

# East Fishkill

*Living*

February 2026

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
**FOOD  
PANTRY**  
*The little room with the big*   
For assistance call (845)227-7863



Photo by Louisa Vitardi

*Feeding Neighbors  
Nourishing Hope*

The Saint Vincent de Paul  
**FOOD PANTRY**

POWERED BY





Pantry Manager Tom O'Mara, President Gary Crispo, and Past President Joyce Pfirman work together to ensure each St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry client is welcomed with care and respect.

## Feeding Neighbors, Nourishing Hope The Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry

By Jeanne Cotroneo Darrow | Photos by Louisa Vilardi

On any given week, men and women from every background quietly walk through the doors of the Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, carrying not only financial strain but hope that someone cares. What they find is more than food: a ministry grounded in Catholic faith and carried out by volunteers who treat every person with compassion and dignity.

Rooted in the shared mission of St. Columba, St. Denis, and St. Kateri Tekakwitha parishes, the pantry operates with a simple purpose: to love our neighbors in their time of need. “Our role is not simply to provide a bag of groceries,” explains St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry President Gary Crispo. “Rather, our role is to let each client know they are loved, valued, and never alone.”

Located behind St. Denis-St. Columba School in Hopewell Junction, the pantry serves all who live within the geographic boundaries of the three parishes, regardless of religious affiliation. More than half of the families served are not parishioners—a reminder that hunger touches every corner of the community. While the pantry’s primary mission is to serve the triparish area, “we’re an equal opportunity provider,” says Gary. “No one in need is turned away.” Those who live outside the service area receive a one-time assist and help connecting to a pantry closer to home, ensuring continued care and support.



## REVEALING CHRIST'S LOVE

For decades, the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry has lived out the Gospel call to care for those in need. Its mission remains steadfast: to offer supplemental food assistance, personal outreach, and compassionate support—always with privacy and dignity, and without judgment.

As economic pressures grow—rising food prices, job loss, medical bills, disabilities, and the challenges of aging on fixed incomes—the pantry has become a stabilizing force for many households. Currently, more than 200 families are active clients, with 110–140 receiving assistance each month. These households range from individuals living alone to multigenerational families of up to 14 people. This work plays an important role in the fight against hunger, which affects 26,130 residents, or 8.8% of the population of Dutchess County, according to Dutchess Outreach. “Every family who comes to us carries a story,” Gary says.

The pantry is powered by more than 100 volunteers whose quiet dedication is faith in action. They learn each family’s needs, discuss dietary restrictions, organize donations, manage inventory, and maintain ongoing communication with households. Many have served for years — some, including Pantry Manager Tom O’Mara, for more than a decade — bringing consistency, experience, and deep compassion to the ministry.

Partnerships with the Food Bank of Hudson Valley, major grocery stores, local farms, civic organizations, scout troops, schools, and individual donors help keep the shelves stocked. Excess food nearing expiration is delivered to Dutchess Outreach’s “Lunch Box” meal program, ensuring that nothing goes to waste.

## A GENEROUS COMMUNITY

The pantry depends on and is deeply grateful for the outpouring of generosity from parishioners, local organizations, and businesses that regularly donate and sponsor food drives. Financial contributions support capital costs, monthly food purchases, back-to-school supplies, coats for kids, holiday grocery gift cards, and Christmas gift cards for children. The pantry also provides resources both onsite and through its website to help families connect with other community services, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

Each client gets matched with a trained pantry volunteer who becomes a personal point of contact. Rather than open pantry hours, this appointment-based model facilitates confidentiality, dignity, and personalized care. “We understand people fall on tough times, and we’re here to help,” says Gary. “No one should feel shame or embarrassment.”

Families shop from shelves and coolers stocked with staples such as cereals, pasta, rice, canned goods, soups, peanut butter, coffee and tea, breads, pastries, and a variety of frozen and refrigerated items including milk, eggs, juices, and meats. Nonfood essentials like laundry detergent, shampoo, deodorant, and paper goods are also available.

Behind the scenes, volunteers stock, sort, check dates, and pick up donations from partner organizations to keep shelves full and safe. In addition to monthly purchases from the Food Bank of New York, they are fortunate to

# Ways You Can Make a Difference

1. Donate nonperishable food and personal-care items (drop-off locations include East Fishkill Town Hall and the narthex of St. Columba, St. Denis, and St. Kateri Tekakwitha parishes).
2. Support parish collections and community food drives.
3. Make financial contributions to support food purchases and programs.
4. Volunteer in roles that match your time and abilities.
5. Partner through schools, businesses, or civic groups.
6. Attend a meeting, held on the second Wednesday of every month (except in July and August) at 7 pm in the Bishop Dominick room in the chapel behind Saint Columba Church. The next meeting is Feb. 11, 2026.

Gary leads the ministry with a focus on compassion, dignity, and service to every neighbor in need.



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Pantry Lead Marie Brown is responsible for keeping the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry fully stocked and organized.



Shelves of food and donated winter coats—essential support made possible by the generosity of the community and the dedication of volunteers.



Volunteers Bill Stickle and Wendy Travis are responsible for driving the truck to pick up food from the Regional Food Bank in Montgomery, N.Y.

receive donations of fresh produce and dairy products from local farms, milk from Stewart’s, and breads, pastries, meats, and fish from Shoprite in LaGrangeville.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

The pantry relies on the generosity of parishioners, local organizations, and businesses whose food drives, financial gifts, and service projects keep the ministry thriving. With the number of households seeking help on the rise, new volunteers are always welcome. Whether you can give a few hours a month or more, there are roles for every schedule and ability—from sorting food to serving as a client representative or assisting with special events.

If you have been looking for a meaningful way to support your neighbors, the pantry welcomes contributions of food, funding, or professional services. Even small acts—such as organizing a workplace food collection—can make a profound difference. You

do not need to be a member of any parish to join. Volunteers often share that the work is deeply fulfilling—an opportunity to serve neighbors directly and to be part of a caring community network.

The pantry is regularly in need of nonperishable foods—pasta, rice, canned fruits and vegetables, peanut butter, oatmeal, coffee, and tea—as well as household essentials such as paper towels, toilet paper, laundry detergent, and dish detergent. Donations can be dropped off at the entrances of St. Columba, St. Denis, and St. Kateri Tekakwitha and at the East Fishkill and Union Vale town halls.

“As the needs of our community grow,” adds Gary, “our commitment remains unwavering in serving every person with compassion, confidentiality, and Christ-centered love.”

*To learn more, visit [svdpfoodpantry.org](http://svdpfoodpantry.org). If you are in need of assistance, please call the hotline at (845) 227-7863. ♦*



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