

Mystic-based group supports nonprofit helping the blind

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Power of Together 2, a crowdfunding group based in Mystic, named Ledyard nonprofit Sofia Sees Hope as its August beneficiary, awarding the organization \$10,200.

Power of Together 2 meets quarterly, and members pledge \$100 to go to one of three randomly selected local nonprofit organizations. Representatives pitch their organizations, and members vote on which one will receive that quarter's collected donations. Previous donations include \$8,100 for the Coogan Farm Giving Garden and \$5,700 for the Groton Public Library to restore Sunday hours.

Sofia Sees Hope raises money and awareness for people affected by blindness caused by rare inherited diseases. Co-founder Laura Manfre created the nonprofit after her daughter Sofia was diagnosed with Leber congenital amaurosis, which causes vision loss at birth and leads to total blindness.

Manfre is a member of Power of Together 2, and when Sofia Sees Hope was selected as a finalist for the August meeting, she gave a presentation about the nonprofit's work in the community, including an upcoming conference for families impacted by LCA.

“One of the reasons my husband and I founded Sofia Sees Hope after our daughter was diagnosed with LCA is because we know how challenging it can be for families dealing with a disease that is rare,” Manfre said at the meeting. “This grant from Power of Together 2 will allow us to help LCA families travel to Groton to learn and connect with others. Without this grant, we would not have been able to do that.”

The LCA Family Conference will be held Oct. 5 and 6. For more information, visit sofiaseeshope.org. The next Power of Together 2 meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 13, at the Hugo Simonelli VFW Hall, 60 Stonington Road in Mystic.

Kindness in Real Life is a regular feature in which we encourage writers to tell about kind acts being done in the community. To submit your own story and photos, email Lee Howard at l.howard@theday.com.