Gowrie Group’s Annual Challenge Reaches Goal and Raises $175,000 to Benefit The Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries!

Photo (left to right): Carol-Ann Myers (BrandTech Representative), Amy Hollis (Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries Executive Director), Carter Gowrie (Gowrie Group Managing Director & Founder), Lindas Dillon (SSKP Volunteer & Gowrie Retiree), Whitney Peterson (Gowrie Group Director of Marketing), and Laura MacLeod (Gowrie Group Marketing Coordinator).

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Through the generous support of over 400 local individuals and companies, the 2019 Gowrie Group Challenge was a huge success – reaching the campaign goal of raising $175,000 for The Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries (SSKP). Since Gowrie Group began this Challenge in 2004, the Challenge has raised over 1.8 million dollars for the SSKP, which equates to providing over 5 million meals to people in need in our community. The 2019 Gowrie Challenge was a milestone campaign in multiple ways, including raising more money for the SSKP than was raised in any of the previous years, selling out the Black Friday SSKP Benefit Concert at The Kate for the first time, and providing more meals to those in need in our community than ever before.

Gowrie Group believes strongly in giving back to the local community and is committed to help end hunger along the Connecticut shoreline. The Gowrie Group Challenge is Gowrie’s annual matching fundraising initiative to benefit The Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries (SSKP). The 2018 ALICE Report* showed that nearly one in three (30%) Connecticut residents struggle to meet their family’s basic needs each month. ALICE stands for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed, which is defined as individuals or families who have earnings above the federal poverty level, but below basic cost-of-living threshold. The matching approach of the Challenge doubles the impact of generous donations from local businesses and individuals. Contributions are used to fill the shelves of the SSKP’s five pantries and to serve meals at the organization’s nine hot meal sites.

Carter Gowrie, Managing Director & Founder of Gowrie Group shared, “Gowrie Group is excited to announce that our Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries matching challenge achieved our goal this year. $175,000 was raised with the generous help of Sound Rigging, L. C. Doane, Lenny & Joe’s, Tower Labs, and BrandTech Scientific; along with more than 400 others who helped with donations that we matched. Particularly satisfying to me (as a performer), this year we
filled the seats at The Kate for the Black Friday Benefit Concert. Special thanks to Brian Wolfe and Trip Wyeth of Acoustic Music.org for their involvement, and of course all of the musicians. Please save the Black Friday Concert date for next year.”

Amy Hollis, Executive Director of the Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries said, “Working together, our community forms a network to ensure food and fellowship are available to neighbors in need. My heart is filled with gratitude for the outpouring of support provided through the Gowrie Challenge. SSKP exists because there is a need and because of our collaborative efforts. Carter Gowrie, Gowrie Group, the Partner Sponsors, and all contributors provide critical access to nutritious food to individuals in need. Thank you for your continued support, proving again and again that we can accomplish great work together!”

This year’s Challenge ran from November 1, 2019 to January 17, 2020. Gowrie Group kicked off the Challenge with a generous $30,000 dollar-for-dollar matching donation. Five local companies stepped forward as Partner Sponsors: LC Doane Company, Tower Labs, BrandTech Scientific, Lenny & Joe’s Fish Tale, and Sound Rigging Services.

Lenny Goldberg, Owner of Lenny & Joe’s Fish Tale, shared, “This year’s $175,000 raised and the 5 million meals since 2004 speaks volumes about the amazing results of the Gowrie Challenge. Lenny & Joe’s Fish Tale is proud to be a Partner Sponsor and as a Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries Board Member, I am acutely aware of how the Challenge’s success has helped our neighbors.”

This year, we were fortunate to have several additional entities from the shoreline – the Essex Community Foundation, Cornelia & Michael Bessie Foundation, both the Clinton and Essex Rotary Clubs, and Liberty Bank Foundation – step up and give a significant donation to the Challenge. These contributions were crucial to helping us reach the $175,000 goal.

Two special local events also helped raise funds for the Gowrie Challenge. The first event was the “Black Friday Benefit Concert” held annually at The Katherine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center (The Kate) on the Friday after Thanksgiving. The Meadows Brothers, Ebin-Rose Trio, Moving Target, Hugh Birdsall, Lauren Agnelli & Friends, and Carter Gowrie & Friends gathered to play for this special concert which raised $5,310 for the Challenge. The second event was the ballet performance of “Ahavah: The Story of Christmas” which was performed at the Morgan School in Clinton, CT. This event raised an additional $5,000 for the Challenge.

Throughout the year, Gowrie Group and its employees donate time and services to soup kitchens and pantries across New England. Each summer, Gowrie employees prepare and serve a lunch at the SSKP meal site in Old Saybrook. In addition, employees work together to plan and host food drives every holiday season at many of Gowrie Group’s locations including Westbrook CT, Darien CT, Newport RI, Marshfield MA, Annapolis MD and Manchester NH. This past December, Gowrie employees at the company’s headquarters in Westbrook, Connecticut collected and donated over 100 boxes of cereal to the SSKP.

Gowrie Group and The Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries are proud of all that they have accomplished in the past 16 years of partnership. We would also like to thank those who generously spread the word about this effort. Once again, morning radio personality, Bob Muscatel of WLIS/WMRD, updated the community throughout the Challenge from his radio station. Shore Publishing provided a series of print advertisements in local papers across the shoreline. In addition, the E-List provided online advertisement on their website and in their weekly e-newsletters.

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The Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries. Since 1989, providing food and fellowship to those in need in the towns of Chester, Clinton, Deep River, East Lyme, Essex, Killingworth, Lyme, Madison, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, and Westbrook. shorelinesoupkitchens.org

*The Middlesex United Way's 2018 ALICE Report. ALICE stands for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed, is defined as individuals or families who have earning above the federal poverty level, but below basic cost-of-living threshold.