



Food Pantry News

Volume 5, Issue 3—June 2023



1971-2021

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

From Our Executive Director

Dear Friends of Star Fish:

This is my third summer as director of Star Fish Food Pantry. As a volunteer and donor, I've witnessed an incredibly consistent response to the needs of our Plainfield community. As director, it is an amazing journey working with the most loyal and dedicated group of volunteers.



We have a regular staff of 20 volunteers working 2 days a week. At any other time, Star Fish can recruit an additional group of volunteers for special campaigns. For example, in partnership with Plainfield YMCA and through a Community Development Block Grant from Union County, Star Fish volunteers prepared 700 bags of food, with nineteen pounds of food in each bag, to be distributed to nine elementary schools in Plainfield.

Over the course of a month, our regular volunteers ordered and picked up hundreds of cases of canned and dry food from ShopRite, Aldi, the Community Food Bank of NJ in Hillside, and other locations and brought them down to our Pantry. Fifty dedicated volunteers gathered together and, within three hours, filled 700 bags with nonperishable food. Leonardo Gonzalez, coordinator of Plainfield YMCA, and his team then delivered this food security to families identified by school social workers and school nurses. The feeling of community and an enthusiastic, cooperative spirit permeates the space of Star Fish Food Pantry.

Volunteers are vital and essential in carrying out our mission to provide food for the hungry in Plainfield. Additionally, school children, high school and college students, and area churches are generous in their participation with food drives, money, and volunteering. We are blessed to have a number of dedicated and generous supporters who provide the food we need or the financial means necessary to accomplish our mission.

Inflation has impacted us, as has the reduction or expiration of pandemic-related federal safety nets; thus, the need for additional nourishment has increased. Being on the front-line addressing food insecurity, we feel these impacts and must address them. We were compelled to cut back on the fresh eggs we distributed this year, due

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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

Love Flowers?

You're in luck! June is Stop and Shop Bloomin' for Good Month for Star Fish.

Get a nice bouquet for your special someone at Stop and Shop, Route 22, Watchung. We will receive \$1 for each bouquet sold!

to high costs during the egg shortages. But still we persevered and prevailed, through the generosity of our twelve Egg-O-Mat donors and others who stepped in to help us maintain this important nutrition item for our clients.

Here is a brief accounting of the number of households, families and children served by Star Fish in the first six months of 2023:

Households: 2,468

Total Number of People: 6,061

Children: 1,332

Adults: 4,729

Star Fish provides nonperishable food items, plus frozen chicken and fresh eggs to individuals and families. We are fortunate to receive donations of some of these food items that enable us to address the needs of the hungry. Items that we also need but do not often receive are diapers, especially size 5, 6, and 4t/5t pull ups; period products; soap, toilet paper and paper towels. Many of our clients benefit from New Jersey's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, but SNAP does not include household items.

Monetary donations help us buy eggs, frozen chicken, and those items lacking on our shelves. We make frequent trips to ShopRite or to Aldi to buy essentials, like peanut butter and jelly, canned tomatoes, rice and beans, canned fruit, soup, and the other items that fill our families' bags of food. Your donations, either financial or in these needed groceries, support us and encourage us to continue the fight against hunger in our community.

Without our volunteers and your support, our mission in helping our neighbors would not be possible. The encouragement I receive from our volunteers, and from you through your generosity, make me believe I can continue my ministry as director of Star Fish Food Pantry for at least another three years.

Best wishes for a relaxing summer.

Thank you,

Patty Bixel



The Giving Garden in Warren

Through the Rotary Club of the Plainfields, we have a long-standing relationship with the Giving Garden in Warren where fresh produce is grown and donated to area food pantries and soup kitchens.

The garden plots are cared for by volunteers, including Rotary Club members. All food is donated

Our clients certainly appreciate the fresh produce that is brought to us weekly. We are most thankful to all involved.

Note: We inadvertently omitted the Giving Garden in April's issue recognizing food donors. Apologies to all the volunteers.



Birthday Boxes for our Young Clients

Students from Central School in Warren were recently challenged to participate in a service project to help others.

We were contacted by Jen McCarey, representing the Central School PTO to ask if we were interested in 100 “birthday boxes” for our young clients. The offer was intriguing and immediately accepted. One of our volunteers went to the school to meet Jen and Alyssa Pech, guidance counsellor at Central School to pick up the boxes. We actually made a second trip to pick up and additional thirty boxes.

Here is a note that we received from Ms. Pech, explaining the project and its impact on the Central School students.

We were so glad that you were able to receive ample Birthday Box Kits put together by our Central School Students. I wanted to take the time to share a little bit about the behind the scenes work that went into making the beautiful kits.

I work with a group of 4th and 5th grade Student Leaders who join my Central School Student Leaders Club in order to promote kindness in our school and community. Through this we also learn about the importance of charity and helping others. We work very closely with the PTO and PTO Fundraising Chair, Jen McCarey, to make our ideas come to life.

Mrs. McCarey had the idea of Birthday Box Kits and my leaders were in charge of promoting it in the school, making posters throughout our halls and keeping track of items donated. In order to get the most donations, we had a friendly competition among the six grade levels (K, 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5). We housed their donations in separate boxes and counted the amount of items they donated everyday. At the end of the day, the leaders would announce the daily totals and use our Birthday Candle display to provide a visual for students to see what grade level was in the lead.

We hope these boxes bring joy to kids and their families as they celebrate their special day together!

Each birthday box consisted of a foil tin and cover, with such things as cake mix, icing, sprinkles, candles, cards, balloons, and similar items to make a birthday celebration possible to our young clients.

We distributed these to clients through the Pantry and also gave some to our partners at HOPES, the agency that provides Head Start Day Care in Plainfield. They were most grateful as they could use these birthday boxes for their day care children in a group setting, sharing the excitement!

We thank the students at Central School for their thoughtfulness and their kindness.



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.



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. We operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. each week throughout the year, preparing and distributing grocery food orders to an average of twenty to twenty-five families in need each week.

Our primary function is to maintain the food pantry. Our volunteers pack and deliver grocery food orders for clients who have been referred to us by local social service agencies. Most of these agencies are listed on our website [Partners page](#).

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. We also prepare special food orders for 160 families at Easter, Thanksgiving, and at Christmas.

The generosity of our donors helps us prepare these holiday meals and bags of food each week for those in need of emergency food assistance. You are all "Stars for Star Fish!"

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.