

St. George Orthodox Church
5490 Main Street
Trumbull, CT 06611

Attn: Bill Kovachi

The Refill the Pantry program is coordinating a Trumbull Faith-based Community food drive collection and looks forward to your congregation's participation.

I've enclosed an overview of the Refill the Pantry program covering the needs of our community and our efforts to help address those needs.

In Trumbull, over 200 families face food insecurity and use the Trumbull Food Pantry. Last year, Refill the Pantry collected 5,500 pounds of food and \$1,900, which is insufficient for our community's needs.

This year, we are asking for participation from all faith-based organizations in Trumbull to help our food-insecure neighbors.

St. George can help by conducting a food drive during March and early April. We can help with signage and promotional material. Your collection should be delivered to Stop&Shop, 100 Quality Street, Trumbull, on Saturday, April 19, between 9:00 and 5:00. We can make other arrangements if that delivery time does not work for you.

Your collection will be weighed and delivered to the Trumbull Food Pantry on Monday, April 21, with a note honoring your congregation's contribution.

Note: we are scheduled to do a second collection for the Trumbull Food Pantry on Saturday, August 16.

Feel free to contact me at **(203) 520-3751** or email at **RLANSING@OPTONLINE.COM** for further details and to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you,

Rich Lansing, Refill the Pantry Coordinator



Refill the Pantry

2024

Food insecurity is growing in Connecticut, says Jason Jakubowski, the CEO of Wallingford-based Connecticut Foodshare, a food bank that distributes food through local food pantries. It jumped 23% in a year, from about 382,000 people statewide in 2022 to about 470,000 in 2023, about 13% of the state's 3.6 million population.

He says about 1 out of 7 Fairfield County residents are food insecure. "We're the richest state in the country, and yet there's a considerable amount of poverty," Jakubowski said. "No one thinks there's a (food insecurity) problem in Fairfield County, but there is."

The best estimate we have is that there are about 750 food pantries in Connecticut. This is surprising given that the average household income in Connecticut is around \$135,000, about 28% higher than the average household income in the United States.

Jason Jakubowski's Connecticut Foodshare serves 600 food pantries in the Nutmeg State. He describes the other 150 food pantries as being anything from very small, likely operating out of a church, to relatively large and serving hundreds. His organization doesn't serve these 150 because they don't adhere to Connecticut Foodshare's safety standards.

LeAnne Reynolds, who works at the Sterling Community Center, which also has a food pantry, says sometimes they see people who need help on occasion but not all the time. The example she provides is that they've had customers from Westport, a very high-income community, use their services from time to time but not all the time.

Refill the Pantry
Richard Lansing, Coordinator
98 Cottage Street
Trumbull, CT 06611
(203) 520-3751

**Collaborating
Churches**

First Presbyterian Church, Fairfield
Good Shephard Lutheran Church, Monroe
Grace Lutheran Church, Stratford
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Fairfield
Thrivent Financial

Financial Sponsor

Refill the Pantry began in 2022 when a collaboration of churches established a program to address food insecurity in the Bridgeport, CT, area. Volunteers participating in the program are associated with four churches: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Monroe, Grace Lutheran Church in Stratford, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Fairfield, and the First Presbyterian Church of Fairfield.

"Our friends and neighbors are struggling more than ever to keep their pantries full," said Pastor Greg Penza of the First Presbyterian Church of Fairfield. "Refill The Pantry allows participants to be part of the answer to addressing, hopefully, reducing food insecurity."

In 2024, more than 77 volunteers from the four churches in Fairfield County participated in eleven food collections for six area food pantries. Those collections provided almost 23,000 pounds of food and \$11,600 to the following food pantries: The Trumbull Food Pantry, Bishop Jean Williams in Bridgeport, nOURISH BRIDGEPORT Food Pantry, Sterling House Food Pantry in Stratford, Fairfield Operation Hope, and the Monroe Food Pantry.

"This effort helps refill our shelves," said Trumbull Food Pantry Coordinator Karen Seferi. "Right now, we're looking a little grim. More people have been coming in. They need more food. So, when we say, 'We need pasta,' we need pasta, the sauce to go with it, too, and anything else that goes with the meal," she added.

Refill The Pantry is financially sponsored by Thrivent, a Minneapolis-based financial services organization that is also a fraternal organization.

"There's just so much need for food in these pantries," said Thrivent spokesman Kent Tedford. "It's sad, but if it's something we can help, support, and, hopefully, alleviate the problem, then that's fantastic."

"The people in our communities are always very generous," said Rich Lansing, who leads the Refill The Pantry program. "Refill the Pantry program provides people the opportunity to help their food-insecure neighbors. The shoppers at the six Stop&Shop stores in Bridgeport, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull have greatly supported their local food pantries."

Refill the Pantry plans to expand on its success with twelve collections in 2025, with expanded publicity efforts in the community and adding other churches and more volunteers into the program.