



Power of Together SECT 2

Meeting Minutes, 2/20/24

Debby O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:05. Approximately 40 members and organizers, two of whom were new members, were present plus 11 Zoom attendees. Debby reviewed her own membership history and POT history, expressing gratitude for our efforts and her inclusion as one of the organizers. She also reviewed the meeting process and the Cactus Jack option for those wishing to pitch and support a non-501c3 worthy cause.

Debby introduced Beatrice Jenette, President of STEPS (Striving Toward Personal Success) who spoke of use of Pot2 funds. STEPS volunteers reach out to meet girls at area middle and high schools, such as New London and Plainfield and others to get them involved in their programs that offer mentoring life skills training and workshops. Programs also include a young leadership program, a 3-week summer enrichment program that includes STEM education, college prep, and personal development, as well as college visits, and family inclusion events. POT funds will be used to hire a new Executive Director to ensure sustainability of program. Beatrice introduced Shaneva Edwards-Harris, a young adult working at Pfizer who has been in the STEPS program since 6th grade. She credits STEPS for helping her see potential for her future and teaching her the skills for success, including mental health, confidence building, assuming leadership roles, and being uplifted as a person. "I owe it all to STEPS in planting that seed; I have been ascending ever since."

The hat was passed and six people submitted their names.

1. Jen Daly spoke for **Girls on the Run**, based on an international program, which provides coaching for 2 programs to run a 5K race, one for 3rd-5th graders, and one for middle schoolers. The program also offers life skills training, confidence and competence building, and a community impact program. Started in 2015, they now serve over 250 girls from Groton, NL, Waterford, and other local towns. POT funds will enable them to offer scholarships to 80 more girls. 98% of participants say they feel better about themselves, and feel confidence in future endeavors, such as running for office, running a home, running a business, etc.
2. Susan Charette presented **Loving Hands for SECT**, a program focused on feeding the homeless. Their outreach includes a Facebook page, and volunteers go out to

feed people wherever they are staying. They also provide other needs such as gas, hotel rooms, etc. They are currently supporting 6 families in hotel rooms, and provide food, clothing, and other necessary items, which are donated – they have a storage unit for donations, which come in through Facebook connections and word of mouth and have donated 700 wrapped Christmas gifts this year to the homeless. Loving Hands for SECT is currently applying for 501c3 status – they will apply to Cactus Jack.

3. Joan Butler presented **Groton Community Meals**, which for 10 years has had volunteers serving 50-60 meals a week at a church in Groton, with the food coming primarily from Gemma Moran and CT Food Share, and donations from restaurants. In 2016 they moved to Groton Senior Center, and now serve about 170 meals weekly at both the Groton Senior Center and the Thames River Magnet School. Currently the total meal count is 150-200 meals every Monday, totaling an estimated 16,000+ meals annually. The organization is totally volunteer run except for 2 chefs, who receive a modest stipend. They have recently received a grant to buy a truck and trailer to deliver meals to neighborhoods in Groton. Joan noted that approximately 16% of the New London population is food-insecure.

The organization receiving the most votes was Groton Community Meals. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.