



SERVING UP SMILES (From top, clockwise) A kid enjoys his meal from Table to Table; celebrity chefs Emeril Lagasse, David Burke and Peter Kelly help the foundation at its food and wine fundraisers; volunteers unpack deliveries. (Opposite page) Claire Insalata Poulos; volunteers unload a truck; New Jersey Senator Cory Booker with volunteers.

While Poulos and her team are the heart of organization, its workhorses are a fleet of refrigerated trucks. They began on Labor Day 1999 with the simple goal of staying open.

"We had one truck and one driver and we picked up food from three donors and delivered it to three recipient agencies," Poulos says. "We finished the year by delivering enough food for almost 30,000 meals."

Instead of government aid, Table to Table keeps the trucks rolling through fundraising. Its two spring events, which have long been considered the premier food and wine events in Bergen County, draw a mix of foodie philanthropists to fete celebrity chefs such as Thomas Keller, Mario Batali and Emeril Lagasse. Poulos gets an assist from another celebrity chef (and Table to Table "best bud") David

Burke. In addition, every October, their "Bag a Lunch, Help a Bunch" initiative demonstrates the collective power of thousands of small donations to improve the lives of the hungry.

Table to Table relies on the food donations of hundreds of donors (including grocery stores, restaurants, farmers' markets and corporate kitchens), as well as the generous support of dozens of corporations, including American Express, American Airlines, BD, BMW, Doherty Enterprises, *The Record*, Wells Fargo, Hudson City Savings Bank, Saks Fifth Avenue, Samsung and Summit Associates Inc.

"Table to Table makes an enormous difference in the lives of people in New Jersey, providing literally millions of meals to individuals and families in need," says Jim Bush, executive vice president – World Service at American Express. "Their focus on service and strengthening our community are values that are shared by American Express and are at the core of why we've supported Table to Table and their important work over the years."

Deliveries are made five days a week to daycare centers, pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, programs for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, senior adult centers, substance abuse rehabilitation centers and programs assisting the working poor.

"Sadly, in the 15 years we've been feeding our hungry neighbors, we've never received so many calls for help. Agencies continue to be inundated with requests. Our goal, as always, is to never turn away an agency in need of food," says Ilene Isaacs, the organization's executive director. "Our free deliveries are a critical, and increasingly permanent, link between the generous hearts of those who hate to see good food go to waste and those who are struggling."

On the future, Poulos is characteristically hopeful.

"From our very first day, we had the audacious goal that we could make this service a permanent gift to the community," she says. "We aren't there yet, but every year we've been able to step closer to reaching it."

With the help of people like Nader Ashway, president and creative director of The Ashway Group and a Table to Table volunteer since the very first day, it seems likely they'll reach their goal.

"Every time I volunteer for Table to Table in any way, I can't help but think of the people who are benefitting. I secretly love it when Claire calls, because I know some kid will have a healthy meal – with meat, and vegetables, and some fruit – and as quickly as this evening," Ashway says. "Man, how could you not love that?" ■