

Food Pantry News

Volume 5, Issue 4 — October 2023



1971-2021

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

AEDs Donated by Star Fish

Concerned with the safety and health of our volunteers and the Covenant United congregation, the Board of Directors recently authorized purchase of two automatic external defibrillators.

The AEDs provide a potential life-saving mechanism for anyone undergoing cardiac arrest or heart attack. With our volunteers mostly over 60 years of age, the potential for these cardiac events is fairly high.

Additionally, we have seen news reports of younger people suffering from a cardiac event that was mitigated by having a nearby AED. We hope that we never need to use these devices, but they will be there if we need them.

We installed one of the AEDs outside of the pantry near the stairwell where it is accessible to anyone using the basement level.

The second device was presented to the Covenant United congregation at a Sunday service in August. The church trustees will decide where it is to be installed on the first floor.



The AED is mounted in the hallway outside the Pantry, accessible to all.



Michael (center) and Janet (right) presented the AED to the Covenant congregation.

Board of Directors

Pat Bixel, Executive Director

Michael Townley, Secretary

Kathleen Nitzsche, Treasurer

Sarah Mazzaresse, Statistician

Catherine Renga, Chair Holiday Meals

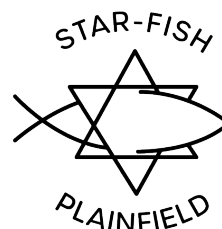
Jerry Zukowski, Chair Food Procurement

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



Message from Patty Bixel, Exec. Director

To all our friends of Star Fish Food Pantry:

In the past few weeks, I've been asked "Has Star Fish seen an increase in the number of people requesting food". Yes, most definitely, we have received a significant increase in inquiries for food. About 10 months ago, the number of people asking for food was 750. That amount increased to 1000 people within a few months and last month, September, we helped feed 1456 people. Lines of people formed on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at Plainfield Food Security Project. We partner with Plainfield YMCA, and serve as the single source provider of shelf-stable food. Additionally, families and individuals seek food through eight local agencies who partner with Star Fish. Once each month we deliver toiletries to St. Mary's Soup Kitchen as a supplement to the meals parishes in the community provides. Our volunteers prepare bags of food specific to those who have no home, flip top cans of tuna, fruit, cereal in cups & protein bars. Star Fish makes every effort possible to take care of neighbors' nutritional needs.

The reason for the increase? There are several. After Covid-19, people were able to return to work. However, many of our neighbors are employed in low paying jobs with salaries insufficient to pay for living expenses of rent, utilities, medical bills, childcare. Perhaps its due to the high cost of food, perhaps its due to the new and large number of immigrants seeking shelter in Plainfield, or perhaps its due to the recent number of people evacuated from their apartments earnestly seeking food. In some cases, poverty and hunger cause individuals to seek out food programs. Perhaps it's the combination of all.

Another question asked is "Are the same neighbors in Plainfield looking towards the cold weather of fall and winter?" I believe families are in immediate need of basics and the future months are not their focus. Meals need to satisfy their children...now. Shelter is needed....now. Clothing for school is needed....now. We hope that Star Fish can contribute providing nutrition to every family who requests food from the YMCA program and our agencies.

The holidays are approaching, and Star Fish is actively engaged in sharing our gifts with our neighbors. Rather than distributing turkeys etc. for Thanksgiving and Christmas, Star Fish purchases and allocates Shop Rite gift cards of various denominations based on the number of people in a family. We realize that not all people in our immediate community celebrate the tradition of Thanksgiving. In this way with gift cards families can purchase foods of their own culture. Last year, the total amount of gift cards for Thanksgiving and Christmas was \$28,000. Monetary contributions from our benefactors make this possible.

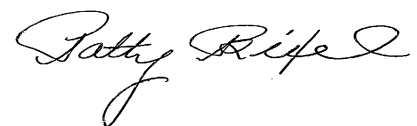
Fortunately, Star Fish is a very grateful beneficiary of generous communities in and around Plainfield and, because of their generosity, the hungry can find access to food. Food donations and monetary donations sustain the mission of Star Fish: "to provide emergency food assistance to families of Plainfield who find themselves in need."

We humbly ask you, our friends, to support the efforts of Star Fish with donations of food or money. Financial contributions help us fill our shelves with food we need and assist us in purchasing Shop Rite gift cards. Please consider donating to Star Fish today. Donate at <https://tinyurl.com/StarFishDonation>

Phone: 908-755-8888 Email: secretary@starfishplainfield.org

Mailing address for donations:

Star Fish, Inc. P.O. Box 2822 Plainfield, NJ 07062-0822



Bits and Pieces

“New” Refrigerator

Many thanks to Mike and Mike, two faithful supporters of Star Fish who have donated hundreds of food items over the past three years. They came through again this month with the donation of a slightly used refrigerator.

Working with our regular volunteer, Eelco Swaak, the three men muscled this fridge down into the Church basement and set it up in a room used by the Church. The fridge is a backup to our one and only fridge in the pantry and will be a help when we have eggs that we need to store before giving them out at the Plainfield Food Security Project.

Thank you Mike, Mike and Eelco! Great job!



PLAINFIELD FOOD SECURITY PROJECT

People are curious as to what we give the families at the PFSP on the second and fourth Thursdays each month. While not extensive, we give basics to help them and information * with the locations, days and times of other sources of free food.

Cereal or oatmeal	Peanut butter	Jelly
Canned diced tomato/sauce	Canned Fruit	Canned Vegetable
Beans	Rice	Chili or soup
Tuna fish	Macaroni and cheese	Pasta
Shelf milk	Bilingual list of Plainfield food providers / soup kitchens *	



GIVING GARDEN PRODUCE HELPS AT PFSP

We have benefited from the donation of fresh produce from the Giving Garden in Warren. Throughout the summer harvest season, Rotary Club volunteers went to the Garden and brought back fresh produce for our clients and for families using the PFSP to supplement their food needs.



These gifts of produce were enthusiastically received by the families at PFSP, as shown in these photos. We thank the volunteers at the Giving Garden for donating to our cause.



Good morning, Pat!

Star Fish Plainfield raised \$121 in the Bloomin' 4 Good Program during the month of June 2023.

In about 10-12 weeks, a donation check will be mailed for the amount you have raised to:

Star Fish Plainfield
P.O. Box 2822
Plainfield, NJ 07062-0822

Thank you Stop & Shop Watchung for selecting us again for your Bloomin' 4 Good Program!
If you missed this fundraiser, you can send your donation to the address shown above.

Stop and Shop

Our friends at the local Stop and Shop in Watchung have selected us several times for their Bloomin' 4 Good Program.

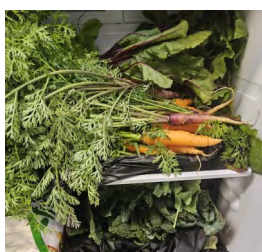
Usually, we receive about \$60 for a month's promotion, but in June (a good month for flowers!), we will receive just over \$120.00!

We truly appreciate this community support and value our friends at this community store.

The Giving Garden in Warren Keeps on Giving!

Fresh vegetables are an important addition to the diet of our families, and we are so grateful to the Rotary Club of the Plainfields and the volunteers at the Giving Garden in Warren who supply us with these vital nutrients each year.

Here are some photos of recent donations brought to us each week. Some of the produce goes out to the families we serve through the Pantry, and the rest goes to the Plainfield Food Security Project walk-up at Plainfield Parking Lot 7.



Bits and Pieces



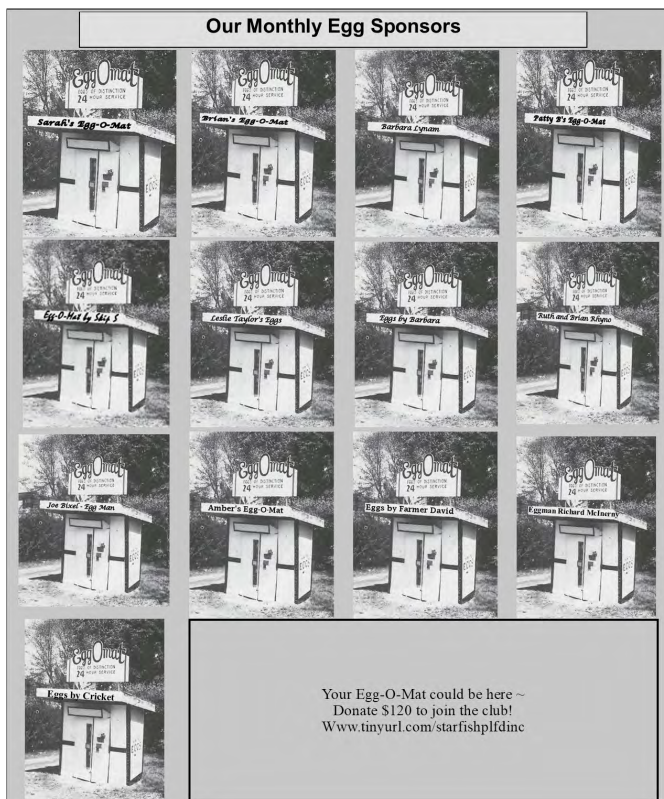
We received about 20 cases of food recently from Gethsemane Temple Church in Plainfield. Priscilla Johnson (right) brought the canned goods and, seeing our packed bags for the Plainfield Food Security Project, knew their donation would be put to good use.



500 brown bags — \$120

500 green bags — \$113

It's not glamorous, but these bundles and boxes are critical to our routine operation. The brown bundles each contain 500 grocery bags, and the white boxes 500 of our special, compostable "plastic" bags. We use one brown and two green bags to package the 240 bags for PFSP each month.



Here are the thirteen people who support our Pantry with regular donations for fresh eggs. Just like the old Egg Omat dispensers, they are a reliable source of eggs for our clients.



You may have read or heard about the eviction of hundreds of people from apartment buildings in Plainfield that were found with dangerous living conditions. We jumped into action with a fast purchase of diapers from the Community Food Bank of New Jersey. Patty and Kathleen (above) picked them up and brought half of them as an initial donation to the resource center that was established at the DuCret Center for Art on Central Avenue in Plainfield. Additional donations will go where they are most needed.

Star Fish, Inc.

P.O. Box 2822
Plainfield, NJ 07062-0822

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.



Special Note

We are most grateful to all of you for your support of our mission. Every donation of food, every dollar, every volunteer hour is meaningful and so very necessary to our success.

We have a number of donors who are faithful givers, some monthly, some quarterly, some annually. Some of these donors focus on eggs—they are our special Egg-O-Mats! Others give for our general needs. All of them sustain us.

You can be part of this core group of regular donors. Go to our website, click on the DONATE button on the "Contact Us or Donate" page, and make your donation a monthly act of kindness. Or go to <https://tinyurl.com/StarFishDonation>

Thank you in advance.

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

- 1 Package of frozen meat
- 1 Loaf of bread
- 1 lb of Pasta
- 1 Pasta Sauce
- 4 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
- 4 Cans Vegetables
- 2 Can of Tuna
- 4 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
- 1 Paper goods, 1 cleaning product, and 1 personal care item



You can donate any of these items at any time. Contact us and we'll 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.