



Food Pantry News

Volume 7, Issue 2—July 2025



1971-2021

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

Meet the Board of Directors—Kathleen Nitzsche

We are blessed to have Kathleen serving on our Board of Directors for many reasons. She is a dedicated volunteer and donor, regularly working in the pantry every week. She fills in for our Executive Director, Patty, when she is not available.



More importantly, Kathleen is a direct link to our founding in 1971. Her mom, Eileen Cunniff, was one of the founders of Star Fish. At that time, the Cunniff family operated a pantry out of their basement, serving families in the West End of Plainfield. Kathleen and her brothers helped shuttle food in and out of the basement, believing everyone did the same in their basements.

Kathleen is also our treasurer, managing the books and safeguarding our accounts in a fiscally prudent manner. She helps assure that our records are complete and works with our secretary to see that thank you letters and gift acknowledgements are sent to our donors. She is also instrumental in getting our end-of-year donor letters out.

In addition to her service to Star Fish, Kathleen is also an active member of the Board of Trustees at United Family and Children's Society in Plainfield. She is also a past and longtime volunteer at St. Mary Church Soup Kitchen.

After a corporate career in Health & Welfare Benefit Planning, Kathleen changed careers to be a pre-school and elementary school teacher and to raise her family. She and her husband Paul live in Plainfield.

Kathleen is a regular attendee at various meetings in Plainfield, such as Planning Board, to report back to Star Fish and United Family on development plans that may affect our respective operations.

She was also an active participant in the recent Luminary Project that involved hundreds of households and earned Star Fish a very generous donation., as shown in the photo at right.



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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

Many times throughout the year Star Fish reaches out to you in our newsletters, bringing you up to date with the number of people we serve: struggling senior citizens, children, people without homes, families who have lost homes due to fires or evictions. The numbers are increasing; the need is great.

We are extremely grateful for the very generous donations contributed to our food pantry enabling us to satisfy the needs of those requesting food. Star Fish provides for those families and individuals by offering heavy bags of food, valued at least \$45 each.

During the holiday season, we provide Shop Rite gift cards in amounts of \$75, \$100, \$125 instead of pre-filled bags of food. These gift cards allow the families to choose the foods appropriate for their holiday meals.

We recently asked two agency leaders if they could share some testimony from our neighbors who are recipients of the donations distributed by Star Fish.

Deena Davenport, Parent, Family & Community Engagement Supervisor, HOPES/ HEADSTART writes: "We are grateful for all the work that Star Fish is doing, providing our families with so many different items for our families at HOPES. Parents have lost jobs, and some work two or three jobs to make ends meet. Star Fish makes a difference in their lives."

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- LT: "I'm thankful for the assistance provided and relieved because now I have food for my family"
- PJ: "I've received snack bags for my children in addition to bags of food, gift cards, diapers and wipes. Thank you, Star Fish."
- KC, a teacher at HOPES: "We are honored and excited to be able to put smiles on families faces when they didn't know where the next meal was going to come from."

Jenny Fischbein, Project Manager for Plainfield Partnership for Healthier Children: "At Connections, we have been fortunate recipients of holiday gift cards. The families that we care for lie at or below the poverty level and frequently have food insecurity due to lack of work, children with disabilities and other health issues.

Here are some testimonies from those families:

- DB: "We are filled with gratitude for the help from Star Fish and want God to bless the people that have helped them."
- MB: "My family would not have celebrated Christmas without the gift cards we received. They have helped us make the holidays much more joyous."
- JN: "Star Fish is a big help. I'm home bound and when I call for food a volunteer delivers the food to me. They make me feel like I'm family."

Director's Message—cont'd

- JP: "Star Fish food supplements give me that extra amount of food that helps me make it to the next paycheck. It feels like a hug. Thank you, Star Fish."

A local social worker asked for food assistance for four high school students who came here as immigrants without family. They attend school during the day and immediately go to work to pay for rent, food and utilities.

When Star Fish has the resources to ensure that everyone has food to eat, we are filled with as much satisfaction as those receiving the benefit of our work and your caring support.

According to Community Food Bank of NJ, 1 million people in NJ are food insecure, a 22% increase over last year. Star Fish is one of 800 partners of CFBNJ. Without them our task would be much more challenging. Without you, it would be impossible.

Please scan the QR code for a quick and easy way to donate now. If you'd prefer, mail a check to Star Fish, Inc., PO Box 2822, Plainfield, NJ 07062-0822. And thank you from all of us at Star Fish for your support.

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The Italian Club at Watchung Hills Regional HS collected pasta and sauce as a club project (left). The HOPE Club at Mount St. Mary Academy donates cereal every year, and this year the Campus Ministry also donated individualized bags of period products (center). Patty Bixel spoke at Wilson Memorial Church, whose members regularly donate food and money, including a very generous annual gift from the Outreach Committee. Pictured with Patty are church members Angela Dellaventura, a volunteer at our Plainfield Food Security Project, and Ruth and Bruce Rhyno, both of whom regularly volunteer at the Pantry.



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.



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.



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.