



Food Pantry News

Volume 5, Issue 2 – April 2023



1971-2021

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

Giving Thanks to All—Part 2

In our last issue, we listed all our friends who supported us with their financial contributions in 2022. It was quite an impressive list, ranging from \$10 to over \$10,000. We sincerely appreciate every one of you and the sacrifice you made to help us on our mission.

We also have many other (and some the same) friends who support us with donations of food and other items we use to help our Plainfield families who are in need of help. We are grateful for the people who take time to set up a food drive in their neighborhood, church or school, or who simply shop for items we need and drop them off. These friends fill a need, and we are so grateful for their support.

We know that we have some anonymous donors, who leave food at the entrance to the pantry when we are not there. We say “thank you so much” to you, as well. You know who you are.

Our list of donors begins on the next page.

Board of Directors

Pat Bixel, Executive Director

Michael Townley, Secretary

Kathleen Nitzsche, Treasurer

Sarah Mazzaresse, Statistician

Catherine Renga, Chair Holiday Meals

Jerry Zukowski, Chair Food Procurement

Marie Pase, Board Advisor

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

PROJECT 600

An exciting initiative between the Plainfield YMCA and Star Fish will help feed hungry families through distribution of food at Plainfield elementary schools. See the article and photos beginning on **Page 3.**



Thanks to our 2022 Donors of Food and Other Items

AAA in North Plainfield	Lisa Blitt, Sotheby's Westfield Office
Anonymous donors	Marsha Young
Agnes Johnson	McGinn School, Scotch Plains
Alys Tyler	Michael Pelton & Michael Pearson
Barbara DeLucas	Michael Ramos Family
Barbara and Jennifer Lynam	Michael Sawicki
Bell and Flores Families	Mike and Linda DeGeorge
Bob Joseph	Ministry of Motherhood, St. Michael's, Cranford
Bridges, Summit	Mountain Park Elementary School, Berkeley Heights
Bruce Zehnle	Mount St. Mary Academy
Brunswick Hills OBGYN	Neighbors of Sleepy Hollow
Cathy Renga	Netherwood Heights Neighborhood Assoc.
Chris Milan of JK Design, Hillsborough	New Providence Scouting for Food c/o Tom Montrone
Circle of Friends, Metuchen	North Plainfield Scouts
Columbia Bank	Olive Bryan
Community Food Bank of NJ	Pat Bixel
Cornelia McCloud	Pat Jackson
Covenant United Methodist Church	Pemberton Block Association, Plainfield
Cranford Methodist Church	Plainfield Postal Workers Union
Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church, Plainfield	PSE&G employees, Plainfield
Dana Campbell	PSE&G New Jersey
Darlene Bullock	Robert Gordon
Elaine Beyers	Rosemarie Bonk
Edison Intermediate School, Westfield	Rotary Club of the Plainfields
Faith Christian Outreach Center, Plainfield	Salt and Light Ministry, St. Michael's Catholic Church, Cranford
Faith Lutheran Church, New Providence	Sam Elkin
First United Methodist Church Youth Group, Scotch Plains	Skip Shihar
Greenbrook Schools PTA	Sleepy Hollow Neighbors Assoc.
Helen Marino	St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, New Providence
James Apap at Liquid Church, Mountainside	St. Bartholomew the Apostle Catholic Church, Scotch Plains
Janice and Joseph Vyzas	St. Bernard of Clairvaux & St. Stanislaw Kostka Catholic Church, Plainfield
Jarrett Brown, Boy Scouts of America	St. Joseph High School, Metuchen
Jasmine Luo, BASF Corporation	United Presbyterian Church, Plainfield
Jeff Robinson	Vishan Budhan
Jerome Riccardo	Wesley Methodist Church, South Plainfield
Jim Naugle	Vivek and Nidhi Radia
Jim Schiffer	Wardlaw Hartridge School, Edison
Joe Encarnacion and Family	Watchung Boy Scouts Pack 32
Karen Calta	Wilson Memorial Church, Watchung
Kathleen Nitzsche	
Kristin Caccavale	
Khush Purdit	
Lila Reidy	
Lillian Bullock	

Project 600—Food for Elementary School Students in Need

Star Fish Food Pantry and the Plainfield YMCA collaborated in providing 600 bags of food for elementary school children in Plainfield.

Each “Project 600” food bag consists of cereal, soup, milk, pasta, canned tomatoes, fruit and vegetables, beans, rice, beans, snacks, juice pouches, mac and cheese, peanut butter, jelly, tuna. All the food items were provided by Star Fish Food Pantry and were purchased from ShopRite and Aldi supermarkets in South Plainfield, with some donated by Wegman’s and the Community Food Bank of NJ.

“Our director of food procurement, Jerry Zukowski, did a wonderful job working with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey to procure food from their inventory,” said Pat Bixel, Star Fish executive director. “He monitored available inventory, placed orders when needed items were available, drove to Hillside to pick up the food, and arranged for a delivery direct to our location.”

Working with Covenant United Methodist Church where Star Fish is located, volunteers stored the “Project 600” food in a basement room near the Food Pantry. “We are very appreciative of the support we receive from Covenant United Methodist Church,” said Pat Bixel. “They understand the increased need for food within our city and work cooperatively in every aspect of this project.”

Fifty individuals of all ages volunteered in filling 600 Wegman bags on Saturday, April 22. The high school students of Wardlaw+Hartridge School, St. Joseph High School, and members of the Scotch Plains First United Methodist Church Youth Group contributed a great deal of time and muscle. Students helped during their spring break to begin preparing those bags before the April 22 assembly day. These same high schools and the Youth Group generously contribute food throughout the year. “Their help with this project was priceless. We’re elated with their personal dedication in feeding families in need”, commented Pat Bixel.

The packaged bags were then taken to a storage location by volunteers from the Plainfield



Some of the fifty volunteers who helped package 600 bags of food for distribution to nine elementary schools in Plainfield. Leo Gonzalez of the YMCA is to left of Star Fish Executive Director Patty Bixel, holding a bag of food.

Project 600—cont'd

YMCA for later distribution to nine elementary schools in Plainfield. The food bags will be given to school nurses and social workers at nine elementary schools in Plainfield with after-care programs. School personnel will identify students in need of supplemental food.

The idea for “Project 600” came from the Plainfield YMCA and their parent organization, the Greater Somerset County YMCA. The YMCA was awarded a generous Community Development Block Grant from Union County to fund the project. Each year, County Commissioners, Director Brandon Givens, and the CDBG staff work with nonprofits and municipalities to allocate CDBG funds from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“Food security is essential for a healthy and productive community,” said Leo Gonzalez of the Plainfield YMCA. “When families have access to nutritious food, they are better able to learn, grow, and thrive. Through our partnership with Star Fish Food Pantry, we were able to provide 600 bags of food that will be distributed to elementary schools in the district. This food will provide much needed nourishment to families in our community who are struggling to put food on the table. I am grateful to Star Fish for partnering with Plainfield YMCA on this project and to the numerous volunteers who made this effort possible.”



“When presented with the ‘Project 600’ proposal from Kate Russo, District VP of Operations of the Greater Somerset County YMCA and Leo Gonzalez, the Plainfield YMCA representative, we saw this as an outreach of our regular programs,” said Ms. Bixel. “The Star Fish mission is to provide emergency food assistance to families in Plainfield who find themselves in need. We meet this obligation through food requests from our Partner Agencies, through our partnership with the YMCA on the Plainfield Food Security Project twice a month, and through other distributions in meeting specific needs. ‘Project 600’ presented a challenge that our dedicated volunteer staff was happy to take on.”



“We truly appreciate the support that we receive from the community that helps fund all of our operations at Star Fish,” said Kathleen Nitzsche, Star Fish treasurer. “It is heartwarming to receive regular monthly donations through PayPal as well as checks in the mail and food from our supporters. We could not do what we do without that community support.”

Anyone wishing to help us offset the food insecurity needs of families in Plainfield can donate at the our website, www.starfishplainfield.org, or by sending a donation to Star Fish Inc., PO Box 2822, Plainfield, NJ 07062-0822. Donations are tax deductible as permitted by IRS regulation and law. We are a

501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Plainfield, NJ with EIN 22-2145178.



Project 600

This joint project with the Plainfield YMCA involved over 50 people and the purchase and delivery of over 10,000 food items in 600 bags of food for elementary school children in Plainfield.

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 two regular days each week plus additional days as needed throughout the year, preparing and distributing grocery food orders every week. Our annual output is nearly 10,000 bags of food!

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 in need. We also purchase and distribute supermarket gift cards for 160 families at Easter, Thanksgiving, and at Christmas at a cost of \$40,000 per year.

We also partner with the Plainfield YMCA on the Plainfield Food Security Project, where we provide 200 bags of food and 100 dozen eggs twice a month. We also provide 60 small take away bags of food each month for clients at St. Mary's Soup Kitchen in Plainfield.

The generosity of our donors helps us sustain our mission "to provide emergency food assistance to families of Plainfield who find themselves in need." You are all "Stars for Star Fish!"

Flower Power

Star Fish benefitted from the generosity of Stop and Shop's Bloomin' for Good Month in February.

We received \$64 as a donation from purchases of special floral bouquets.

Thank you Stop and Shop and all who participated!

Food We Provide To Those In Need—Items & Amounts Vary Based on Family Size

- 1 Package of frozen meat
- 1 Loaf of bread
- 1 lb of Pasta
- 1 Pasta Sauce
- 1 bag rice
- 2 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
- 2 Cans Vegetables
- 2 Can of Tuna
- 2 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 (when available)



You can donate any of these items. Just contact us (info above) for best drop-off days and times. We can 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.