

Power of Together 2
Meeting Minutes: February 11, 2020

As you read in our most recent newsletter, Power of Together 2 has donated \$142,500 to 15 worthy causes since our inception in April 2016. And we are more than 120 strong. New members are: Valerie Grimm, Holly Carbonneau, Carol Marzetta, Kenneth Sigel, Eunice Sutphen, and Philip Pavone. There are four chapters of PoT (Niantic, Griswold, Waterford and Mystic), with membership growing at each meeting. As of December 2019, the four chapters have raised more than \$430,000.

Prior Recipient Report: Always Home

Betty Smith reported that the money we gave to Always Home in November helped a family push back from the edge of homelessness. Julio and Twyla were able to fix the transmission on their car and to pay rent. Twyla wrote a note of appreciation, which reads (in part): “This organization and the incredible people who coordinate it are truly angels on earth. They changed my family’s life after we experienced several devastating blows...they ensured we were able to get back on our feet and not just survive but thrive.”

Presentations

1) Christie Williams, a member of the board of directors of Flock Theater, was seeking funding for Flock’s educational programming aimed at increasing literacy in “low level fluency” fourth grade students. It’s a two-week residency program designed to teach students important events in CT history through shadow puppet plays. Students participating in this program have “experienced double-digit improvements in literacy,” Williams said. Funding provided by Power of Together 2 would pay for programming for 300 students (four classes in three schools with 25 students each).

2) Phil Pavone described the AZ Pawn Gift of Mobility Giveaway, a program that collects, refurbishes, and distributes wheelchairs to those in need. Pavone, a cancer survivor, has given away 650 wheelchairs to date. “Once we give these chairs to people and see how grateful they are—the tears and the hugging and kissing—I know we’re making a difference,” says Pavone. “These chairs offer a way for people to live an independent life.” The Power of Together 2 funding would be used for batteries, which Pavone said cost between \$125 and \$250 each, and advertising, to “get the word out.” He said that 98% of the chairs go to CT and RI residents.

3) Rachael Bundesmann spoke on behalf of the New London Community Meal Center on Montauk Avenue. The Center provides 75,000 meals a year, Bundesmann said, in a kind, warm, and welcoming environment. Much of the food is donated by the Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Foodbank and prepared and served by volunteers. The Center has just one full-time and two part-time employees. Bundesmann said the Power of Together 2 funding would be used

to upgrade safety equipment, including flooring, smoke detectors, a dropped ceiling, and new locks. The Center is funded by the United Way and through donations.

Selected Organization

Phil Pavone's AZ Pawn Gift of Mobility Giveaway was selected in a very close vote. Pavone's organization does not have 501c3 status, and so checks will be written to Cactus Jack Foundation, with "AZ Pawn Gift of Mobility" written in the memo line. Making your contribution online through Givinga is also an option; a link is included in the Minutes email.

A representative from the Cactus Jack Foundation, which is a 501c3 organization, came to describe their services at a Power of Together meeting last year. While other Power of Together chapters have worked with Cactus Jack, this is the first opportunity for our chapter. We will be working with them as they manage the distribution of the funds to AZ Pawn Gift of Mobility.

The next Power of Together 2 meeting is on Tuesday, May 12, at 7 p.m. at the Mystic YMCA.