



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.



We're 50 years old and still going strong!

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.

We began with a small operation in Covenant United Methodist Church as well as in the basement at Eileen Cuniff's home. Mary Nischwitz worked the east end of town from the Pantry and Eileen the west. Food donations would be divided between the two locations, with Eileen's basement the western pantry. Her family and friends all participated.



Our entryway at Covenant United Methodist Church

People in need would call our number and an answering service took their information. Within a few years, volunteers took the place of the answering service. Mary and Eileen would check in, find out who needed food, the number of adults and children, and their addresses. They would then prepare bags of food and they or another volunteer would deliver to those in need.

Over time, this split system proved to be unwieldy, and a single location was selected—Covenant United, where we are today.

We occupy a space in the basement off the assembly/meeting room. It was originally the church's choir room where robes and such were stored. Covenant United allowed us to use it because the church's then-pastor was one of the founders of Star Fish back in 1971. We in turn give Covenant United an annual stipend to help off-set their overall utility and maintenance costs.

The Pantry was set up with four rows of wooden shelving of near-equal length. On one wall, there is a counter area attached with

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Board of Directors

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Michael Townley, Secretary

Kathleen Nitzsche, Treasurer

Sarah Mazzaresse, Statistician

Catherine Renga, Chair Holiday Meals

Joseph Stowasky, Chair Food Procurement

Marie Pase, Board Advisor

Newsletter

We welcome any comments or suggestions.

Send an email to
Secretary@
starfishplainfield.org



We're 50 years old... (cont'd)



shelves above and below. There are three aisles, like the one at the left, with food storage on both sides of the aisles, while the third aisle has one refrigerator and four freezers for cold storage.

In 2018, the church gave us permission to expand a little. We pushed

one wall back about four feet and added a wall of shelving (shown at the right).



We also moved our entry doors down the hallway about fifteen feet and added shelving in that new space as well (you can see that in the photo on page 1). This allowed us to consolidate all of our food storage within the pantry

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we cut back from our previous Tuesday, Thursday and Friday morning schedule to operating just Tuesday and Thursdays. Our director, Patty Bixel, schedules additional mornings as needed to accept food deliveries and to package food for special needs.

Our support for the Plainfield Food Security Project keeps us busy and keeps the food going out the doors every week, with 40 to 50 bags of groceries and 150 dozen fresh eggs helping to feed the hungry in Plainfield. We also support the food project at Plainfield High School with 15 to 20 bags of groceries that include pancake mix, syrup, and fresh bread that we purchase from Aldi's.

Your support, in donated food or personal care items or money, helped us meet our mission to feed the hungry in Plainfield over the past 50 years and, hopefully, will continue for years to come.

Mt. St. Mary Academy Cereal Bowl

One of those great programs that occur quietly every year and without much fanfare is the cereal donation we receive from students and faculty at Mt. St. Mary Academy in Watchung, led by Donna Toryak, Admissions Director.

We are not sure of the first year of the program, but we do know that our Patty Bixel helped establish the Cereal Bowl with its special trophy.

Normally run at the same time period as the football Super Bowl, the Cereal Bowl was set up as a friendly competition among the various homerooms. Each homeroom was challenged to collect cereal during the competition, trying to out-do their peers and see who could collect the most cereal.

Boxes and boxes of cereal come into the school, stacking up in each classroom while the competition rages on. When all is said and done, one class is named the victor, receiving the coveted Cereal Bowl to proudly display until the next competition. See next page.



Cereal Bowl (cont'd)

Now is when we step into the program. Our volunteers go up to the Mount and collect the bags of cereal. Sounds easy, right? Just try lifting an extra-large trash bag filled with cereal boxes— they are heavy!

Nonetheless, we fill our cars and trucks and bring the bags (shown on previous page) to the Pantry and where we store them.

On our last trip in 2019, we opened each bag and then re-packed the cereal into lawn leaf bags, smaller than the black plastic and easier to handle and store away on our shelves.



With four of us working, we each opened the plastic bags and put the cereal on round tables. When we finished, two of us had 75 boxes of cereal and two had 50 boxes—as if we planned it!

Repacking into the leaf bags resulted in bags with approximately 20 boxes each. They stack neatly on the shelf in the pantry and are marked and ready to use when needed (photo at left).

Such a great program at the Mount, year after year providing us with a steady supply of cereal. With Covid closings, we missed the Cereal Bowl last year but know that the students are busily collecting now for a delivery soon.

New Friends

We have made and enjoyed lots of friends over the years. Many of these friends were volunteers who worked on a regular basis or on special events such as our holiday dinner projects. Perhaps you are one of those friends?

Covid-19 has brought us new friends, people who have learned of our Pantry and the work that we do to help feed the hungry in Plainfield. Some are individuals, others are groups or local churches.

Many of these groups continue to donate food to help fill the pantry. Many of the individuals choose to donate through PayPal to help us purchase food to supplement donations. We buy fresh bread, eggs, and specialty items such as pancake mix and syrup for kids' breakfasts.

However you choose to help, know that we are grateful! More on the following pages...

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/

Friends old and new

Friends at St. Bartholomew the Apostle Catholic Church in Scotch Plains are providing us with special breakfast snack pack bags for children (right and below). These bags contain breakfast and snack items to help cheer up kids at home on Covid-19 remote learning. Church members also donated cars-full of groceries. Thanks to all for your generosity



Wardlaw Hartridge School in Edison is another new friend, collecting food for us on a regular basis.



This is a donation from our friends, the two Mikes, in Plainfield. They purchase items in bulk and drop them off. Great job, guys!

More friends, just a few of many...

NETHERWOOD HEIGHTS NEIGHBORS

CEREAL BOWL 2021

**Collecting Hot and Cold Cereal
and Shelf-Stable Milk
for Star Fish Food Pantry**

Children Eating Right Excel At Life

Many students who normally receive breakfast at school go hungry when schools are closed. Unemployment has also created a pandemic of food insecurity for more and more families. As a source of nourishment for locals referred by social service agencies, Star Fish Food Pantry helps feed hungry adults and children in Plainfield year-round. To support their efforts, Netherwood Heights Neighbors is collecting cereal for Star Fish through Super Bowl Sunday, February 7th.

To contribute, please drop-off by 2/7/21 at one of these locations:

The Coffee Box: Plainfield shop at 1359 South Avenue

OR Laura K's House: 1116 Loraine Avenue

THANK YOU!



Above—2021 Cereal Bowl Project - Netherwood Heights Neighbors and The Coffee Box on South Avenue. Great project that boosted our cereal and milk inventory.

Below—pancakes and syrup for Plainfield High School feeding project of Chef Andre—25 bags of food delivered.



Some of the 50 bags of food we pack every week for the Plainfield Food Security Project, helping the hungry.



Principal Slocum from McGinn School with food donated for our pantry.

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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 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.