits were cut, we've seen an uptick in community members approaching volunteers on routes looking for resources. Your role in these moments is essential, and we want to make sure you feel confident and supported in how to respond.

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### **Guidelines for Directing, Not Distributing Food**

When someone approaches the van asking for food, our goal is to refer them to established, public facing resources provided by our partners. Food should not be distributed directly from the van. While it may feel natural to want to hand out food at that moment, we need to direct people to the resources equipped to provide ongoing support. By following these guidelines, you're helping us maintain the integrity of our efforts and ensuring food reaches people in the most organized way possible. We have this policy for two reasons. 1) Our agreement with our food donors is to distribute food through food access partners and distributing food from the store parking lot is in direct conflict with that agreement. 2) Our partners' distribution methods are designed to be sustainable, reliable, and effective, ensuring that help is there for them consistently.

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### Using Flyers to Guide People to Resources

Each of our vans is stocked with flyers that list local food pantries, and community organizations that are ready and equipped to provide food assistance. When someone asks for food, please offer them a flyer. These flyers come in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic. You can be a great resource, and help connect people to a network of resources that can provide not just a meal today, but a sustainable way to support them moving forward.

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**Staying Informed and Empowered**

We understand that these moments may feel different each time, and that's why it's crucial for all of us to stay informed. By reviewing the flyers regularly, you'll be able to share up-to-date information with confidence—whether it's knowing the operating hours or the specific services available. The more we know, the better we can guide others, and the more effective we'll be as a team.

We are so thankful for your commitment and your role in this mission. Together, we are sustaining one of the best food access networks in the state. Thank you for being a part of this work. Let's continue to support each other, keep moving forward, and ensure that no one is left behind.

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To lift or not to lift, that is the Question

This short article will review what we likely already know, and hopefully implement, to maintain good body mechanics while we re packing and unpacking vans. This will be a review for you, but we need to keep these important things in mind. Here is a good video detailing some of the important things to keep in mind when lifting.

I would suggest that you view this video.

We all get in a hurry as we load and unload the vans. We want to hurry to the next stop to get food to the people who need it. Yet we do lift, and, in many cases, lift those boxes again as we pack and repack the load. This does not account for the unloading of the boxes. We lift the same boxes yet again. Some of the boxes are heavy; some are light. OSHA gives the following designations for weight:

- 5-10 pounds are light;
- 10-20 pounds are medium;
- and 20-40 pounds are heavy.



We need to take a little extra time, however, to make sure that we are using “good” lifting behaviors. Do you “warm up” before going out on a route? You should. The following list was developed from both Table 2 Table and OSHA information.

Assess the load. Does it look like a big load or a small load? Will you have to do anything special, such as finding extra room in the van, to accommodate the load?

Plan your route from the load to the van.

It may be necessary to repack the load to avoid lifting boxes that are too heavy.

Position your feet shoulder-width apart.

Bend your knees, not your back.

Get a good grip on the box.

Keep the load close to your body.

Lift with your legs.

Put the box in the van.



Got an idea for the Newsletter?

We want to hear about it! If you have an idea of something that you think might be a good newsletter article, please let Jared or Gina know. We are always looking for fresh ideas.

Thanks to the Newsletter Team:

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