

# Donors' group forms to help local nonprofits



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By Brooke Constance White Sun staff writer

STONINGTON — A group of residents has found a straightforward, simple way to make a difference in the community and, ultimately, to change lives.

With 58 members who are committed to donating \$100 each at quarterly meetings, the newly formed Power of Together 2 group is donating more than \$5,000 to local nonprofit organizations four times a year.

During their hourlong meetings, members vote to select an organization that will receive their donation for the quarter. Residents Karen Stone, Barb and Harry Holt, Gae Melford, and Dave Schulz started the group, basing it on the original Power of Together in Niantic — thus the “2” at the end of the group’s name.

Most of the members of Power of Together 2 are from the Stonington and Mystic area, but the group is hoping to expand and bring in members from Westerly.

So far, members have donated \$4,300 to Mystic Area Shelter & Hospitality during the first meeting in April, and \$5,800 to the Groton Public Library during the second meeting in July.

The goal is to get to 100 members so they can give away \$10,000 after each meeting.

A member can be one person, a couple, a family, or even a small group of people who wish to collectively donate the committed \$100.

Melford, who’s retired from a career in editorial photography, said that when she learned about the Niantic group she immediately knew she wanted to do something similar in the Stonington area.

“This is something that is direct, simple, goes straight to the community, builds community, has no overhead, doesn’t take months of planning, doesn’t need a venue, and is, at least for me, affordable,” she said. “A way to do the most good with my limited dollars. But I still donate my time to other organizations that I am committed to, and also want to give a few dollars, when possible, to a number of organizations that I have always given to.”

So far Stone, who's also retired and enjoys volunteering in her spare time, said all of the members love the concept and have said it feels good to gather together and collectively put money back into the community.

"We keep thinking of more people that we know and sending out emails to get more people to join the group," she said. "It really is a grass-roots effort and has started from the ground up."

At the quarterly meetings, members who wish to make a pitch for a particular nonprofit put the name in a hat, and three are drawn. Members then vote on which one of the three organizations will be the recipient.

"People are truly committed to what they propose and they make compelling arguments," Melford said. "It's definitely tough to choose which one to support as they are all worthy. But you end up choosing something that you may not have known about, and that you now realize is such an important cause."

It's an easy way for people to make a difference in the community, Stone said. "They might be more likely to donate to this than finding an organization to donate to on their own because the collective impact of the members' gifts is greater than a single \$100 check," she said.

A representative of MASH attended the July meeting to share how the money was used and how the organization made a difference in the lives of six families in the region who were having financial difficulty.

"With our donation, they were able to help the six families out of those difficulties," Stone said. "In one case, it helped with a security deposit and in the others the money helped to pay past-due rent payments. In the six families, there were nine children total that were helped."

The Groton Public Library recently sent out a press release saying the funds donated by the group will help keep the library open on Sundays.

Although the group so far has donated only to nonprofit organizations, Stone said it can also donate to an individual or family in need using a nonprofit called Cactus Jack, based in Waterford. Cactus Jack acts as the 501(c)3 nonprofit and then distributes money to the individual or family in need.

To become a member, interested parties can contact the group at [poweroftogether2@gmail.com](mailto:poweroftogether2@gmail.com) or attend their next meeting at 7 p.m., Oct. 11, at the Mystic VFW.

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