



Food Pantry News

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Star Fish, Inc. is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Donations are tax deductible as permitted by law.

Despite Covid-19, it has been a great year

Star Fish was established in 1971 to provide emergency food assistance to our neighbors in Plainfield. Fifty years later and with the help of our resilient and dedicated volunteers, we continue to respond to the need for food.

Since March, people in Plainfield have been suffering from the effects of Covid-19. Jobs have been lost; salaries lost. Money and food is out of reach of families and neighbors in need. Each Thursday food lines appear in Plainfield with people receiving boxes of food from the government.



Our friends Joseph and Charlie and our director Pat Bixel pose with the gift bags the boys donated for kids

There are days when 400 or more individuals obtain donations from Plainfield Food Security Project initiated by the Plainfield YMCA. Star Fish has been present each week to supplement those food packages. The confidence our community has in Star Fish as evidenced by generous donations makes our participation possible.

Filling the gaps in service became easier when this Plainfield Food Security Project was initiated by the YMCA. This project gave us an opportunity to use the expertise we have gained since our founding to help organize and implement a food distribution program outdoors in a safe manner.

Keisha Belton, the Plainfield YMCA supervisor, Timothy Priano, Board president at DuCret School of Art, Councilman Sean McKenna, and Michael Townley, representing the Rotary Club of the Plainfields and our own Star Fish gathered and planned for weekly food distributions at

(Continued on page 2)

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Newsletter

We welcome any comments or suggestions.

Send an email to
Secretary@
starfishplainfield.org



How we're doing...

the DuCret School and at the Salvation Army. Thousands and thousands of people received wholesome, nutritious foodstuffs, fresh fruit and vegetables over the course of eighteen weeks through the summer. The Project as since moved to an outdoor event every Thursday.

Due to the challenges presented by the pandemic, precautions were taken within our Pantry as a response to state-imposed restrictions on gatherings. We closed our weekly packing days, and shelved our plans for distributing Easter holiday dinner bags due to the inability to gather people together to do the packing and due to the fact that our Partners were on hiatus as well. We anticipated possibly doing a dinner packing project in the summer—little did we know that the pandemic would continue raging well beyond that time.



Meanwhile, publicity about the project brought us new supporters. Many people donated not only monetarily but also brought food items to DuCret and spent time volunteering. As word spread, so did the generosity of neighbors in Plainfield and in the surrounding communities. We were blessed with many, many donations, enabling us to purchase food as needed and to prepare ourselves for the day when we would re-open the Food Pantry.

That day arrived in September, when we returned to begin working a modified schedule of Tuesdays and Thursdays only. Some of the community who had heard about the Food Security Project wanted to offer their time to help as weekly volunteers. This was another great outcome—new volunteers came on board to work in our pantry. This was a direct result of widespread news about Star Fish working in the community.

Our new executive director, Pat Bixel, had worked hard to make sure all of our volunteers have an opportunity to participate, setting up shifts for first and third and second and fourth days. People volunteer because they want to help, and this new shift pattern gives everyone an opportunity.

We continue to support that effort with donations of groceries for up to 200 families a month, in addition to food for St. Mary's Soup Kitchen and Covenant United Methodist Church. And through our generous donors, we have money to buy fresh eggs that we've added to the PFSP donations for that extra added protein.

As donations to Star Fish are received they are used immediately. Money at Star Fish does not linger. Generous Thanksgiving and Christmas donations were equal to nearly \$30,000. In place of food packages, Star Fish clients were gifted with ShopRite and Walmart gift cards.

Another effort that we support with regular donations of food bags is Homefirst, Inc. This is an agency in Plainfield that helps the homeless with temporary housing and job counseling and other similar services. We contact a liaison person, find out how many families need food, and deliver the

Working through the pandemic with your support

bags of groceries, including frozen chicken and fresh eggs. Homefirst staff holds the food and gives it out as needed to their clients.

Our friends at the Rotary Club of the Plainfields arranged for us to get hundreds of pre-packaged meals that only need water and a microwave or stovetop to heat up for nutritious meals. We shared that donation with Covenant United Methodist Church, helping them help others.

Our on-line presence has helped elicit monetary donations, too. PayPal sends us notices of these donations several times a week, with amounts ranging from the thousands of dollars to the equally important donations in the tens of dollars. We also receive personal checks on a regular basis from our supporters. All of them are welcomed and acknowledged with our thanks and gratitude.



Recently, one of our loyal contributors in New Providence found that they could not safely collect, sort, box, and deliver foodstuffs to us as they have done for years. Faith Lutheran Church and the Scouts' "Scouting for Food" initiative normally gave us 600 or more boxes of food that would last us six to nine months. As an alternative, they asked their congregation and the people of New Providence to support us financially. We received nearly \$14,000 through this effort.

We do not receive grants from large philanthropies. Our efforts are sustained by our generous donors, such as Mt. St. Mary School students, St. Bartholomew Church, Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church, United Presbyterian Church, PSEG and New Jersey American Water Company workers from their Plainfield sites, Food for Thought, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, American Bean Coffee in Watchung, Friends of Sleepy Hollow and The Coffee Box, Sleepy Hollow Neighbors, Mike and Mike, Hakma in Berkeley Heights, personal friends of our volunteers, Ellen Radin Esq., the family of the late Mike Ramos, Wilson Memorial Church, The Frippery Thrift Shop, Scotch Plains Baptist Church, the CROP walk in North Plainfield/Plainfield, a golfing fundraiser at the Plainfield Country Club, food from the Plainfield Public Library's "Food for Fines" project, Murray Hill Farms, and many, many others— we thank you all. You all truly are "Stars for Star Fish!"

We invite you to make a gift today. As a part of the CARES Stimulus Act, you may be eligible to claim an above the line deduction for up to \$300 cash donation to nonprofit organizations this year. (Please check with your tax advisor to learn more.) See the Contact Us and Donate page on our website to donate through PayPal using your credit card—www.starfishplainfield.org/

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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 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](#).

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.