

Spring 2017

# Newsletter



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## Empty Bowls raises over \$10,000 in support of the Rise Food Pantry and the Hightstown Cultural Arts Commission



Local high school volunteers help serve soup.



A Place To Dance performed at the event.



Ceramic Artist Adam Welch, created over 250 bowls.



Thank you "Souper Chefs" and generous sponsors.

## 2017 grants

Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation  
First Commerce Bank  
Janssen Pharmaceuticals  
Junior League of Greater Princeton  
Novo Nordisk  
Provident Bank Foundation  
Shop-Rite Partners in Caring

## Incredible Activities and Unforgettable Moments

Applications are available online, and at the Rise office  
116 North Main Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520

For more information contact Cris Ciobanu at 609-443-4464 or visit our website: [www.njrise.org](http://www.njrise.org)



**SUMMER CAMP 2017**  
**JULY 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
to  
**AUGUST 11<sup>th</sup>**

\*Tuition prices are based on Federal Poverty Guidelines. AFFORDABLE TO ALL. Limited Space - Deadline June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

About 9 years ago, retired elementary and middle school teacher, **Gail Zelenak**, walked out the front door of her East Windsor residence with a few gardening tools when a woman happened by walking her dog. They struck up a conversation during which the woman shared that she was a volunteer at the Rise Food Pantry. Once Gail heard about this community service, she was hooked.

Gail initially joined the group of volunteers who was working at the Rise Food Pantry. There, as the record keeper and greeter, she was able to learn people's names and needs. Later, she reached out to help at the Rise Greater Goods Thrift Store where she put in many volunteer hours.

These days you can find Gail Zelenak all over the community whether it is at the Hickory Corner Library or Twin Rivers Library's food donation boxes doing pickups, at the door of the Rise Food Pantry seemingly "schmoozing" or at the community dinner on Thursdays from 4-6:00 at the First United Methodist Church orchestrating events.

Strong on the outside toting boxes, giving directions or making decisions, on the inside this humble "volunteer" says that this experience has made her more sensitive to the needs of community members. "You just never know what burdens they're carrying... I feel so fulfilled doing this work," says Gail. What a lucky day for the community that Gail stepped out her front door that day with a few gardening tools. My, how her garden has grown!...

To read more about the Dynamic Duo visit  
[www.njrise.org](http://www.njrise.org)



"Where's the maestro tonight?" community residents ask when they don't see **Tony Zelenak** at Rise to the TASK community dinner. When he is not tinkling the ivories on Thursday nights between 4 and 6:00 PM at the First United Methodist Church, he's either unloading donations from his van, setting up or breaking down tables and chairs, carrying trays of food or chatting with his friends. This East Windsor resident of 25 years has been helping out at the community dinner since its opening night about 5 and a half years ago and now he says that that's where his friends are.

He loves his fellow volunteers and those whom he seeks to help. He shares his life happily with them and they share their lives with him in return. He lives for the smiles and good cheer he can bring to them and he relishes the smiles and good cheer he gets back.

Tony watched his wife, Gail, enjoy her volunteering for about a year before he decided to jump in and give it a try himself. "I had no idea how much I would love it," says Tony. "I've been lucky in life. I've learned a lot and done a lot. It was time to help other people. I could have gotten a part-time job and earned a little money, but this is just so much more rewarding. Some people have everything and they're still not happy. This experience has taught me to appreciate all that I have."