



# It Takes A Village: Donna & Brad's Food Rescue Mission

## **Dear PADS of Elgin Family,**

Donna started volunteering at PADS long before most of us arrived—driven by a simple belief: "It's not that we don't have enough food, it's just we don't have it in the right positions."

One day Donna was in the Starbucks inside her local Target when a young employee shared something that was weighing on him. "I'm throwing all this food away, and it really bothers me."

Donna didn't hesitate. "Hold it right there. Give me 24 hours and let me figure this out. But don't throw away any more food."

The next day, she walked into PADS with a proposal: What if she could rescue that food and bring it here every week?

That simple conversation launched what would become a vital food rescue program. Donna started collecting Starbucks pastries and breakfast sandwiches weekly. Then Angie, our Volunteer Manager mentioned that KFC was also giving away food. "Let's coordinate this," Donna said, and every Tuesday morning became her regular pickup day. But as the volume grew, PADS' freezer couldn't hold everything. So, Donna went searching, finding three other churches running soup kitchens that needed help. She created a rotation system, so each organization received donations every few weeks.

Five years ago, when her husband Brad retired, he joined the mission. "Brad carries the heavy bags now," Donna says, "because it's a lot of food."

And it truly is. Twice a week, Donna and Brad arrive at PADS with five or six giant freezer tote bags overflowing with donations from five businesses: breakfast sandwiches, and jugs of juice. Fried chicken from KFC and Chick-fil-A. Fruit and juices from Jewel. Tubs filled with giant loaves of freshly baked bread from Sugar & Rhyme.

The impact extends far beyond what most people see. While community members generously donate dinners, PADS provides breakfast and lunch for every guest. The food Donna and Brad rescue helps offset significant grocery costs. Our staff build meals around these donations, stretching every dollar and every pound of food.

And the reach doesn't stop at our doors. These rescued donations also feed residents at various permanent supportive housing programs throughout the area—multiplying the impact of Donna's original 24-hour promise.

“They used to call me Mrs. Diabetes because I would bring in all these sweets,” Donna laughs. “It's great that everybody gets a treat every once in a while.”

After all these years, Donna's enthusiasm hasn't dimmed. “I still love it. I look forward to it every single week. I love what you guys do here. Watching it flourish and grow makes my heart happy.” That's the village at work—neighbors who see a problem and refuse to walk past it.

Ready to join us? Explore our volunteer opportunities at <https://padsofelgin.org/volunteer/>

Thank you for believing in our mission to empower people and families toward self-sufficiency. You make it possible.

With gratitude,



Jen Keller  
Development Manager, PADS of Elgin

**P.S. Looking to make a monetary donation?  
Here's the link for that:  
[Donate | PADS of Elgin](#)**

