

Fish Newsletter

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Fish, Inc., Dunellen Area

Serving our neighbors since 1970

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Fish, Inc. Dunellen Area Celebrates 50 Years of Helping Others

Remember when a gallon of gasoline was 36 cents, the average hourly pay was \$1.65 and a half-gallon of milk 59 cents? The last time we saw those prices, it was 1970 when Fish, Inc. Dunellen Area was incorporated.

The Fish movement was started in 1961 by a small group of people in St. Andrew's Church, Old Headington, Oxford, England. A person was selected to be a street warden and to watch out for the well-being of the people on this street. Fish cards were distributed to all of the homes on each street, and people placed the Fish card in their window when they needed help. When a local street warden saw a Fish card, he went immediately to the house.

Fish, Inc. Dunellen Area was incorporated June 19, 1970. The seven original churches sponsoring the new Fish organization were First Presbyterian Church of Dunellen, Middlesex Presbyterian Church, Our Lady of Mount Virgin Catholic Church, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Green Brook Baptist Church, St. John's Roman Catholic Church, and Dunellen United Methodist Church.

In December of 1970, the Secretary reported that in the first six months of operation, Fish, Inc. Dunellen Area had answered 127 calls for help. In present day, Fish telephone volunteers answer between one hundred and one hundred thirty calls per month, with heavier volume during the holidays.

Over the past fifty years, some things have changed and some have remained the same.

Fish now operates out of Friendship Hall at 456 New Market Road, Piscataway, a building owned by the First Baptist Church, New Market.

Our Food, Clothing and Christmas Toy Programs continue to flourish with the support of local houses of worship and corporate partners. We now pick up food donations directly from local supermarkets six days a week and local national-chain restaurants once a week.

While the scope of our work has evolved and changed over these fifty years, our commitment and service to our neighbors in need has not. With the blessing of our Lord and the hearts of our volunteers, we hope the work of Fish will continue for many years beyond our own.



A Message From Lisa

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate fifty years of service to our community, we are constantly reminded of what a vital service we provide to those in need. When we give a family food or a new winter coat, we see and feel their appreciation and the impact we make on their lives. When a client feels comfortable enough to break down and cry in front of you as you hand them groceries or clothing, when clients say "God Bless You" or "If it weren't for you...", you are reassured that you're doing the right thing.

But with all the thanks and blessings we receive, we recognize that our service would not be possible and we could not survive without the support of our community. Through our fifty years of service, we have had the support of

many caring individuals, volunteers, churches, civic organizations, corporations, schools and union groups. We greatly value these relationships and appreciate each and every donation.

The year 2020 certainly is one to be remembered, and should be, for the good things. The Covid pandemic brought our families closer, allowed us to spend more time together and refocused our attention on things that truly matter. It gave us time to unclutter our lives and homes, to spend less time away from family and reconnect with those we've lost touch with. And while there has been sadness, pain and loss as well, we must continue to look to a brighter tomorrow.

Looking to the next fifty years, it would be nice to think there will no longer be need in our country, in our communities. However, if there is, we hope there will be caring people to carry on the work of Fish and never forget those in need.

Lisa Couch
President



In Memoriam

We remember those dedicated and loyal volunteers who have passed during the last year.

“Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure; you are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure.”

Judy Cox

Our friend Judy passed away near the end of January of 2019. A valuable volunteer member of the Fish Steering Committee for so many years, she was chair of our Communications Subcommittee and responsible for the



publication and distribution of this very newsletter, along with other publications, and communications with our religious and corporate sponsors. Judy first volunteered at Fish more than thirty years ago to pack food on Tuesday evenings for Wednesday delivery. She also served as a holiday food delivery driver.

Judy was a member of the choir of Our Lady of Fatima Roman Catholic Church, Piscataway for more than fifty years. Soft-spoken and sweet even in the face of serious illness, she put others at ease. She was rarely slowed down in her work for Fish. Simply stated, we miss her.

Joe Kownacki

(By Jerry Gargiulo)

I met Joe in January, 2008 when I first entered the Fish Food Room as a volunteer. Everyone greeted me, but one person did so with a bigger smile, a warmer “hello” and a handshake. That of course was Joe. As we worked together over the years, it was easy for me to see how pleasant he was to everyone, no matter who it was that he met. He was always quick with a smile or a compliment. He was a great volunteer too. Whatever he was asked to do, he did well and with a smile.

Joe loved popular music and could usually tell you who sang or played what song and when, even back to the rock and roll era before he was born. Humor was Joe's other great love. He knew jokes on every subject, and was glad to share a laugh with anyone who would listen to the riddles and anecdotes. He enjoyed trips and picnics with the social group he was part of. It's no surprise that he received awards from that group over the years for best sense of humor and volunteer of the year.

My wife and I shared some time with Joe outside of Fish. We had fun dinners together. He enjoyed simple things as we did, like seeing houses lit with a great deal of Christmas lights. We lost Joe too soon, at the age of 48 in the middle of April, 2019. Every Christmas season when I see a house with lawn displays and lit from top to bottom, I'll think of my friend Joe.

Tom Pisack

We lost Tom near the end of May, 2019. It's rare to find someone so devoted to helping others as Tom was. He didn't talk much about this service...he lived it.

He began his adult life by giving to his country, serving honorably in the U.S. Air Force, then managed or owned several retail businesses. His service to his church, Our Lady of Czestochowa in South Plainfield is almost legendary. There he did maintenance, cut the grass, took the priests out to eat, helped them with personal business, served at masses, helped run the annual festival, supported events to help the less fortunate parishioners with time and money, and loved to play Santa Claus at various functions. As if all that wasn't enough, he and his wife Margo brought needy families to their house to share a big meal on



When Tom retired about nine years ago, he began volunteering at the Fish Food Pantry. Tom loved to cook, so would regularly prepare hot meals for the Fish volunteers, refusing to take any compensation. (The kielbasa with sauerkraut was fantastic!) A few years later, he and another Fish volunteer thought it would be a good idea to start up a soup kitchen in the area. The Fishes and Loaves Café became a reality in the old school cafeteria at Our Lady of Fatima serving a free home-cooked, hot meal the third Friday of each month. There, Tom was famous for his soups. If that wasn't enough, he then joined the Salvation Army to run its Mobile Canteen (food truck for disasters.)

There was never a dull moment when Tom was around. He always made us laugh, even though his larger-than-life style was more "Don Rickles" than "Jim Carrey" but we know that underneath it all beat a heart of pure gold. There's an emptiness and silence now in the Fish Food Room, an emptiness that will linger for a long time.

Connie Sprayberry

Our friend Connie was called home just before Thanksgiving, 2018. Unfortunately, Connie's time with us was cut short just as we were getting to really know each other. We knew her as an active member and Recording Secretary of the Fish Steering Committee. Very easy to speak with, Connie was one of those pleasant, soft-spoken people who always made a person feel comfortable. She spent so many years in service to her church and community, as a member of the Columbiettes, as a Eucharistic Minister, and by doing whatever her church, Fish, and her friends asked of her.

Connie loved music and played piano nearly her entire life. That alone brought joy to so many. Her sudden passing left us stunned and saddened.

John M. Shlyk

Just by looking at John, one might never have guessed at the giving spirit that lived inside of him. While attending services at Abundant Life Worship Center, he was encouraged by one of the staff to become involved with the Fish Food Room. John showed up at the door one day and stayed for several years.

John served his country in the United States Coast Guard, and was a member of the American Legion Post 1000 in Trenton. He was Head Mechanic at the United States Postal Service Kilmer Annex in Edison, New Jersey for 32 years. In his free time, John built and rode Harley Davidson Motorcycles. He was an animal lover and enjoyed gardening.

While a volunteer at Fish, John worked in the receiving area where he would do heavy lifting of canned foods, date check and sort food products and keep things organized. He would also help on the van when needed as a ride along helper. John was taken from us suddenly and tragically on October 22, 2019 at the age of 64.

Brendan Culleton

Brendan strolled by the Fish Food Room one day and became a fixture for a number of years. He, like John, had an opposing look of someone who might volunteer. It was what you couldn't see – Brendan's giving heart that called him to volunteer with us.

Brendan was a homeless man, known to many as "the walrus", who lived in and around the Dunellen train station. He would spend afternoons at the Dunellen Library where everyone knew him. He also helped out Snoopy selling hotdogs at the cart, across from the Dunellen library. Brendan served in Operation Desert Storm with six years of Navy service.

We didn't know much about Brendan but we knew he loved trains and this is why he was so happy being in Dunellen. He would often comment how he used to visit the Union County Model Railroad Club and could spend all day there.

Brendan always wanted to be of help. Working in the receiving area, he would move heavy cases of food around, stock shelves and receive donations. Brendan's sudden passing has left us shocked and saddened. We remember him fondly.



We Get Notes of Thanks

Dear Friends at Fish,
Thanks so much for your help in these trying times. You are a beacon of light in the darkness that has been hanging over us.

Bless you volunteers for your caring and generosity. You are our "Heroes"! Stay safe.
From a very grateful family

Fish of Dunellen Area,
About 6+ weeks back, I was discussing with my mother if she wanted or needed anything as she was in hospice and none of us able to visit with

her in person and she had her Covid stimulus check. I mentioned to her that it was possible that she may be getting another of these checks and maybe she could come up with a suggestion of something she could use to occupy her time. She wanted nothing and asked what she could do with the money. I told her she could do whatever she wanted. She asked if there was some way she could use some to help folks in need. She tried not to watch the news, but knew that there was a lot of suffering, a lot of unemployed.

We discussed options and she decided she wanted some of her money to go to Fish as she herself had been helped by your food pantry several times in her past.

Please accept, from my mom, the enclosed check. Unfortunately, she just passed away and was not able to write this letter to you personally.

Regards,

Hi Lisa~

I just wanted to let you know I've moved. I am currently living with my sister which also allows me to see my daughter and family more often, especially my grandchildren.

I want to thank everyone, Harry, Dolores and those who assisted my experience with Fish.

I never felt I was getting a "hand out" but rather "a hand up", and that has to do with you!!!

God bless,

Fishes & Loaves Café II Back In Action

The wait is over! The Fishes and Loaves Café II at Our Lady of Fatima is back to serving dinner!

Our doors reopened Friday, September 18th with a meal of b-b-q chicken, homemade potato and pasta salads, corn on the cob, pickle and dessert serving 70 hungry folks.

Dinners are provided the third Friday of each month from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the former school cafeteria of Our Lady of Fatima RCC on New Market Road in Piscataway. No reservations required – just walk up. During this time, dinners are being provided as take-outs with our hope to return to indoor dining in the future.

Dinners are always free and provided for those in need of a good, home-cooked meal.

Local Scouts Give Back

We are happy to be the recipient of three Scouting projects.

Piscataway Girl Scout Junior Troop #81105 Bronze Award Project



The Girl Scout Bronze Award is the highest honor a Junior can achieve. Girl Scouts in 4th or 5th grade should only “Go for the Bronze” if it is something that they personally want to do and with parental assistance, will be available to complete the minimum 20 hours of individual work that the project requires. Each Girl Scout has the option to work on the Bronze Award with her troop, or she can work on an individual project and build her own team.

Eleven Girl Scouts of Piscataway Troop 81105 decided to work as a team on their Bronze Award project. Many of the girls have been members of the troop since they were Daisies in kindergarten. Over the years, the girls have enjoyed many activities that involved animals such as reading to dogs at Kennedy Library’s Tales for Tails, visiting the Edison Animal

Shelter, horseback riding, and birdhouse building at the troop’s Raymour and Flanigan fundraiser event last summer. Therefore, for their Bronze Award project, the Scouts decided to focus on animals and helping pet owners in the community who are facing financial hardships and are in need of pet food. The girls collected pet food and created a pet food pantry for the service organization, FISH.

In the fall to get the troop’s project in motion, troop leaders Lena Mitchell and Kia Simmons reached out to the Piscataway Mayors Office about partnering to have the troop host a pet food drive at the township’s January Free Rabies Vaccination Clinic. In addition to this drive, the girls also held individual pet food drives at their schools, the Piscataway Library, at church, pet stores in the area, and they collected pet food from their family and friends. The Scouts created flyers to display around town about their drives and they conducted surveys to find out more about the types of pet food and treats that pet owners preferred. The Scouts collected hundreds of pounds of pet food and were excited for the second phase of their project which was to build the pet food pantry at FISH.



Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the girls had to adjust their project plans. Due to social distancing, Kenneth Mitchell, a troop dad assembled the pet shelving unit and the girls dropped off their donations to FISH in May. Additionally, Scouts created individual Public Service Announcements (PSA’s) to announce the new pet shelving unit and pet food that the Girl Scouts donated to FISH and to encourage community members to donate pet food to help those in need...especially now... during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This project of love and care is a wonderful addition to our food room and will be appreciated by our clients. On behalf of the furry friends we serve, we say “woof-woof”, “mew-mew” or in other words, “thank you!”.

**Green Brook Boy Scout Troop #129
Eagle Project of Dylan Vaidya**



Since 1912, the Eagle Scout rank has represented a milestone of accomplishment—perhaps without equal — that is recognized across the country and even the world. Those who have earned the Eagle Scout rank count it among their most treasured achievements. “Eagle Scout” is not just an award; it is a state of being. Those who earned it as youth continue to earn it every day as adults. That is why an Eagle Scout *IS* an Eagle Scout — not was.

Eagle Scout is the highest achievement or rank attainable in the **Scouts** BSA program of the Boy **Scouts** of America (BSA). Since its inception in 1911, only four percent of **Scouts** have earned this rank after a lengthy review process. The **Eagle Scout** rank has been earned by over 2.5 million youth.

Dylan’s project was to refurbish and beautify the waiting area outside of the Fish Food Room. This included digging up old black top where the garbage dumpsters once stood, installing new soil, sod, plantings and a dogwood tree, replacing two pieces of the cement sidewalk and pouring a new cement pad for the benches. Dylan’s crew also removed two old post signs on the grass area, installed a new garbage receptacle that had been donated to Fish by the Piscataway Elks, treated the wood benches with a protective coating and branded the back of the seat with the Fish symbol. After a lengthy delay due to the Covid pandemic, the go-ahead was given and it only took a mere two weekends for the project to be completed.

Dylan is a Junior at Watchung Hills Regional High School. His Eagle ceremony will take place at a future date.



This project certainly has made a significant difference in the appearance of the waiting area and entrance to the food room. There is a sense of calmness that now surrounds the area, making it a peaceful and pleasing space for those waiting for assistance. Fish thanks Dylan, the Scouts of Troop #129, the leaders and those companies who donated their time and materials to help Dylan achieve his goal. It is beautiful and will be enjoyed by all.

**Dunellen Boy Scout Troop #119
Eagle Project of Jack Onufer**

Yet another wonderful gift to Fish, Inc. was the Eagle Project of Jack Onufer. Jack looked at several different projects before settling on helping Fish.

Jack’s project was to freshen up and organize the winter coat storage area of the Fish Clothing Room. This was no small feat as the first order of business was to clear out all the coats and boxes to a Pack-Rat storage unit located in the parking lot. (Have you seen that staircase?!) Once that was done, the room was painted with two coats of “sunflower yellow” paint and as the sad peach walls gave way to the bright, cheery yellow, you could just hear them sigh. After painting was done, windows washed and new sunflower curtains hung, it was on to expanding the storage. To accomplish this, poles were installed two rows high along three walls so coats could be hung, thus doubling the storage. A steady parade of scouts and adults moved boxes, bags and floor racks back into the room and proceeded to sort and hang coats by gender and size. When all was said and done, the end result was a well organized, bright and cheery work space the clothing room volunteers enjoy and truly appreciate.

We thank Jack, his leaders and fellow scouts for their hard work which will be enjoyed for many years to come.

In The Face of Hunger

The statistics on hunger in America are staggering. One in nine people in the U.S. is food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to healthy meals, and many have visited a food bank in the past year. Thirty-seven million Americans go to bed hungry and the number is climbing. It is projected that by the end of 2020, 54 million people will be struggling for food, up by 17 million since 2018. Ninety-three percent of food banks have seen higher demand since March. We live in the richest country in the world, with more than 900 million acres of farmland, yet we still have millions of Americans going hungry.

In the face of the Covid pandemic, Fish, Inc. continued to distribute food utilizing a “drive-thru” process where groceries were placed in the open trunks of our clients’ vehicles, all the while maintaining social distancing and no contact.

All over our country, it is food banks like Fish, Inc. who help to fill the gaps. Your donations, whether material or financial make a difference in the lives of those we help. In recent months Fish has purchased fresh fruit and produce to add to the bags of groceries we distribute monthly. We have also purchased small packets of laundry detergent to hand out to those getting clothing through our clothing room. These additions were greatly appreciated and happily received by those we serve.

With all the difficulties this pandemic has brought, Fish will continue to provide for those affected as well as others in need. There are many individuals and families like our own who need our support and depend on Fish to help them put food on their plates. And as long as you keep giving, we will keep providing. It’s what we do.



Distributing food outdoors via “drive-thru” process.

Masks Up!

Thank you to Denise Copelton-Fletcher, Gale Zensky and Sherley Penrose for sewing and donating face masks for our volunteers. We appreciate you sharing your talents to keep us safe!



New Procedure for Clothing Donations

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Clothing Room will be accepting donations only when open. Any donations left on our porch will automatically be disposed of.

The Clothing Room is open Mondays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and the third Saturday, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. This schedule is subject to change so it is recommended calling the Fish hotline (732-356-0081) or checking the website or FaceBook page for current donating hours.

Acceptable items for donation are clean, usable clothing (no rips, tears, stains, broken zippers, snaps, buttons or animal odor) for men, women, infants and children, wearable shoes, purses and costume jewelry. We also accept bedding (sheets, blankets, quilts) and other household materials such as towels, washcloths, curtain sets, and throw rugs. As a clothing room our main focus is clothing, and as such, we are not able to accept other donations (ie: furniture, household items, etc.).

We appreciate your donations and thank you for helping to keep us safe as we strive to help others.

Thank You, Thank You

We just can't say it enough. For your donations of clothing, food, time, talent and monetary support, all of which without we couldn't exist.

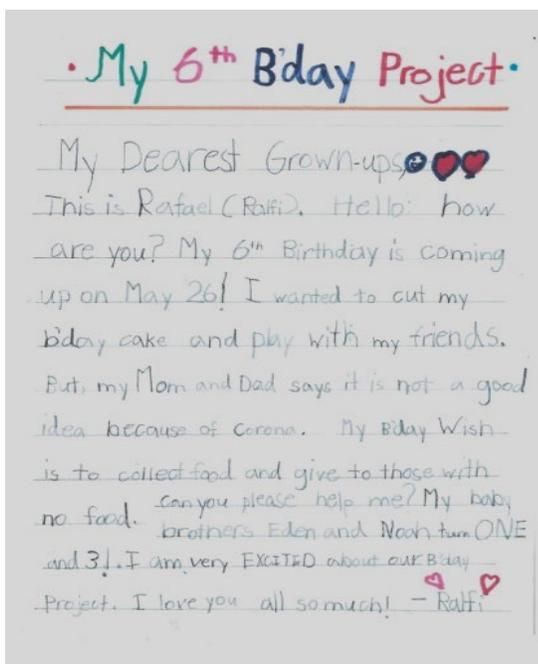
And for volunteering during the pandemic, we thank:

Client Cheryl A. and her two sons
Paul Verzi and Dave Losey from The
Piscataway Knights of Columbus
Piscataway Councilwoman Michele Lombardi
Kerri Bucci
Jane Barry
Linda Proulx
Victoria Flores
And all regular volunteers

Kids Take Action Against Covid To Help Others

Don't underestimate kids. Think they aren't listening or understand what's going on in the world? As you read on, you'll see that they may be small, but they've proven to be mighty. Let us introduce you to Rafael and Kristiana.

Rafael or as he is called "Ralfi" is a 6 year old with a social conscience. During his home schooling he was learning about community and helping within the community. Born from that learning came the following letter:



My 6th B'day Project

My Dearest Grown-ups, 😊❤️❤️
This is Rafael (Ralfi). Hello. how are you? My 6th Birthday is coming up on May 26! I wanted to cut my b'day cake and play with my friends. But, my Mom and Dad says it is not a good idea because of corona. My B'day Wish is to collect food and give to those with no food. Can you please help me? My baby brothers Eden and Noah turn ONE and 3! I am very EXCITED about our B'day Project. I love you all so much!
-❤️Ralfi❤�

Ralfi's mom posted the letter on FaceBook and it went viral! Soon food donations were arriving by UPS and Amazon from family and friends from around the world. All in all, Ralfi collected 662.3 lbs of food! The easy part was over. Now...how to get all that food to the Fish Food Room. Ralfi's mom had heard of local police departments helping other organizations and made a call to her local police department in Piscataway. Without hesitation, a crew of four Piscataway police officers loaded up a police pick-up and unloaded box after box of food items at the Fish Food Room.



Our thanks to Ralfi's family and friends who supported his project and the very kind members of the Piscataway Police Department for making the delivery. We especially thank Ralfi for his tender heart, caring ways and his extremely generous birthday donation.

Kristiana's Krafts Cares

Eleven year old Kristiana wanted to help those who needed it during this time when so many are out of work, so she and her Mom came up with the idea to sell the craft items she enjoys making. The items she makes are all made of Perler beads (plastic beads that are fused together with an iron) and turned into magnets or keychains. Kristiana named her project Kristiana's Krafts Cares. Her efforts were very successful as she was able to help both the Fish Food Room and a local animal shelter.



Fish is grateful to Kristiana and her mom for their kindness in donating to Fish and for caring about others in need.

Local Groups Donate to Fish

During these unprecedented times, many local families are finding it difficult to make ends meet. With both adults and children working and schooling from home, meals that were once provided elsewhere are now the responsibility of the home kitchen. This need puts a heavy burden on household budgets. To help ease this burden, Fish has increased the amount of food distributed to families each month. Of course that increase reduces our inventory and to keep our shelves well stocked, we rely on our donors.

The Piscataway Township Education Association (PTEA) has made a generous donation to Fish to purchase food, paper goods, and produce. The PTEA was able to secure this donation through the NJEA PRIDE in Education Grant Program. PRIDE is used to help establish a connection between the local schools, the

association, and the community. Fish was chosen because of its 50-year history of assisting the community of Piscataway through its food pantry, clothing donations, and other activities.



On July 16th, the ENF Committee, headed by Chairperson Eileen Uken of the South Plainfield Elks Lodge No. 2298, was proud to present a generous donation to the food pantry of Fish Inc. This donation was funded using the Spotlight Grant which the lodge applied for and received from the Grand Lodge. This year, grants that are received are slated for use in the relief of pandemic related issues. The Fish food pantry will put this money to good use in order to purchase needed items for the pantry.



Pictured from left to right is PER Christine Sauer of the South Plainfield Elks; Lisa Couch, President, Fish, Inc.; Rick Couch, Treasurer, Fish, Inc. and Janice Dube, Chaplain, South Plainfield Elks.

Eduardo Bustamante, an English/Special Education teacher at Middlesex High School started fundraising money to help feed the homeless. Over the summer, Mr. Bustamante made a financial donation and a donation of clothing to Fish.



Pictured left to right, Eduardo Bustamante; Rick Couch, Treasurer Fish, Inc.; and Diane Neiss, Clothing Room Volunteer.



KISS Products, Inc. USA, is a new neighbor in Piscataway. Having recently moved its distribution operations from Long Island to a new 469,600 square foot building in Piscataway, KISS is a global leader in professional quality beauty products and treatments, with iconic brands sold in over 100 countries worldwide.

During the time of this pandemic, many corporations are not permitting employees to volunteer with local organizations. In lieu of this and in keeping with the idea of being a responsible neighbor, KISS Products recently made a generous donation to Fish, Inc.

We thank KISS for their generous donation to our programs and welcome them as a new neighbor and partner in the fight against hunger and need here in Central Jersey.



Piscataway Elks Lodge #2414 recently made a donation of gift cards to various local stores. These gift cards are distributed by Fish and intended to aide clients during the Covid pandemic with specific needs that Fish isn't able to fulfill.

In addition, the Elks donated a new electric beverage cooler. This cooler will be used to hold donations of dairy products received from local supermarkets and allow our food room clients to serve themselves.

Coming Up

Thanksgiving Food Distribution:
 November 16-20, 9 a.m.-12 noon
 November 21, 9 a.m.-11 a.m.
 November 23 & 24, 9 a.m.-12 noon

Christmas Food Distribution:
 December 14-18, 9 a.m.-12 noon
 December 19, 9 a.m.-11 a.m.
 December 21 & 22, 9 a.m.-12 noon

Come Join "THE FISHNET"

If you would like to hear from us when we have a specific need, become a member of *The Fish Net*. To subscribe, visit us at: www.fishdunellenarea.org and click on "The Fish Net" tab.



Follow us on Facebook at "Fish, Inc.-Dunellen Area"

Shop at AmazonSmile

and Amazon will make a donation to:

Fish Inc. - Dunellen Area



The Last Word

For assistance, or if you would like to contribute or volunteer, call the Fish hotline: **732-356-0081**. For more information about Fish, Inc., please visit our website: www.fishdunellenarea.org.

Fish, Inc., Dunellen Area qualifies as a nonprofit corporation and is exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. We follow IRS requirements for receipts.

