



**CommUnity**  
Crisis Services and Food Bank

**GRASSROOTS & GROWING**  
FY21 Annual Report



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# GRASSROOTS & GROWING

## MISSION

CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank is a volunteer-driven organization that provides immediate and non-judgmental support for individuals facing emotional, food, or financial crisis.

## VISION

Every individual in our community has support in a time of need.

## VALUES

- Individuals self-identify for CommUnity services.
- We protect the privacy of the individuals we serve.
- Clients come first.
- We make the most efficient use of our resources.
- Volunteers are the heart of the organization.

## Dear Friends,

Throughout the history of human beings, people have relied on one another to survive. This applied to our ancestors as much as it does today. We rely on the contributions of others to enhance our quality of life. Whether that is a family member watching our children, our friends helping us with a ride to the airport; or something of a more systemic nature like sending our children to public school, depending on snow plows in a storm, or calling the fire department in an emergency. It is community that enhances our quality of life and contributes to the ability for each individual to not just survive, but thrive.

It is for this reason that we are extremely proud of CommUnity Crisis Services & Food Bank as an organization. We were started by the grassroots efforts of a few, and have become a long-standing staple that our neighbors rely on when times are challenging. Our programs exist to serve a wide array of community needs. From essential items like food and housing, to providing crisis response; CommUnity staff, volunteers, and donors show up for their neighbors. Through our Food Bank and Basic Needs programs we are able to assist individuals and families through food assistance, rent assistance, and work enabling items. Through our Crisis Intervention and Mobile Crisis Outreach programs we respond 24/7 to those in our community who are in crisis, need emotional support, or are experiencing mental health challenges.

The upcoming year is going to represent continued growth for the services CommUnity offers. As we continue to live through this pandemic, mental health needs are significant for youth and adults in our community. As a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Center, CommUnity counselors will be answering the 988 crisis line as it rolls out next summer. This three digit number was created and approved by the FCC to remove barriers for those experiencing a mental health crisis. We anticipate a significant increase in calls, chats and texts as mental health needs continue to mount in our community, and barriers to access are reduced. Additionally, we are expanding our Mobile Crisis Outreach program to better meet the needs of our community by increasing our response to schools and alongside law enforcement. Mobile Crisis Outreach provides in-person counselors 24/7 at no cost, regardless of socio-economic status, to any member of our community. We are passionate about providing these lifesaving services, and dedicated to providing high quality crisis response services.

Our Food Bank and Basic Needs Programs continue to expand on the services they provide. Over the past year we have increased the number of clients served by mobile pantry and food delivery. We have changed the hours and process for clients to access clothing vouchers, rental assistance, utility assistance, and work enabling items. We consistently look for ways to improve upon our legacy services, removing barriers for the individuals and families we serve.

Community Crisis Services & Food Bank would not be the organization it is today without our amazing volunteers, donors and community partners. We are incredibly honored to have dedicated community supporters that understand we truly are better together. Please read on to see the impact our organization has had over the past year.



Sarah Nelson, Executive Director



Amy Hospodarsky, Board Chair



# 1.5 MILLION

## POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED

Your support distributed 1,544,798 lbs of food to our Food Bank Clients in FY21. 861,467 lbs of food were donated by Table to Table and 74,703 were donated by community members.

# 31,367

## VISITS TO THE FOOD BANK

10,839 individuals visited the Food Bank a total of 31,367 times in FY21. Of those, 73% of our clients identify as non-white, and 40% identify as black.

# 861,467

## POUNDS OF FOOD DONATED BY TABLE TO TABLE

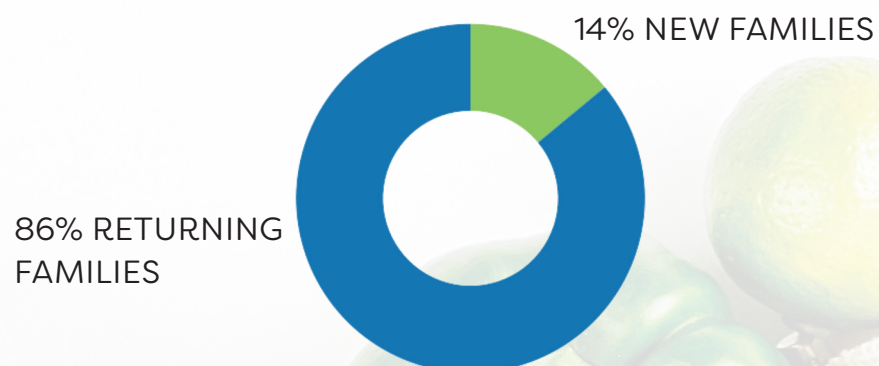
# 650

## FAMILIES SERVED WEEKLY

# 3,903

## FAMILIES SERVED ANNUALLY

563 of the 3,903 families who visited the Food Bank this year visited for the first time.



# FOOD BANK

# TABLE TO TABLE

## CommUnity's Closest Partner (Literally!)

After nearly a year in service at Pepperwood Plaza, CommUnity Food Bank was thrilled to welcome our partners, Table to Table to the neighborhood! Our Director of Development had the chance to sit down with Nicki Ross, Executive Director of Table to Table, as she settled into her new office. Ross, who has been with the organization for 5 years, leads a small staff, and an enormous volunteer force that rescued an average of 50,000 lbs of food each week last year.

Since 1996, Table to Table's mission has been to keep wholesome, edible food from going to waste by collecting it from donors and distributing to those in need through agencies that serve the hungry, homeless and at-risk populations. "One common misconception about food rescue," Ross said, "is that the food is somehow inferior... or short-dated. The truth is, that more than half of the food T2T collects is not short-dated, and has months of viability left."

Here's where CommUnity comes in. Our Food Bank model and Table to Table's food rescue model were developed with each other in mind. "Table to Table's model is remarkably unique, sustainable, and effective. We have the wheels and the relationships and we're able to match food donors with recipients... Table to Table knows food rescue and CommUnity knows its clients. Your volunteers and staff keep T2T going. They're so open-minded and provide great feedback and perspective."

In FY21, Table to Table donated 861,467 of the 1,544,798 pounds CommUnity Food Bank distributed. We're so grateful for their partnership over the last 25 years and look forward to a bright future of continued collaboration!



# A DEDICATED FOOD BANK VOLUNTEER

Rick grew up on a farm in rural Johnson County, Iowa. He understands the importance of a strong community and that’s why he volunteers every week at CommUnity’s Food Pantry at Pepperwood Plaza.

When Rick saw an article about the CommUnity Food Bank, he knew it was a sign for him to give back to the area he’s called home for over 60 years. “I just knew it was the perfect position for me,” he says. Rick quickly realized he wouldn’t just be making a difference for the thousands of hungry people CommUnity helps, but for fellow volunteers, as well. Rick says he’s made so many connections with clients and other volunteers that he considers them a part of his extended family, and he is forever grateful.

During the pandemic, Rick says services like CommUnity’s are needed now more than ever. “People have been homeless,” explains Rick. “They’ve been out on the streets and can’t make ends meet. There’s been people that have lost jobs and don’t have paychecks. There’s so many people that need our service and need our volunteers.”

Volunteering is a fun and meaningful way to give back, either alone or with a group of family, friends, teammates, or coworkers. CommUnity relies on volunteers every single day to help with important tasks like sorting and stocking shelves, administrative work, and more. For more information on how to join our team of compassionate and energetic volunteers, visit [builtbycommunity.org/volunteer](http://builtbycommunity.org/volunteer).

**585**  
FOOD BANK  
VOLUNTEERS

**11,203**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

**\$277K**  
IN COST  
SAVINGS

**1,787**  
TOTAL FOOD DELIVERIES

Our delivery volunteers make weekly access to groceries a possibility for our neighbors who may not have accessible transportation to visit the Food Bank.

**112**  
MOBILE PANTRY VISITS

The Mobile Pantry provides monthly grocery assistance to residents of underserved and rural areas in Johnson County.

**FOOD BANK**



# AN UEXPECTED CLIENT LETTER

Through all of our services, CommUnity serves thousands of people each week. Each client who walks through any of our doors has a rich history behind them, and we feel truly honored when someone offers to share their story with us.

We received a letter from a client named Ben at the end of FY21 explaining that “A few years ago, when I was just starting out on my own, I had little by means of wealth, just the very limited resources my closest family could spare...I was working two jobs, seven days a week and barely getting by, scraping the bottom of my bank account every two weeks.”

Ben went on to explain “When you work 56 hours over seven days a week, every week, and have extra expenses, debt, student loans, a high-interest car loan because the bank doesn’t trust you to not default at your income level - daily life is already strenuous,” but “People deserve to eat regardless of income or status... Every community, rural or urban, deserves to have a resource like CommUnity Crisis Services and Food Bank.”

On behalf of all CommUnity staff members and volunteers, thank you, Ben, for your kind letter! It is an honor to serve you and all of our clients!

**6,323**  
BABY ITEM VISITS

**1,702**  
INDIVIDUALS BENEFITTED  
FROM HOUSING & UTILITY  
ASSISTANCE

1,720 people benefitted from a total of 560 housing and utility assists in FY21. 112 of those were security deposit assists.

**276**  
IDENTIFICATION  
ASSISTS

**167**  
WORK  
ENABLING ITEMS  
DISTRIBUTED

**518**  
BOX FANS  
DISTRIBUTED

**1,514**  
BUS PASSES  
DISTRIBUTED

**1,740**  
CLOTHING  
VOUCHERS  
DISTRIBUTED

**BASIC NEEDS**



# AN EMPOWERED CI VOLUNTEER

Grace signed up to become a Crisis Intervention (CI) volunteer during her Freshman year at the University of Iowa. Now a senior, Grace looks back on her experience, saying “It scared me. I was super intimidated by the idea of talking to anyone with suicidal ideation, and I didn’t think I would be up for it, but I saw it as a big challenge and if I could learn how to do it properly and do it well, I thought it would be a really awesome way to spend my time!”

Grace is a Psychology student and would like to have a career in counseling. Volunteering with Crisis Intervention was a perfect way for her to get involved outside of academics and gain valuable experience. In addition, Grace says her experience as a volunteer has “given me a lot of great communication skills,” and “it’s a great opportunity to practice empathy and see how far unconditional positive regard can go.”

When asked what she would say to someone considering volunteering on the crisis line, Grace said “I think it can be super intimidating, but it’s worth it in the end. You learn a lot about yourself and other people. It’s just a great opportunity and a great way to spend your time... I leave every volunteer shift feeling better than I did before I arrived.”

We could not provide the level of service and mental health support we offer without our volunteers. When our neighbors are in need of another voice on the phone, CommUnity Crisis Intervention staff and volunteers are always there to take the call.

**33,020**  
TOTAL CONTACTS

**23,799**  
LIFELINE  
CONTACTS

**3,624**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

**\$89.5K**  
IN COST  
SAVINGS

**7,667**  
CONTACTS INVOLVING  
SUICIDE

Over 23% of our total Crisis Intervention contacts in FY21 discussed suicide. All Crisis Intervention staff and volunteers go through rigorous suicide intervention training to prepare them for these critical conversations.

**86%**  
OF CLIENTS FOUND THE  
CONVERSATION HELPFUL

After their conversation with CommUnity staff or volunteers, all Crisis Intervention clients are asked to provide feedback on their experience. Their valuable feedback allows us to constantly improve our service for future conversations.

**CRISIS  
INTERVENTION**



# AN INSPIRED CLIENT TURNED SPECIALIST

Kris first learned about CommUnity in 2002 when she found herself in need of food while living in a group home following a mental health diagnosis. She recalls what the Food Bank was like in the days before client choice became the standard.

“I remember when volunteers used to stock a table in the waiting room with fruit and bread. There were a lot more restrictions then, and people would rush to the table.” she says, and the new system “works really well. Grocery shopping where people can choose what they want... like gluten free items and things like that... works really well.”

Kris has used other CommUnity services such as Housing and Utility Assistance, bus passes, and clothing vouchers through the Basic Needs Program as well as Mobile Crisis Outreach. “I first used Mobile Crisis after someone really close to me passed away. I was in a really bad place and they came out to help.”

Kris has since put her experience to work with the Abbe Warm Line as a Peer Support Specialist. “One of the things I say to a lot of callers on the warm line is letting them know how strong they are for calling, not knowing who will answer, and reaching out.” On the Warm Line, everyone on staff has struggled with a mental health diagnosis, and Kris says it’s helpful that the peers know what services are like. “It’s good, because you don’t feel so alone. I want to help de-stigmatize mental health. Thinking about suicide isn’t a stupid decision. It’s not a selfish decision. You’re not alone.”

Kris, in addition to many other CommUnity clients, is thankful for the holistic approach to crisis CommUnity takes. “Thank you for helping me through the last 15-16 years. You’ve helped me get through the hardest time in my life. I couldn’t have done it without Mobile Crisis, without the Food Bank when I didn’t have money.”

**803**  
**DISPATCHES**

551 were dispatched through the Mental Health/Disability Services of the East Central Region (ECR), and 206 were dispatched through the GuideLink Center.

**2,939**  
**FOLLOW-UP  
CONTACTS**

Mobile Crisis Outreach clients receive follow-up contacts for one year following their initial contact. These contacts help connect clients with community services that can support them long-term.

**88%**  
**OF CLIENTS DIVERTED FROM  
HOSPITALS OR JAILS**

The goal of Mobile Crisis Outreach is to de-escalate the client’s mental health crisis and divert clients from hospitals and jails. In FY21, we saw some of our highest dispatched rates ever and several months boasted a diversion rate of 90% or above.

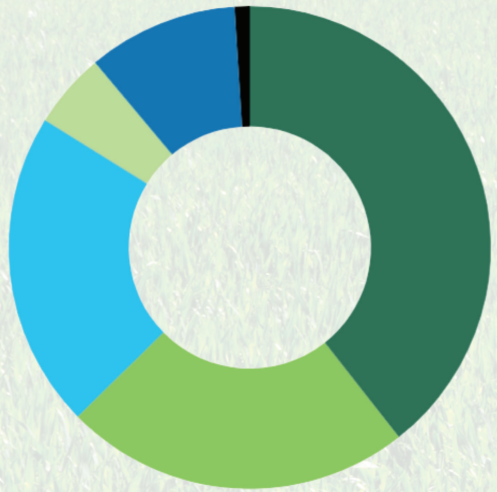


88% HOSPITAL & JAIL  
DIVERSION RATE

# MOBILE CRISIS OUTREACH

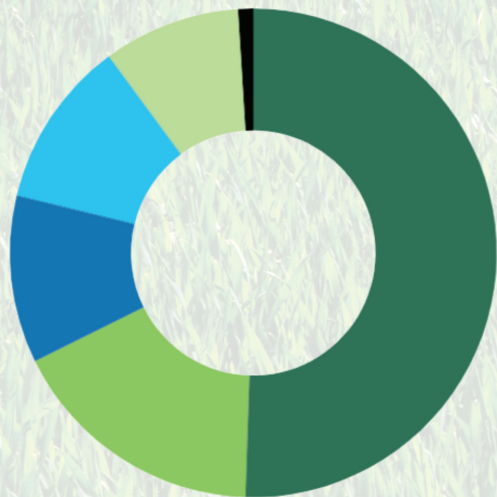


FOR EVERY \$1 SPENT... **\$0.89** goes to programs  
**\$0.11** goes to administration



IN-KIND DONATIONS **\$2,587,983**  
CONTRIBUTIONS **\$1,567,113**  
CONTRACT INCOME **\$1,385,959**  
GRANTS **\$697,847**  
FUNDING ALLOCATIONS **\$357,323**  
OTHER **\$98,492**

REVENUE



FOOD BANK **\$3,075,850**  
CRISIS INTERVENTION **\$1,063,208**  
MOBILE CRISIS OUTREACH **\$691,462**  
ADMINISTRATION **\$674,750**  
BASIC NEEDS **\$581,768**  
OTHER **\$71,635**

EXPENSES

FINANCIALS

A NOTE FROM OUR  
CI PROGRAM MANAGER

Last year alone, we talked to over 33,000 people in crisis. Many of those conversations were handled by volunteers - people like you who want to help, who want to make a difference in people's lives, and, in some cases, be the presence that helps a person choose life. If you've ever been struggling and needed support, you know how critical a service like this can be. We're here for everything from "I'm having a bad day" to "I don't know how I will get to tomorrow."

While helping others through a crisis may sound like a daunting task, we have a thorough, engaging, and fun training program taught by long-serving counselors and experts that will help you hone your skills and natural instincts towards empathy, compassion, and helping.

Whether you're looking to bolster your professional resumé for a future career in mental health, or just looking to give back to our community, the Crisis Intervention program is a great place to spend your time! The conversation about the importance of mental health is gaining momentum, and you can have an impact right now! Join us for our Spring training this coming February, and become a part of the movement to shed light on these issues to have a meaningful, life affirming effect on your friends, family, and community!

Ryan Dickson, Crisis Intervention Program Manager



# OUR DONORS

## \$250 – \$499

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Gabriela Kaus  
Will & Wendy Keen  
Michael & Mary Kelley  
Michael W. & Michelle R. Kennedy  
Nancy Kennedy  
Sandy Kessler

# CommUnity’s Leadership team is made up entirely of women!

## \$500 – \$999

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# 279 Birthday Bags

were distributed to local children at our Food Bank in FY21!  
Birthday Bags are available for kids of all ages and include  
a cake baking kit, birthday decorations, a present, and  
more! Thanks to the Rotary Club of Iowa City Downtown  
for donating birthday bags to the Food Bank.

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Barbara Zilles  
Linda S. Zimmerman

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## DECEMBER

**Project Holiday**  
All month - Each \$25 donation will purchase a complete holiday meal for a local family in need.

## FEBRUARY

**Spread the Love**  
All month - Spread the Love is CommUnity's annual community-wide peanut butter and jelly drive.

## MARCH

**Pancake Breackfast**  
March 5 - Join us for breakfast on the first Saturday in March.

## APRIL

**CommUnity Baby Shower**  
All month - Help us provide diapers and other baby items to local families.  
**Hunger Banquet**  
April 8 - The Hunger Banquet is designed to immerse participants in the reality of food insecurity.

## MAY

**Mental Health Awareness Month**  
All month - Help us raise awareness about the importance of taking care of your mental health.  
**Period Poverty Drive**  
All month - Let's end the cycle of period poverty through the donation of menstrual hygiene products.

## JUNE

**Strike Out Hunger**  
June through August - Help us provide diapers and other baby items to local families.  
**Fan Club**  
June through July - For every \$20 donation, a family in need will receive a box fan.



Join CommUnity in celebrating 50 (plus one) years of service to our community!

We're all closet disco queens this year, but we can celebrate in style with limited edition 50th Anniversary Reunion gear!



Place your order at  
[builtbycommunity.org/50th-anniversary](http://builtbycommunity.org/50th-anniversary)

Order your **limited edition** 50th Anniversary gear now!

Supplies are limited.  
Ordering will close on November 10th!

Learn more about Mission Circle at [builtbycommunity.org/missioncircle](http://builtbycommunity.org/missioncircle)



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# QUICK CONTACTS



## **Crisis Intervention**

Call, chat, or text a trained counselor to listen and provide support.

Call or Text: 1-855-325-4296

Chat: [IowaCrisisChat.org](https://lowacrisischat.org)



## **Mobile Crisis Outreach**

Have trained crisis counselors dispatched to your location.

Call 1-855-581-8111 and ask for Mobile Crisis



## **Basic Needs**

Get assistance with rent, utility bills, mailing addresses, and more.

Call (319) 351-0128



## **Food Bank**

Visit once per week to receive groceries and household basics.

Call (319) 351-0128 for delivery or visit the Food Bank at

1045 Highway 6 East

Iowa City, IA 52240

# TOP TEN NEEDED DONATIONS

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Financial Donations    | 6. Baby Formula         |
| 2. Hygiene Products       | 7. Rice & Pasta         |
| 3. Toilet Paper           | 8. Hearty Soups & Stews |
| 4. Canned Meat            | 9. Peanut Butter        |
| 5. Baby Diapers and Wipes | 10. Laundry Detergent   |



