

Route Restructure Update: Your Feedback Matters

Written by: Gina Hudson

We recently shared an update about our route restructure, and as part of that process, I had the opportunity to interview several of you who regularly run routes. Those conversations focused on a few key questions:

What's working well on your current route? Where do you see inefficiencies or challenges? Are there partner-specific needs or requests that aren't always reflected in the data?

We've taken that feedback, along with our route data, and rebuilt our route structure based on what we learned. We've already implemented a couple of smaller changes, and in doing so, we recognized that we may need another round of volunteer communication before moving forward with the larger restructuring.

Before we implement the full route structure we've developed, we want to review the proposed changes - especially with our volunteers assigned to the same weekly route - and hear more about your experiences. We want to hear more about your partner relationships, their specific requests, and the informal route negotiations that happen day to day. This kind of qualitative feedback is just as important as the numbers.

For example, in the route changes we've made already, one partner is receiving fewer dairy donations. Through follow-up conversations, we learned that this partner was actually taking dairy product that wasn't a high priority for other partners on the route. This was context that wasn't visible in the data alone. That insight helped us better understand the impact of the change.

At the same time, we also recognize that volunteers may need more information from us. While you help us understand specific relationships and on-the-ground realities, we want to help you see the bigger picture of our route structure and how each partner fits into the broader food access system and how our decisions affect the communities we serve overall.

One example of this broader view came from reviewing delivery frequency and reach. We realized we were delivering to a childcare program four times a week that serves 60 children, while a pantry partner serving more than 200 children each week was receiving fewer deliveries. Through the restructure, we were able to better align deliveries to meet the needs of more kids across our network while still serving the childcare program appropriately.

This next round of feedback is about balancing both perspectives: the experience and expertise you bring as volunteers, and the system-level view that helps us increase impact. We're grateful for your insight, flexibility, and continued partnership as we work to make our routes as effective and responsive as possible. It will still be some time before we implement anything, but we plan to be in touch in the coming weeks to have a conversation about changes to your route.

Upcoming Events!

Souper Volunteer Week

When: February 2 - 7

What: An annual week of appreciation for all T2T volunteers. Each day of the week we'll have hot soup and a treat for volunteers as you return from your routes. The more days you volunteer, the more kinds of soups you can try.

T2T Night at the Heartlanders

When: February 20, 7pm

What: T2T is the Heartlanders Nonprofit of the Night! Complimentary tickets are available for volunteers, and we are selling discounted tickets as a fundraiser with the proceeds benefitting T2T. We will be selling pucks for the Chuck-a-Puck game, and have feature video played on the jumbotron!

Where: Xtream Arena

Who: Anyone - spread the word!!!

T2T Annual Dinner

When: April 22, 5:30-7:30pm

What: Celebrate 30 years of food recovery with us in a night of community, philanthropy, and fun!

Where: The Celebration Farm

Who: All are welcome!

More info on the Annual Dinner on page 3

Volunteer Spotlight

Gerald "Gerry" Clamon

Written by: Jared Long and Lynn Morano

We're pleased to introduce Gerald "Gerry" Clamon, a retired physician and medical oncologist originally from Connecticut. Gerry has been volunteering with Table to Table for nearly six years, helping rescue good food and deliver it to neighbors who need it most.

Gerry learned about Table to Table from his neighbors and friends, Mary and Mike Kelley, who shared how rewarding food rescue can be. After getting a taste of the mission, Gerry jumped right in and hasn't looked back.

When asked what he enjoys most about volunteering, Gerry said, "I've met so many wonderful volunteers on routes and have formed lasting friendships. Gina in the office is incredibly kind and hardworking. She's an inspiration."

His advice for new volunteers? "Try a few routes and choose one you enjoy, ideally with someone you get along with." After all, food rescue is best served as a team effort.



Gerry Clamon, T2T
volunteer of 6 years

One of Gerry's favorite food memories is making tortellini with his family. Although he admits he was never very good at folding them and was gently teased for it. A fun fact you might not know: Gerry was already getting "pretty darn bald" in his twenties! And if he could travel anywhere, he'd choose something simple and meaningful like camping with his family again.

Thank you, Gerry, for helping save food, reduce waste, and nourish our community. We're grateful to have you as part of the Table to Table family.



Partner Interview: IC Compassion

Written by: Greg Clancy

Kim Seals has served as the dedicated director of the Iowa City Compassion Food Pantry for 10 years. When the food pantry opens on Wednesdays, she and Compassion volunteers meet our volunteers at the Table to Table delivery truck. Together they unload everything in the truck, but can always use more. Like so many of our partners, Kim says they have seen a significant increase in demand over the past few months.

Everyone at the pantry is treated with respect, regardless of age, background, race, clothing, or appearance. Kim emphasizes that all are welcome. Many people who benefit from the pantry are middle-aged or older and come from a variety of backgrounds, including refugees. However, not everyone prefers traditional American foods. Some enjoy kabsa, a dish made from long-grain rice, chicken, vegetables, and spices like cardamom, saffron, cinnamon, black lime, bay leaves, and nutmeg. Fresh vegetables like summer onions are also especially appreciated.

Kim wanted us T2T volunteers to know how much our work means to the people served at IC Compassion. We are helping to complete Compassion's mission to "create a diverse environment that fosters a deep sense of belonging for all." A college student volunteer noted how sometimes clients arrive with their head hanging down and frowning, but after visiting the Compassion community and receiving healthy food, they leave smiling and feeling uplifted.



Kim always pulls out all the stops to bring some festive cheer to the pantry during the holidays!



Kim works hard to ensure all the folks who visit IC Compassion can take home a Thanksgiving turkey.

Meet Sam Fouts, Green Iowa AmeriCorps Member!

Written by: Jeff Knox

Sam is our new AmeriCorps volunteer. He hails from Cleveland, Ohio, and attended Miami University majoring in literature and Creative Writing. He even studied for a year on a Greek island, Ikaria. After college, a friend told him about AmeriCorps and a position in Iowa City. He loves Iowa City, living downtown and enjoying the rich cultural activities that are available. He especially likes Prairie Lights, often attending the readings.

According to Sam, there are never routine days at Table to Table. He likes the people he has met. His role is ever-changing, including filling in as needed on routes; doing documentation and school presentations for Love Food, Fight Waste; aiding with harvesting to bolster local food access, and being in contact with local food donors. He's even undertaken writing a children's book about Table to Table!

When he's not at Table to Table, Sam likes to read. He describes his reading tastes as eclectic. He is currently learning about urban planning. His favorite food is fried potatoes, with oil, garlic, and salt. And we recently learned he's a hot sauce tasting competition champion, tasting the million scoville unit hot sauce without breaking a sweat.

Welcome Sam. We are glad you are here.



Sam helped out with lots of gleans this Fall, helping us connect farm fresh produce with our partners!

Save the Date for the T2T Annual Dinner!

Written by: Natalie Leathers



April 22, 5:30-7:30pm

The Celebration Farm in the Double Round Barn

You won't want to miss the opportunity to gather with fellow T2T supporters, volunteers, and partners at this year's Annual Dinner! Join us for a night of FUN-draising and celebrate 40 million pounds of recovered food across 30 years of food recovery efforts in our community!

With exciting new activities, silent and live auction fun, delicious plates from all your favorite local restaurants, and an epic surprise, this year's dinner is sure to be one for the books!

Invitations will be mailed out in early March, but if you'd like to secure your tickets ahead of time, be

The Volunteer Submitted by Jeff Knox

Down through the ages
On life's many pages
One thing stands out very clear
Whenever they're needed
For a cause that's pleaded
Is the ready-to-help volunteer.

They respond by groups or by one
They work 'till the task is all done
They ask no special favor
They just simply savor
The feeling of good in their heart
The good they had from the start.

on the lookout for a save the date email to hit your inbox very soon!

As always we will also need a large number of volunteers to help out with various aspects of the event, including set up, dinner service, tear down, and much more. All volunteers will receive an email in late February with the option to sign up for volunteer duties at the dinner.

If you have any questions regarding the dinner, volunteer opportunities, or ticket purchases, please email Natalie at communications@table2table.org. We hope to see you there!

From the Handbook: When Calling Out

Written by: Jared Long

As we are now well into the season where weather and illness can lead to late arrivals and absences, we thought it might be a good idea to remind folks about what to do if you are running behind or need to miss a shift. The information below is taken from the Volunteer Handbook.

Volunteer Commitment & Absences

You are an integral and valued part of our team, and we depend on your attendance to keep Table to Table running smoothly. In general, when you need to be absent, we request that you notify the staff as far in advance as possible. This allows us to find another volunteer to be scheduled in your absence.

Please follow the guidelines below if you are going to be running late or absent:

- If you are running late, please give us a call and let us know when to expect you (319-337-3400)
- If you need to call out with less than 24 hours before your absence
 - Call 319-337-3400 AND
 - Email scheduling@table2table.org
- Planned absences
 - Please provide us with written communication by either email (scheduling@table2table.org) or the Volunteer Absence form in the office
 - Additionally, letting someone know verbally in the office is helpful but not sufficient, and must be accompanied by the above-listed notification process to ensure appropriate team members have access to the information.



A Day in the Life of...

Written by: Sam Fouts

I learn a lot from our volunteers. Some have been part of Table to Table for so long that a route comes to them like breath. As we're loading food into a van, they can already tell me which partners will be interested in what—who can distribute a gaylord of pumpkins or accommodate a one-hundred pound slab of meat. It's not that they know food so much as they know people. I've taken note.

On any given day, I make an effort to chat. On routes, I speak with the folks in the storehouses, the workers at the Hy-Vee bakery counters, the people who run the pantries, and those who shop our vans for items to make a meal. I'm getting to know them, slowly. And where there are gaps in my knowledge, I turn to the volunteers who know our partners best—who (in one case) toss them candy fireballs on our stops.

Every day, I'm learning. Small things—the names of Costco warehouse workers, shortcuts, favorite foods. I'm learning what fifty pounds of dairy looks like at Successful Living, that if you ask (and you're lucky) you might get a whole fish from a Hy-Vee deli counter, that you can take that fish to the Salvation Army for their evening meal, that there's still plenty I need to know.

I've enjoyed my first three months at Table to Table immensely, and I'm looking forward to the conversations to come!

Helpful Volunteer Hints

Written by: Marcia Musgrove

1. A few tips for using the new van (#13): you can pack/stack boxes inside the back of the van, make a path from front to back inside the back of the van for using both the side door and back doors, it tends to be easiest to get in and out through the back door.
2. When documenting your volunteer hours, if you are not providing hours associated with a route, please be sure to log your hours on the clipboard hanging to the right of the van keys.