



Star Fish Food Pantry

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1971-2021

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

In Memoriam

Our dear friend and dedicated volunteer, Joe Stowasky, died on Sunday, May 8, 2022 after a brief illness.

Joe began volunteering at Star Fish in November 2017 and soon volunteered to be our purchasing chair. In that capacity, he placed orders for needed supplies from the Community Food Bank of NJ, then helped to pick up those orders and bring them to the Food Pantry, where he also helped shelving the purchased items.

Joe commented about Star Fish when asked a few years ago "I'd recommend Star Fish to anyone who is looking for an opportunity to donate to a worthy cause, whether it is food items we always need or financial assistance that helps when we purchase food."

Joe was a retired pharmacist who graduated from Rutgers in 1973 and owned his own pharmacy in Clark for 25 years. After selling the pharmacy to Rite Aid, he was employed at a long term care pharmacy for 19 years before retiring 2016.

He was an active parishioner at St. Helen's Church in Westfield since 1989. Joe was well known and liked for his generous spirit and friendly manner. He was a member of St. Helen's Funeral Ministry and its Choir.

Joe's life was celebrated at a beautiful and well-attended funeral Mass at St. Helen's Church, a true tribute to a life filled with service to others.

Joe was born in Newark to Joseph and Madeline (Greco) Stowasky. He is survived by his beloved wife of 48 years, Suzanne (Aumann) Stowasky, his devoted children Alison Korner and her husband Brian, Meredith Pickens and her husband Brandt, and Elizabeth Stowasky. He is also survived by this cherished grandchildren, Nathan and Patrick Korner, Emma and Lucy Pickens. and by his sister Joan Tobia.

Go to our **Contact Us or Donate** page to make a donation in Joe's memory. Visit www.starfishplainfield.org.



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Newsletter

We welcome any comments or suggestions. Email us!

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

Teenagers and children are terrific!

We are grateful for all of our friends, young and old(er), who help us with food donations, financial assistance, and in other ways. But sometimes it is the younger people who just show how remarkable they can be, despite their younger years. Here are examples of what terrific teenagers and children means:

From October thru February, teenagers from Wardlaw Hartridge School and Warren Middle School rallied their classmates and teachers in contributing an incredible amount of food as part of the Community Food Bank of New Jersey's friendly competition *Students Change Hunger* campaign. Schools and youth groups hosted food drives and fundraisers to help feed hungry New Jersey neighbors. Star Fish Food Pantry was the proud recipient of the Wardlaw Hartridge and Warren Middle schools' collections.

Diana Levy, Schools and Community Outreach Manager of CFBNJ, reported a total of 67 schools who participated in collecting 58,000 pounds of food and \$36,000. Warren Middle School collected 653 pounds of food and the Wardlaw Hartridge School collected 1,600 pounds of food. Diana added *Students Change Hunger* helps to meet the need in our communities and teaches students the power of advocacy, leadership, and outreach. Students are the next generation of leaders, and when they come together to support their communities, great things are possible”.

Nicole Nolan, advisor to *Wardlaw Hartridge Subscribes to Fight Hunger* stated that this group is led by senior and junior students who organize monthly food collections from the Wardlaw Hartridge community. Ms. Nolan is greeted joyfully each month by our volunteers as she delivers the food to Star Fish.

When asked about the importance of this project, junior Naischa Puri shared, “We, as a school, realize our privilege and want to take action in order to put our privilege to good use.” Senior and Student Council President Shive Tickoo added,



One of several food deliveries from Wardlaw Hartridge School in Edison.

“By maintaining a steady stream of donations of food, *Wardlaw Hartridge Subscribes to Fight Hunger* ensures that the problem of food insecurity is being tackled by one less person, one less

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We are Back in Publication

Sometimes things just get lost in the shuffle. Has that happened to you?

Despite our best intentions to publish quarterly, we seemed to have missed one. So this year, instead of getting your full four quarters' worth, you're only getting 75%. But still not bad for free, though.



Teenagers and children (cont'd)

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family, and one less community having to worry about where their next meal is coming from.” Wardlaw Hartridge continued to collect and deliver food to Star Fish Food Pantry for the remainder of the school year and plans to resume efforts when school returns to session in September.

The Warren Middle School, with advisor Linda Yu, includes a *Character Education* program. In December, the school celebrated differences and decided that food was a sure way to showcase differences. Discussions ensued with topics that included food insecurity. As a result, Warren Middle School joined the CFBNJ “Students Change Hunger” competition.

Well-accepted by the school and local community, their campaign resulted in over 600 pounds of nonperishable foods donated to Star Fish. Zach, a student, remarked that “It made me feel good to give food to others in need.” And one teacher said “The food drive was a positive experience for students and staff alike.

My class enjoyed counting the number of cans we brought in each morning, trying to improve upon our number each day.”



Plainfield's Maxson Middle School students with their food collection

Although not part of the competition of *Students Change Hunger*, St. Joseph High School in Metuchen, under the leadership of Tracey Coudriet, Director of Campus Ministry, delivered hundreds of pounds of food and monetary donations to Star Fish at Thanksgiving and other times. For example, their campaign of *Fish for Star Fish* brought in 100 cans of tuna fish. Another



Students from St. Joseph High School in Metuchen with their donation of bread and pb&j.

campaign to collect winter coats warmed the Plainfield neighbors visiting the St. Mary's Soup Kitchen in Plainfield. Students also prepared over 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that were sent to local soup kitchens. Following that event, Star Fish was blessed with delivery of bread and nearly fifty unopened jars of PB&J.

The Youth Group of the United Methodist Church of Scotch Plains, students who were 13 through 17 years old, used the church's annual *Souper Bowl Sunday* to collect nonperishable items they know children and families enjoy. This included bags of cookies, cereal, fruit juices, macaroni & cheese, canned spaghetti and meatballs. As James Naugle, Youth Group advisor

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Teenagers and children (cont'd)

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stated, “The kids have a great deal of fun purchasing from parish donations for other children. It’s the highlight of the year. We’re happy to partner with Star Fish”.

Kelsey commented: “I loved raising funds and shopping for people in need.” Luke Checchio added, “Grocery shopping, a typically monotonous, colorless chore, takes on a whole new meaning when shopping for Star Fish. is an extremely fulfilling and life-changing experience, as it opens one up to the realities of the privileges we enjoy on a regular basis.” And Naa Dei Ashie said, “...this experience helped me grow as a person and become aware of hardships others face.”



Donation by the youth group of the United Methodist Church, Scotch Plains, delivered by James Naugle, Advisor.

Mount St. Mary Academy’s HOPE club once again collected cereal for Star Fish as they have done for the past 20 years. Donna Venezia Toryak, club advisor, carries on this activity and proudly donated to Star Fish over 250 boxes of cereal. Students in each class compete to see who could bring in the most cereal and earn the coveted *Cereal Bowl Trophy*.

Younger children have responded to the collection of food as well.

In April, the PTO of Mountain Park School of Berkeley Heights conducted a cereal collection for Star Fish. The results of this campaign conducted by Dana Campbell, PTO parent resulted in nearly 115 boxes of cereal. Dana told us that the homerooms found this event to be exciting because the children knew that they were helping other children. They found great benefit in providing food for others like them.



Pat Bixel (left) and Donna Campbell display some of the food donated by the students at Mountain Park School

Lucas Encarnacion, a 4th grade student at St. Bartholomew the Apostle, Scotch Plains, amazed us with his position as a six-month board member of the national magazine for children, **The Week Junior**. Lucas represents the tri-state area. Lucas was influenced by his family who, for many years, has sponsored 10 families in Plainfield for their Thanksgiving meals. His father, Joe Encarnacion, told us, “Lucas was born into the tradition of feeding those in need and continues to raise the bar in what his family does and how we do it.”

Lucas interviewed Star Fish Executive Director

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Teenagers and children (cont'd)

(and all-around tireless worker) Pat Bixel for his article that appeared in the December issue of **The Week Junior**. Lucas' article focused on how to "Hold a Food Drive," learning from Pat the steps it takes to make that drive successful. The



Encarnacion family of Plainfield has organized *Food for Thought of NJ*, but their acts of doing good has spread to friends in Tampa, Florida and to Staten Island.

Another young supporter is Khush Shah, who decided to

surprise his family by requesting relatives and friends to donate non-perishable foods to Star Fish rather than providing birthday gifts at his 7th

birthday party. His donation was extremely generous. With a large smile on his face, Khush delivered his birthday gifts to the Food Pantry. With an equally big smile, his father showed his incredible pride in his son's humanity and generosity.

Star Fish is truly grateful for the enthusiastic partnership that we have established with these student organizations and families. Their motivation in helping others is rewarding to us, to themselves and to others. It becomes an education outside of the classroom as it creates an awareness of the hunger experienced by many in their own neighborhoods.

Teenagers and children make a difference in the wellbeing of those in need of food. They help sustain the mission of Star Fish: *To provide emergency food assistance to families of Plainfield who find themselves in need.*

Postal Workers Union Does Wonders

What an evening we had at Star Fish on May 14! This was the day that our Plainfield Postal Workers Local participated in the annual food collection.

Postal customers received a post card and put out food that the workers collected that was either picked up by our volunteers or dropped off at the Pantry. We received donations of non-perishables from 4:00-7:30 pm, assisted by a group of 20 volunteers at any time. Nine high school



students helped and were super, as were the adults. Our friend Nancy Piwovar, retired postal worker (right in photo), was at her best in calling and receiving messages from the carriers with food for us. Outstanding!!!

We received a couple thousand pounds of food most of which was sorted and shelved, with last minute arrivals left in bins in the pantry. And there was more food to be picked up Monday. To thank our helpers, delicious pizza was on the menu and greatly appreciated. Our heartfelt thanks to all the postal workers and to our volunteers for a job well done!

Be a STAR for Star Fish!

Donate at our website
make your donation a
monthly donation!
www.starfishplainfield.org

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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

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



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.