

Star Fish Food Pantry News

Vol. 4, Issue 4—December 2022



1971-2021

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

Plainfield Food Security Project Continues

Star Fish Food Pantry began a partnership with the Greater Somerset County YMCA and its Plainfield YMCA chapter at the beginning of the Covid pandemic early in 2020 in the Plainfield Food Security Project. That successful cooperative effort continues today.

On the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, Star Fish has become the primary provider of food for the PFSP at the parking lot on the corner of Seventh Street and Park Avenue in Plainfield. This is the location where both walk-up and drive-up residents of Plainfield can receive needed groceries.



Leonardo "Leo" Gonzalez (right in photo) is the Plainfield YMCA coordinator working along with his volunteers in distributing food to lines of people in need of nourishment.

At this site during the month of November, Star Fish prepared bags of food for 230 families including 695 children. In addition, the Pantry supplied over 120 dozen eggs.

For the Thanksgiving holiday, the Community Food Bank of NJ donated 75 plump frozen chickens and 44 boxes of holiday food, and Darby Road restaurant in Fanwood donated 75 lunch packages. Star Fish was there to help with the distribution on the day before Thanksgiving.

Star Fish continually works on the Plainfield Food Security Project with the Plainfield YMCA and the Greater Somerset County YMCA. We also work with eight city agencies to provide food for those in need.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS! Please REMEMBER US in your year-end giving: Your donations are what keep us going *week after week*. Donate by mail to Star Fish Inc., PO Box 2822, Plainfield 07062-0822 or on-line at www.tinyurl.com/starfishplfdinc

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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

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

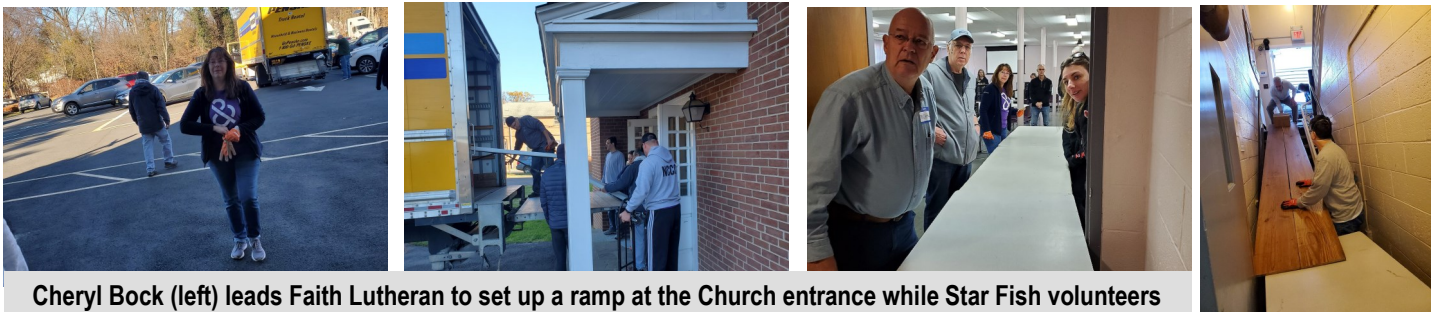
Faith Lutheran Church's Annual Food Donation

Faith Lutheran Church in New Providence blessed us again this year with a delivery of food that was collected in New Providence and through donations at the Church itself.

We received over 200 boxes of canned goods and dry goods, and bags and bags of cereal to help fill our shelves and get us through the coming months. The donations are packed in boxes specially selected so they fit on our shelves. The church volunteers and our own volunteers set up a ramp system and slide the boxes down onto tables in Covenant United Methodist Church basement meeting room. Our volunteers then take them to tables marked out with the food types - tuna, peanut butter and jelly, beans, vegetables, etc.

After the boxes are all delivered, Star Fish helpers sort through to repackage as needed into boxes by year - 2022, 2023, 2024, even 2025 - so the food is given out before it meets expiration dates. Some are put in milk crates, others put back in boxes. Then all are taken into the pantry to be shelved. Some items (like tomato sauce and pasta) were taken directly to the pantry and shelved there to save time and space.

We give thanks to all of our friends at Faith Lutheran, particularly Pastor Jane and Cheryl Bock who help lead this community food drive and promote it through the congregation and community.



Cheryl Bock (left) leads Faith Lutheran to set up a ramp at the Church entrance while Star Fish volunteers wait for the first boxes to come streaming down (right)



Sifting through the boxes to separate by years so the older stock is used first. Lily shelves tomato sauce in the Pantry (above)

Faith Lutheran (cont'd)



Before the Faith Lutheran team and truck arrive, our volunteers set up tables with marked crates, ready to be filled with the date-separated food, such as tuna, vegetables, beans, etc. The whole group (above center) posed before getting back to work.

The Faith Lutheran Day at Star Fish wouldn't be possible without the dedicated volunteers who give of their time to help on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Some of the volunteers help us during the week as we package food for our Partner Agencies and for the Plainfield Food Security Project. Others pitch in when we have special events, like this one, and come year after year. We've even watched some younger helpers grow into adulthood!

Here is a list of the people who helped us this year. It does not include the folks from Faith Lutheran who drove and unloaded the truck. If we missed anyone, we sincerely apologize.

Pat Bixel

Jerry Zukowski

Catherine Renga

Sarah Mazzaresse

Kathleen and Paul Nitzsche

Janet and Michael Townley

Karen Calta

Sherry Kenny

Kevin Doyle

Bob Joseph

Lois and Jim Whalen

Rosemarie Bonk

Boris Moczulla

Leslie Taylor

Rich Gewirtz

Tasha and Gabrielle Vaughn

Maureen Varley

Lily Renga

Peter Renga

Gabrielle Renga

Peter Chang

Chris Car

Jonathan Zayle *

Savion Parish *

Nitya Gadni **

* St. Joseph HS

** Wardlaw Hartridge School

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Food for Thought, Inc.

The Encarnación family of Plainfield and their non-profit, Food for Thought, Inc., donate food and gift cards every year at Thanksgiving to help Plainfield families in need. We treasure our relationship with them and share the following information:

Greetings Patty,

I hope this email finds you well and that your Thanksgiving weekend was extra special for you and your family.

Thank you again for all that you do for the Starfish food pantry. You and the volunteers do an amazing job of serving the community.

The food and gift cards donated by Food For Thought of NJ are made up of the heartfelt contributions of our friends, families, neighbors, and organizations who look to help make a small difference in the lives of struggling families for Thanksgiving.

To name a few of those who donated are...the Hudson Way Immersion School (Stirling, NJ) coordinated its annual collection, and members of Neighbors of Sleepy Hollow also gave generously along with individuals from near and far. While most of our donations come from NJ locals, we have received donations from places like Texas, Puerto Rico, Virginia, Ohio, and New York. Through the years Olivia's (and now Lucas') vision and simple goal remain the same... helping struggling families for Thanksgiving by giving a sense of hope from caring people. Imagine what our world could be if more people did the same.

Each year my family and I are emotionally overwhelmed by the outpouring of goodness. We certainly reflect on how thankful we are to have such great people in our circle. This, of course, includes you.

Thank you and Warm regards, Joe, Patricia, Olivia & Lucas Encarnación



Covid-19 Affected our Holiday Dinner Program

One of the changes caused by Covid-19 affected our **Holiday Dinner Program**. Through this years-old project, Star Fish volunteers packaged grocery bags for 160 to 170 families each Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Typical holiday food items included such items mashed potatoes, yams, cranberry, mac and cheese, vegetables, stuffing, gravy, desserts and frozen turkeys or chickens.

Beginning in spring of 2020 and due to Covid-19 restrictions, we could not gather and package all of that food - there was too much face-to-face work involved. We pivoted to giving out ShopRite gift cards for each holiday, enabling clients to purchase the food items that they needed or desired for their individual dinners. This change was well-received, in part due to the flexibility it gives the families to buy what they need to supplement what they receive from other sources. We continue it today.

For 2022, we purchased and distributed approximately 1200 gift cards worth almost \$45,000.00 to over 480 families. We benefitted from several large grants that covered this expense this year, one from the City of Plainfield and another from the Plainfield Foundation.

We would like to continue using gift cards in 2023, but that will depend on the generosity of our donors and any grants that we can obtain to help fund the project. Donate at our [Contact Us or Donate page](#), mail checks to Star Fish, PO Box 2822, Plainfield 07062-0822, or online www.tinyurl.com/starfishplfdinc..

Schools and Scouts and Workers, oh my!

We enjoy many special relationships with area schools and organizations that support us with their food drives. Without them, our shelves would be bare at various times throughout the year. Of course, the holidays bring out the best in so many people, and food collections peak at this time of year.

Some of our friends bring in food annually, like the Postal Workers Union from Plainfield that contributes through their “Stamp out Hunger” collection each Fall, and PSEG workers who collect from their co-workers. The Ramos family collects food in memory of their father, Mike, and brings it to us in the Fall, also.

Others contribute throughout the year at various times, such as regular donations by the North Plainfield Boy Scouts, Mike and Mike in Plainfield, and many others.

Pictures below are representative of these and other groups and individuals, including St. Joseph High School in Metuchen, Mt. St. Mary Academy in Watchung, and Wardlaw Hartridge in Edison, along with the group who helped receive and sort the Postal Worker's food collection, and a number of others.

At this holiday time and throughout the year, we give thanks to all for your wonderful generosity!



Clockwise, from left—North Plainfield Scouts, the Ramos Family, Wardlaw Hartridge students' competition, Mike and Mike of Plainfield's donation (only one Mike shown), Plainfield's PSEG workers, and the Watchung Scouts' donation (above)



Star Fish, Inc.

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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!"

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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 of Soup
Macaroni and Cheese
Small bag of tea bags
Jar of Peanut Butter
Jar of Jelly
Can of Fruit or Jar of Applesauce
Cans of 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.