



# Volunteer Newsletter

## Lessons Learned Written by: Ryan Mohwinkle

It was mid-June, one of those days when everything happens at once. We'd just hauled a couple thousand pounds of food from the School Nutrition Food Show in Coralville, and van 12 was on duty. Short-staffed, racing the clock, I was hustling through deliveries to get van 12 back to the office in time for its next route. I was making my stops as timely as possible and at my final stop, staff kindly waved me into their garage so we could unload more quickly. Without much thought, I eased forward. Then—CRUNCH. The van jolted to a stop. My stomach dropped.

I backed out, jumped down, and saw it immediately: I had driven straight into an awning just before the garage door. The reefer unit was badly damaged. My heart sank. I apologized to the staff, shared our office number, and called back to the T2T office to explain what had happened. I gave the staff our contact information and told them that we would be reaching out soon to discuss reporting to insurance and repairs.

I made a few mistakes that day and I'm hoping by sharing this story, you can learn from them too. First of all, I should have slowed down and ensured that I was taking the necessary precautions when pulling up for a delivery. It is always better to be extra cautious and take your time when pulling into pick up/drop off site. Secondly, always always ALWAYS double check the height clearance (which is posted in each van on the front of the glove box) before going under an overhang or awning. In this particular case, the overhang didn't have a visible height label so I shouldn't have driven under it. It is always better to play it safe and avoid passing under if you are unsure of the clearance. I didn't have a copilot with me that day, but we usually send you out as a team for a reason. Once you pull into a parking lot, you should cease conversation and focus on navigating safely. Your partner is your second set of eyes.

Fast-forward a few weeks: the insurance company declared van 12 officially totaled. Despite going under 5 miles an hour, reefer units are no match for a steel overhang and they are expensive! We turned over the keys and now it's time to move forward. We immediately started searching for van 13. This time, we're aiming bigger - maybe a small box truck that can hold 3-4 pallets for those heavy Costco runs.

We had van 12 less than a year and this final trip was the fourth time it had a roof scrape or a back end bump. Which is why this lesson is for all of us: Always slow down, even when time is tight. Look around and up for obstacles and look around again. Always double-check clearance signs. And if the clearance isn't posted, don't risk it!

So here's to van 12, gone but not forgotten, and forever remembered as the van that taught us to look up before we drive in.



## What to do with Chemicals on a Route Written by: Elizabeth Wagner

Ever been offered a donation of chemicals on your food rescue route and weren't sure what to do?

- First, always call the office when you are offered a donation of chemicals! Table to Table and our food access partners do not accept pesticides, vehicle chemicals, or most chemical cleaning supplies. Staff can instruct you on the phone whether or not to accept the donation and how you can reject it at the donor site.
- Checking with staff before accepting these donations is the best way to prevent unwanted chemicals ending up at our facility, which poses risks to our compliance standards and requires additional staff time to safely dispose of the items.
- If you do receive special confirmation to accept a chemical donation, those chemicals must be transported in the cab of the vehicle for the remainder of the route to prevent food contamination. Thanks for keeping our food safe and warehouse free of unwanted chemicals!

**Volunteer Hangout at  
Big Grove**  
**Written by: Jared Long**  
**When:** Wednesday, Oct 1,  
from 3-6pm  
**Where:** Big Gove Iowa City  
**Who:** All T2T volunteers  
and guests are welcome,  
drop in anytime and stay  
for as long as you'd like

Big Grove is providing a  
beer for each person, and  
we'll also have some  
appetizers available



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## Volunteer Spotlight

Jeff Knox - Jenna Schmitt - Loyal Ulm

Written by: Lynn Morano

This month we are recognizing three remarkable volunteers who will soon be stepping down from their regular roles with Table to Table: Jeff Knox, Jenna Schmitt, and Loyal Ulm. Each has made a lasting impact on our mission, and we are grateful for the dedication, energy, and kindness they have brought to food rescue.

**Jeff Knox** - Originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Jeff is a retired speech-language pathologist who has been volunteering with Table to Table for 10 years. He first got involved through friends and long-time T2T supporter Frank Lalor.

One of Jeff's favorite memories is picking up a large number of egg crates from N.L. Hy-Vee. He also loved ending his routes with deliveries, knowing the food was immediately helping people.

His advice to new volunteers: "Be friendly, and talk to everyone."

Jeff recognizes that food insecurity is "becoming an even larger problem in our current society." Though he no longer runs a route, he remains active in research at St. Ambrose University and enjoys visiting with people. Travel is another passion—he and his family have explored much of Europe and the U.S. and will be heading to Newfoundland in September. His favorite treat? Angel food cake.



Jeff Knox, T2T volunteer of 10 years



Jenna Schmitt, T2T volunteer of 3 years

**Jenna Schmitt** - Jenna, originally from Naperville, Illinois, joined Table to Table nearly three years ago while studying at the University of Iowa. She began in a CORE support role before starting her regular Monday morning Trader Joe's route with her partner, Jon.

She recalls how Jon worked hard to include the Free Medical Program in their deliveries, which inspired her to see how food rescue touches so many corners of the community. Another fun memory was the first time she had to drive Van 10 on her own—"I didn't crash, so it was a success!"

Her advice for new volunteers: "Don't be afraid to get involved in more than one way. There are so many opportunities here. Also, talk to the other volunteers—I've never met a more interesting group of people with so many stories, advice, and jokes to share."

Reflecting on food rescue, Jenna said, "The work T2T does is so important. Even though it cannot end food insecurity, the positive impact of food donations is immense."

A favorite food memory for Jenna came when a friend's family welcomed her with a homemade garden-fresh meal at a time when she was homesick—an experience she says she'll never forget. Looking ahead, she's planning a trip to hike Machu Picchu with her sister and looks forward to celebrating with her favorite treat: vanilla bean or salted caramel ice cream.

**Loyal Ulm** - Loyal, originally from Urbandale, Iowa, has been a T2T volunteer for almost five years. A former Operations and Home Delivery Manager at the Coralville Pantry, he is now pursuing a graduate degree in Social Work at the University of Iowa. He began volunteering soon after moving to Iowa City as a way to get involved locally. Some of his favorite memories come from getting to know people at drop-off sites—especially a daycare chef who shared his excitement about preparing meals with the food from T2T.

Loyal encourages new volunteers to embrace variety: "I always enjoyed going on substitute routes. It's a great way to meet new people and see different parts of town." Through his work at the Coralville Pantry, Loyal saw firsthand the immediate impact of T2T: "It's amazing that the food we pick up every morning makes it onto the dinner table that same night."

A favorite food memory from childhood was baking birthday cakes with his parents, with the birthday child being able to pick the cake theme, including a memorable Pennywise the Clown cake inspired by the movie It. Today, when he's not studying, he enjoys jigsaw puzzles and long walks in the woods.



Loyal Ulm, T2T volunteer of 5 years



## Service Enterprise Project Update Written by: Marcia Musgrove

Over the last 18 months, T2T leadership and the Volunteer Engagement Committee have been working on completion of the requirements for Service Enterprise, a certification that recognizes not for profit agencies commitment to support, show appreciation and engage volunteers in its strategic planning and operations. This project included an assessment of current state, analysis of gaps/opportunities, implementation of best practices and submission of documentation that demonstrated evidence in meeting the best practice standards. On August 30, 2025, Service Enterprise Certification was awarded to Table to Table. . Kudos to Jared and Nicki for their leadership.



## Volunteer Engagement Committee FY25 Projects written by: Marcia Musgrove

Table to Table's Volunteer Engagement Committee has been busy! It is led by Jared Long, Volunteer Manager and includes volunteers in a variety of roles. Some of the committee's projects this year included volunteer appreciation initiatives like Souper Volunteer Week, special shirts awarded to volunteers with 5+ years of service, free Heartlander hockey tickets, and volunteer hangouts at Big Grove! The committee also worked on volunteer training protocols and developed a new volunteer onboarding checklist, training guides for each volunteer position, and some volunteers even attended food justice workshops presented by Jada McDonald, AmeriCorps VISTA member. Also on the list of accomplishments is significant updates to the volunteer handbook, analyzing volunteer survey results to identify areas for improvement, and the completion of the first year of the T2T Volunteer Newsletter - [check out past issues here!](#) Here's to another year of great work by the Volunteer Engagement Committee!!!

## Rock the Chalk

Written by: Marcia Musgrove

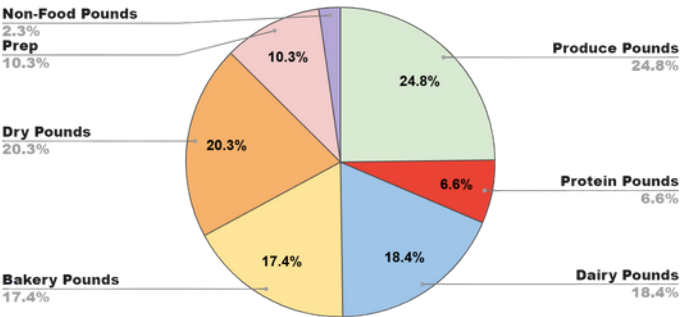


This year's Rock the Chalk in downtown Iowa City was another Table to Table success! If you weren't able to participate or admire see below for evidence of artistic talent from Nicki, Christina and volunteer artists of all ages. Our theme this year was Sit at the Cool Table!

## FY25 Metrics: YOUR Impact on Food Insecurity

- 2,621,817 pounds of food rescued this year
- Volunteers served 11,530 hours on 3608 shifts.
- 43,870 miles driven on 2355 routes = 6,632 pick ups and 6,040 deliveries
- 41 Food access partners and 6 produce stand locations served
- Top 5 food donors: UNFI, Costco, Trader Joe's, Hy-Vee 1st Ave, Hy-Vee Waterfront

FY25 Distribution by Food Type



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next page...

## Volunteer Awards

Written by: Jared Long

Each year, we like to take the opportunity to recognize volunteers who have served with Table to Table for at least a decade. This year, for 10 years of dedicated service, Vicki Jaeger, Dick & Deb Irvin, and Bernice Thommandru were all recipients of the State of Iowa Governor's Volunteer Award. If you happen to bump into any of these volunteers, please congratulate them and thank them for their extraordinary service to this community.



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## FY25 Metrics Continued: Local Foods Recovery

- Table to Table distributed a total of 47,062 lbs of local produce in FY25.
- Volunteers also delivered 42,775 lbs of fresh local produce for the Grow: Johnson County program.
- Completed 53 gleans at 17 different farms and gardens, totaling 8,103 lbs. (Up 68%)
- T2T attended 46 farmers markets or wholesale produce markets
- Through partnership with Field to Family, T2T received 3,283 lbs of food from the Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program.

## Fundraising Breakdown

- 57% of revenue came from individual/household donors through direct appeals, events, and unsolicited gifts
  - 68% of the funding from household donors comes from 20% of these donors
- 33% revenue came from community groups, organizations, and municipalities
  - This includes grants, sponsorships, and donations
- 10% of revenues came from corporate donors and partners, demonstrating room for growth in this area and opportunities for our donor relations officer
- 160 first time donors in FY25

### Working Together at CommUnity: Drop-Off Tips for a Safer Flow

Written by Gina Hudson

As many of you know, our team makes multiple trips to CommUnity every day to deliver food donations. With that level of activity, it's incredibly important that we stay safe, organized, and respectful of the space and people we're working with.

I recently had a great conversation with Matt at CommUnity, who shared some valuable insights to help make our drop-offs as smooth and safe as possible. By following a few key practices, we can ensure we're supporting their staff while keeping ourselves and others out of harm's way.

The biggest takeaway? Patience goes a long way. The drop-off area is located in an active alley where vans, trucks, forklifts, carts, and people are all moving at once. For everyone's safety, please stay inside your vehicle until the van ahead of you has completely pulled away. When it's your turn, pull up to the garage door and ring the doorbell once - even if the door is already open. Staff are nearby and will come out quickly to assist you.

When someone comes to meet you, let them know what kind of food you've brought (for example: "chilled items and bread"). This helps them prepare the right storage space immediately. A staff member will bring a cart to your vehicle. You're welcome to unload the donation yourself or ask for help if needed. And if you can, please take banana boxes back with you to reuse. Once your donation is unloaded, we ask that you exit the alley promptly to make room for the next delivery.

Although there aren't set times to avoid, some drop-offs are naturally busier than others. Regardless of when you arrive, staying calm and aware of your surroundings helps keep everything moving safely. One issue we've occasionally seen is volunteers jumping in too quickly - grabbing carts or beginning to unload before staff are ready. While we know it comes from a place of wanting to help, this can actually cause confusion and even create safety hazards. Similarly, standing outside the van or gathering in the alley can unintentionally block traffic lanes. The best thing you can do is stay in your vehicle until the way is clear and staff are ready to receive your delivery.

Food safety is also a top priority. Always let someone know what's in your donation so perishable items can be handled right away. Please don't leave a cart or boxes unattended, even if you're in a hurry. And remember - volunteers are not expected to inspect or sort food donations. CommUnity's staff handles all of that. Your role is simply to ensure a safe handoff and clear communication.

Thank you for showing up with such dedication and care, day after day. The time you spend making these deliveries truly matters, and by following these practices, you help keep everyone safe while supporting CommUnity in the best possible way.