



Food Pantry News

Volume 6, Issue 4 – November 2024

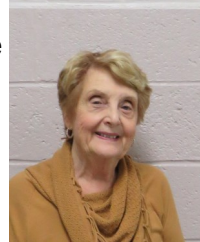


1971-2021

Our mission: To provide emergency food assistance to families of Plainfield who find themselves in need..

Meet the Board of Directors—Catherine Renga

Catherine Renga has been involved with Star Fish since its inception over 50 years ago. Like many of the volunteers, she learned of the program through one of the founders, Eileen Cunniff, whose daughter Kathleen is also a director.



Catherine is a dedicated volunteer, working as a team captain on one of the weekdays at the Pantry. She recalls the early days of Star Fish when food was distributed to the west end of Plainfield out of the Cunniff home. She values all of the volunteers and the many people who support Star Fish with their donations.

As a director, Catherine helps with the coordination of the Holidays' Food Distribution, including the present system of giving ShopRite gift cards to families based on their need.

She has instilled the value of service in her children and grandchildren. When Star Fish receives the large food donation from Faith Lutheran Church in New Providence, we almost always have Renga young adult grandchildren there to help out, a true blessing that is a credit to our friend Cathy.

Catherine was an educator and retired after 33 years of teaching in New Jersey. She presently is an active parishioner in St. Helen's Church in Westfield, where her spirit of volunteerism is highly appreciated.

She was very involved in the organization of the Sunday Dinner Program at St. Mary's Church, which started over 30 years ago in Plainfield. She has also been a member of First Friends and over the past 12 years has visited detainees in the Elizabeth Detention Center.

Catherine is also a volunteer with CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) for the Union County Foster Program and presently volunteers for RAP (Refugee Assistance Program) as a tutor.

Catherine enjoys traveling, especially with members of her family.



Board of Directors

Pat Bixel
Executive Director



Michael Townley
Secretary



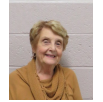
Kathleen Nitzsche
Treasurer



Sarah Mazzaresse
Statistician



Catherine Renga
Chair
Holiday Meals



Jerry Zukowski
Chair
Food Procurement



Marie Pase, Board
Advisor

Newsletter

We welcome any comments or suggestions. Email us!

If you don't want to receive emails from us, opting out is easy—just send an email to

Secretary@starfishplainfield.org

Please forward to your contacts.

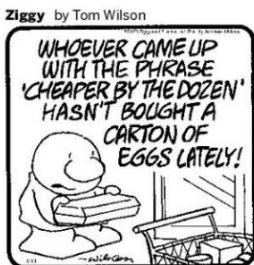
Donations, Gift Cards, Eggs and Gold—WOW!



Cecily Caldwell of CenterPath Wellness (left) accepts Thanksgiving dinner gift cards from Patty. In the center, Patty is shown delivering 40 turkeys to the Community Food Bank of NJ, donated by Keystone Plastics of South Plainfield. At right, employees of Sensory Spectrum of New Providence are shown with their Thanksgiving Food Drive for Star Fish. Thank you all!



Karla and Tamyika of PS&S Architecture and Engineering in Warren pose with Patty and food from their drive. At center, young friends with backpacks we gave to the YMCA, Cedarbrook School, and Plainfield Family Success Center. And at right, Kevin Holton, D.C. and Marie Blair show some of the food items they collected at their office. Thank you all for your generosity!



EGGS are near or over \$5 per dozen (and they're not even gold), putting them out of reach for many. We are buying at Costco to keep our cost down.

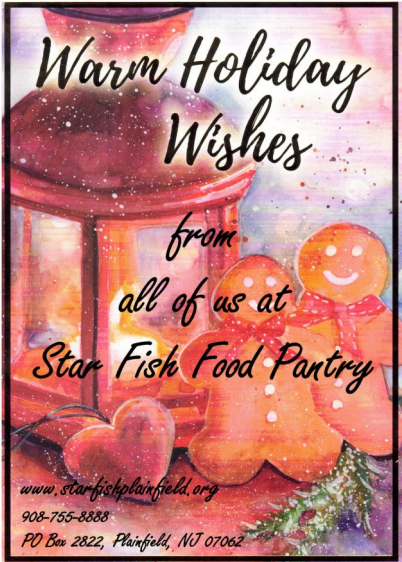
GOLD—Speaking of gold, we are now a 4 Star Charity at Charity Navigator and have achieved the Gold standard at Candid, assuring our donors that your donations are used wisely. We really do our best for the people we serve. Use the QR code to donate, or see the back page for more.



Message from our Executive Director, Patty Bixel

This is the season of traditional meals, jingle bells, holiday lights and decorations, menorahs, hope, and joy. Most of all, it is the season to show gratitude.

To all of our generous friends and loyal volunteers, we, the Board of Directors for Star Fish, Inc. and the Star Fish Food Pantry thank you for your contributions.



Whether through time, talent or treasure, you strengthen our mission to serve the individuals and families experiencing food insecurity in Plainfield.

We provided food for 14,500 individuals last year. The number requesting food assistance has increased throughout 2024. Your donations make it possible for us to help alleviate hunger throughout the year.

With grateful hearts, we wish you and your families all the good things that the winter holidays bring—an abundance of joy, hope, and thanksgiving for our own blessings and the wonderful opportunity we enjoy when we help others.

**Patty, Cathy, Jerry, Kathleen, Michael,
Sarah**

Scan to
donate



Plainfield Food Security Project is Moving

You may know that we have worked to help alleviate hunger for thousands of families in a partnership with the Plainfield YMCA through a project called Plainfield Food Security or PFSP. This effort began at the on-set of Covid-19, with emergency food walk-ups at the Salvation Army and drive throughs at DuCret Center for Art.

We moved the walk-up operation to Plainfield Parking Lot 7 at Park Avenue and East Seventh Street, where we continued giving out bags of food to 140-160 people every two weeks. The drive-thru at DuCret closed.

Recently, the YMCA was told we had to shut down and vacate the lot by the end of the year. Apparently, the contractor for the Grace Church redevelopment is going to use the lot for construction staging.

The YMCA is looking for another suitable location near downtown, but will temporarily re-locate to the DuCret Center for Arts. If you know of or can help facilitate a downtown location, please contact us at secretary@starfishplainfield.org.



Star Fish, Inc.

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Phone: 908-755-8888

E-mail:

secretary@starfishplainfield.org

Donate at

www.starfishplainfield.org

Visit our website, click on the Contact or Donate link in the menu bar, and then click on the "Donate" button as shown below.



What is Star Fish?

We are a group of volunteers from Plainfield and the surrounding area who belong to a tax exempt, 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation in existence since 1971. Star Fish operates three days each week throughout the year, preparing and distributing grocery food orders to an average of thirty to thirty-five families in need each week.

Our primary function is to maintain the food pantry. Our volunteers pack and deliver grocery food orders to clients who have been referred to us by local social service agencies. Most of these agencies are listed on our website [Partners page](#). We also prepare and help give out 150 bags of food twice a month at the walkup Plainfield Food Security Project.

Using a referral system helps us better manage our resources. These agencies vet the client to help assure that our limited resources are given to those truly in need. Our team also prepares special food gift cards for 160 families at Easter, Thanksgiving, and at Christmas. This enables the families to buy food that is appropriate to their heritage and beliefs.

Food We Provide To Those In Need—Items & Amounts Vary Based on Family Size

- 1 Package of frozen meat
- 1 Loaf of bread
- 1 lb of Pasta
- 1 Pasta Sauce
- 1 bag rice
- 2 Cans Soup
- 2 Macaroni and Cheese
- 1 Small bag of tea bags
- 1 Jar Peanut Butter
- 1 Jar Jelly
- 1 Can of Fruit or Jar of Applesauce
- 2 Cans Vegetables
- 2 Can of Tuna
- 2 Cans of Beans
- 1/2 Dozen Eggs
- 2 box of cereal (or 4 Instant Breakfast Cereal envelopes for single persons)
- 1 dry or shelf-stable milk
- Paper goods, cleaning products, and personal care items when available



You can donate any of these items. Just contact us (info above) for best drop-off days and times. We can even arrange to pick it up!

Too busy to do extra shopping? Donate instead and we'll buy it. Just go to www.starfishplainfield.org and click on the "Donate" button.