

# Volunteer Spotlights

From sun-drenched gardens to bustling pick-ups, our volunteers make magic happen every day. Here's a peek into the story of two of our bright, garden-loving gleaners! **Written by: Lynn Morano**

## Deb Bernhard

Meet Deb Bernhard, who jokingly says she's "from everywhere!" Deb jumped into Food Rescue life in the spring of 2025 after her friend Anne invited her to try glean— and she's been hooked ever since!

"My favorite part?" Deb says, "Spending time in these gorgeous gardens! They're such peaceful places—I love the sunshine, the bees, the butterflies, and even the occasional cat who comes to supervise."

Deb believes every hour spent glean— truly matters. "That short time in the garden makes a huge difference for Iowa City families and their kids," she says. Fresh produce has become a luxury, and thanks to generous garden owners, we get to share that bounty "with everyone!"

When she's not gathering veggies, Deb enjoys reading, walking, yoga, traveling, and—no surprise—pie! She's lived all over the U.S., but her dream destination? The North Pole! (We're guessing she wants to check if Santa's garden needs a little glean— too!)

We're so grateful to have Deb's bright energy and adventurous spirit as part of our Food Rescue family!



## Volunteer Hangout Wrap-up

**Written by: Jared Long**

Volunteers and staff had a great time at the Volunteer Hangout last month at Big Grove. We'll plan on doing it again next Spring, so don't worry if you missed this one. There'll be another time!



## Anne Suter



From rock bands to early mornings in the garden, Anne Suter has done it all — and we're thrilled to shine this month's volunteer spotlight on her!

Originally from the South, but happily rooted in Iowa for decades, Anne has been part of Table to Table for years. She first got involved when her husband, Tom, served on the Executive Board, and she later served three terms herself — helping guide funding priorities and fundraising efforts.

In 2022, Anne found a new calling as a gleaner, recruited by her daughter Molly, who had helped launch the initiative. "I love starting my days outside on a farm or in a garden," Anne says. "And I really love that the fresh produce we harvest in the morning is almost always in someone's home by that evening. I appreciate the generosity of the donors so much."

Anne's advice about T2T's mission?

"Food insecurity is everywhere, and food abundance is all around us. Table to Table connects the two — efficiently, beautifully, and more importantly, with heart."

When she's not glean—, Anne enjoys reading, walking, traveling, knitting, crocheting, dancing, and cheering on the Hawkeyes. And here's a fun fact: she was the lead singer in a rock and roll show band in the 1980s — very tall hair included!

Her favorite ice creams? Pistachio and chocolate chip, of course.

From Board meetings to cornfields, Anne's energy, dedication, and joyful spirit have made Table to Table stronger for decades. Thank you, Anne, for everything you do!



**We're sending a big Table to Table thank-you to one of our longtime volunteers, who's wrapping up his time with us and heading north to new adventures!**

## Farewell to Bob Montgomery

After four years of dedicated volunteering with Table to Table, we're wishing Bob Montgomery all the best as he moves on to his next adventure — in Duluth!

Originally from Ida Grove, Iowa, Bob has spent the past 47 years in Iowa City, where he's shared his time, talents, and good humor with the T2T community. Before retirement, Bob was a software engineer, but once the pandemic settled down, he was ready for something new.

"I was kind of tired of hiding out at home from COVID," Bob shared. "After the vaccines came out, I was looking for some way to contribute to the community. This was my first experience volunteering as a retiree — and I liked it so much that I've added two other regular volunteer gigs!"

Bob's sense of adventure and quick wit have made him a favorite among staff and fellow volunteers. When asked about his most memorable moments at T2T, he didn't disappoint:

"Going to the Oakdale prison and wandering around looking for someone—anyone—to help me, hoping I wouldn't get jumped and taken hostage."

"Or the time my route partner and I couldn't find each other at the Coralville Hy-Vee, so I called Jared to ask how to find him. How would Jared know?"

"Or the time Mary Palmberg and I picked up and delivered 3,500 pounds on a route. Oof. I made her buy me a Blizzard at DQ afterward. I think that route got split soon after that!"

His best advice for new volunteers?

"Call the office if anything weird happens — even if Jared can't help find your lost partner in Hy-Vee."

When he's not rescuing food, Bob enjoys walking, cycling, skiing, reading, playing the saxophone, and frisbee golfing with his son. And when it comes to food, he's got strong opinions:

"I have a hard time saying favorite, but the Mary Palmberg Special Blizzard is hard to beat — chocolate soft serve with chocolate, caramel, and pecans."

He also shared one sweet family tradition: making pizza on the grill every Easter when his kids were little.

Thank you, Bob, for all the laughter, stories, and impact you've brought to Table to Table. Duluth is lucky to have you — but we'll always claim you as part of the T2T family!



### AmeriCorps Opportunity at T2T

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### Winter Weather is on the Way Written by Jared Long

I'm sorry to be the bearer of 'bad' news, but winter is right around the corner. Some folks love it, some loathe it, but regardless, we need to have a plan. Now is a good time to refresh your memory of our [Weather Safety Cancellation and Delay Policy](#). We occasionally need to cancel or delay routes. While we try to make the best decision based on the available information, we may sometimes decide to run routes in conditions that you are not comfortable with. Please know that you are welcome to call out anytime the weather conditions are beyond your comfort zone.





# Volunteer Newsletter

## The Uniqueness of T2T - Written by Jeff Knox

I was looking at an old t-shirt I had received from an early volunteer episode at Table to Table. Something caught my eye. At the bottom of the front of the shirt was: "Iowa's original Food Rescue Organization." To my curious mind this meant that there were other food rescue organizations in Iowa. Gina suggested that I talk Nicki about this. She was able to give me the following information. Thanks to Gina and to Nicki. What follows is not original, but is from the information Nicki provided.

There are three ways in which communities rescue food: centralized food banking, decentralized partner pickup, and coordinated transportation and distribution. Guess which of these is these fits our T2T model? Answer to follow.

Food Banking is the most common model. Feeding America is the leader in Iowa. Food donations are picked up from partners, like Walmart. The food is transported to one of six food banks that serve Iowa. Trucks are sent, with paid drivers, to pick up pallets of food. Feeding America came into existence in 2008. This makes T2T one of the few food rescue organizations that had local rescue relationships before Feed America.

Decentralized Partner Pick up involves individual organizations like a pantry picking up food from a store. Volunteers would go to stores and pick up food. Many rural counties in Iowa use this method. For example, the Scott County Food Rescue Partnership uses this method. T2T is important in that donor partners do not have to divide food rescue opportunities for 40+ organizations.

T2T fits under the Coordinated Transportation and Distribution model. I asked Google to find other T2T organizations in the country. The only one found, with the same name, was in New Jersey. You all know how T2T works. Eat Greater Des Moines had a similar food rescue operation. However, it closed after a conflict with the local food bank.

This information answered my question. We are unique! Thanks Nicki and Gina

## Utilization and Safety Guidelines for Van 13 Written by Marcia Musgrove and Elizabeth Wagner

As some of you may have noticed, a new vehicle has joined our parking lot! You may have also noticed it looks a little different than the rest of our fleet. This November, T2T will begin utilizing our newly purchased 2023 Ford Transit Cargo Cutaway Box Truck. Because the structure of the vehicle is different from our cargo vans, we have included specific utilization and safety instructions for our new Van 13 below!

- Entering and Exiting Vehicle

Like any vehicle, always use three points of contact when entering and exiting the cargo area. Three points means that you should have two hands and one foot - or two feet and one hand - in contact with the vehicle at all times when entering or exiting.

There are two handle bars attached to the rear of the cargo area to be used for support

.Use the four-step ladder to enter/exit the side cargo door - please do not use the attached stirrup step.

- Using the Ladder

The ladder will be secured near the side cargo door using hooks and a bungee cord. Lift the ladder off of the hooks (the ladder weighs 25 lbs.) and place it parallel to the vehicle with the handle up.



Use the step later to enter/exit the van



Consider packing some items in the van



Place the ladder parallel to the van



Secure the ladder by the side door with a bungee cord.



Utilization and Safety Guidelines for Van 13 - Continued

Before you leave each stop, lift the ladder back into position and secure it in the hooks with the bungee cord. Always make sure to load the ladder back in the truck before you drive away!

• Loading and Packing

The bed of Van 13 is slightly textured, making it difficult to slide boxes. Plan ahead with your partner on roles and consider having one person outside the truck packing boxes and one inside to pack the truck.

To decrease lifting, consider packing the boxes on the bed of the truck instead of the ground.

Please do not carry any boxes while moving up or down the ladder.

• Locking the Vehicle

Use the key fob to lock the driver and passenger door in the cab.

The side and rear cargo doors need to be manually locked with smaller keys attached to the carabiner. To keep our ladder and belongings safe inside, please remember to lock each cargo door at the completion of your route!

For a refresher on general safety procedures and body mechanics, please rewatch our personal safety video! If you have any questions about the new vehicle or safety guidelines, please reach out to T2T staff!



Meet the Big Truck of T2T  
Written By Gina Hudson

If you've ever noticed the T2T big white truck parked out front, you've seen one of the hard working members of our team. Our 22-foot refrigerated straight truck can hold up to 10,000 pounds of food, making it essential to T2T's mission. This mighty vehicle helps us recover over 900,000 pounds of food each year, with warehouse donations making up 31% of all food T2T recovers. These donations include a wide range of nutritious options, from gluten-free and vegetarian foods to organic staples, adding balance and variety to the meals we share.

Each week, the big truck follows a busy route: visiting United Natural Foods every Thursday (and sometimes Tuesday), making runs to HACAP Food Reservoir in Hiawatha to pick up large orders for CommUnity, responding when Tyson Foods calls with pallets of pork,

and stopping by Amazon every few weeks for donations. Many of these pickups involve ten or more pallets, and the truck's capacity makes those large rescues possible - like the 45,000 pounds of cantaloupe it helped haul a few months ago!

A few specially trained drivers rotate through these routes, ensuring each trip runs smoothly and safely. By the time most volunteers arrive for their shifts, the big truck has already been out and back, quietly keeping our food recovery efforts moving. It's the behind-the-scenes powerhouse that helps us rescue more food, reduce waste, and deliver nutritious meals across our community.



As we celebrate Thanksgiving and the winter holidays, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of our volunteers. Your commitment to rescuing wholesome food and delivering it where it's needed most brings hope and nourishment to our community. Thank you for all you do..