



Food Pantry News

Volume 7, Issue 1 – March 2025



1971-2021

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

Meet the Board of Directors—Sarah Mazzaresse

Sarah is our Board Statistician. She is responsible for assembling the data and preparing the distribution lists for our Holiday Meals Project.

She not only develops the organized lists of clients from worksheets supplied by each Partner Agency, she uses their raw data to determine the value of the ShopRite gift cards going to each family based on their size.

Sarah also uses the data to prepare and print labels that the Holiday Meals Committee applies to envelopes for each client family. She also prepares and prints a special holiday message to go with the gift cards for each family.

Sarah's methods save the Committee hours of work handwriting each envelope for the 160 +/- clients served for the three holiday periods every year.

Sarah started her duties when we were still giving out bags of food for the Holiday Meal Project, with some families receiving 5 or six bags. Her efforts saved many, many more hours at that time because the volunteers had to write the Agency name, family surname, family size, and number of adults and children on 500 or more grocery bags for each holiday! Talk about writer's cramp!!

Sarah has been a director on our Board since 2018 and volunteers for most large-scale projects. She is employed fulltime for twenty-four years at Syneos Health, overseeing an IT Help Desk that provides hardware deployment services and support in the Pharmaceutical Industry.

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If that is not enough, Sarah is also the Board of Trustees President at United Family and Children's Society in Plainfield, an adoption and counseling agency serving Plainfield and the surrounding area.

Sarah is married and the mom of two wonderful kids, a daughter in high school and a son in middle school.

We are grateful for Sarah's enthusiasm, energy, and willing service to Star Fish and the people of Plainfield.



Board of Directors

Pat Bixel

Executive
Director



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Kathleen Nitzsche

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Sarah Mazzaresse

Statistician



Catherine Renga

Holiday Meals



Jerry Zukowski

Food Procurement



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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

Please forward to your
contacts.

Message from our Executive Director, Patty Bixel

Over the past several weeks, we at Star Fish Food Pantry have been asked about the services we provide in feeding the hungry in Plainfield. The question has been consistent, from community members, contributors, and those who are experiencing food insecurity - will federal mandates make a difference in the availability of food for our neighbors in need? We don't know the answer, but we are concerned.

We have been most fortunate to receive incredible gifts of time and philanthropic support from individuals, schools, churches, restaurants, local foundations & the Community Food Bank of New Jersey. Our Board of Directors intends to continue the work of our mission and to remain good stewards of your donations and our volunteers' time and talents for helping others.

All of us at Star Fish cannot thank you enough for remaining committed to offering the most basic need - food – to our neighbors. Please continue your support.



Rahvin Budhan (c) poses with his mom, Devanie (r) and our director, Patty, with the food collection the Budhans organized at Complete Care Westfield. We have been blessed with several collections and donations over the years from Rahvin (who also volunteers in the summer) and Devanie and her co-workers at Complete Care.

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Plainfield Food Security Project is Moving (Again!)

Our cooperative project with the Plainfield YMCA has found a new location nearer to our former location. We started the PFS project during Covid-19 at the duCret School and the Salvation Army, then moved to Parking Lot 7 at Park Ave. and E. 7th St. where we gave out 140-160 bags of food every two weeks. Then we were told to vacate the lot, and moved temporarily back to duCret. Now, with the assistance of Hannae Wyatt, president of the Board of Education and the Plainfield school district, we have found a location at district-owned property at 504 Madison Avenue. This building is in the downtown area and is located in an area that is walkable for the families from our former location at Lot 7. Thanks to all who made this happen.



Luminary Project Helps Star Fish

We are grateful to all who support us in our mission. One example was the recent Hillside Historic District Luminary Project that brought together hundreds of residents and members of neighborhood associations to light up Plainfield with luminaries on Christmas Eve. Jeff Pauls, coordinator of the Luminary Project, presented \$2400 proceeds to our treasurer, Kathleen and our director, Patty. Jeff and his friends are faithful advocates. We truly appreciate the support shown by all!



Donations Continue to Support our Pantry



Al Smith of the Rotary Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains (left) delivered a load of pre-packaged meals that the club prepared at an End Hunger event. Netherwood Heights Neighbors donated their fantastic collection of soup, cereal and milk. At right, students at Mount St. Mary Academy pose with some of the 250 boxes of cereal the Hope Club collected this year. Thank you all!

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Catherine and Taylor of Scotch Plains Fanwood High School French Club (left) pose with their food donation. The Faith Christian Outreach Center's Ray and Cheyenne Martin and Lenny Braxton brought a load of food from their collection. At right is a display of the food collected by the Circle of Friends at St. Francis Cathedral, Metuchen. Thanks to all for your generosity!



EGGS are higher than ever and scarcer than ever in some stores. We are buying wherever we can to keep our cost down.

Happily, our friends at iHop in North Plainfield have donated 150 dozen eggs over the past few months—a BIG help to our needs.

Thanks, iHop!



We are GOLD—Just a reminder that we are now a 4 Star Charity at Charity Navigator and have achieved the Gold standard at Candid, assuring our donors that your donations are used wisely. We really do our best for the people we serve. Use the QR code to donate.



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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.



What is Star Fish?

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. Star Fish operates 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. We also prepare and help give out 150 bags of food twice a month at the walkup Plainfield Food Security Project.

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. Our team also prepares special food gift cards for 160 families at Easter, Thanksgiving, and at Christmas. This enables the families to buy food that is appropriate to their heritage and beliefs.

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
- Paper goods, cleaning products, and personal care items 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.