Gowrie Group’s Annual Challenge Surpasses Goal and Raises Over $290,000 to Benefit The Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries!

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Through the generous support of nearly 700 local individuals, companies, and our Partner Sponsors, the 2020 Gowrie Group Challenge was a tremendous success and raised $290,390 to benefit the Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries (SSKP)! Gowrie Group began this annual Challenge in 2004 to benefit the SSKP, and over the past 16 years the Challenge has raised over 2.1 million dollars for the SSKP, which equates to providing nearly 6 million meals to people in need in our community.

The 2020 Gowrie Challenge shattered all previous donation records including beating our Challenge goal by nearly $100,000, raising $125,000 more than any previous year, and driving a 44% increase in total number of donations from years past. These statistics results in the most meaningful and impactful outcome – raising $300,000 for the Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries to feed those in our community in need.

There is no doubt, 2020 was a year like no other. Food pantries across the country and here in Connecticut reported twice as many families in need. At the height of the 2020 COVID-19 in mid-2020, the Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries served doubled the number of pantry guests than any year on record. In the final week of December 2020, the SSKP served 52,000 pounds of food to those in need in our community.

To meet this doubling need for food services, the Gowrie Challenge doubled their efforts to help end hunger along the Connecticut shoreline. To launch the 2020 Challenge, Gowrie Group doubled their matching gift to $60,000, of which $30,000 was a personal pledge from Carter Gowrie. Six local companies stepped forward as Partner Sponsors: LC Doane, Tower Labs, Lenny & Joe’s Fish Tale, Sound Rigging, BrandTech Scientific, and Essex Financial. The Partner Sponsors all increased their donations over past years. Together, Gowrie and the Partner Sponsors donated $115,000 in matching funds to double the impact of all other donations, dollar-for-dollar, to help our neighbors.
Carter Gowrie, Managing Director & Founder of Gowrie Group shared, “The need for food services was up 50% in this pandemic year. It is with sincere pride that Gowrie Group and all of our Partner Sponsors stepped up to help end hunger on the Shoreline. Gowrie Group is excited to announce that our Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries matching challenge went above and beyond our goal this year. Thank you to everyone who stepped up and donated in 2020 to help us greatly exceed our goal and raise nearly $300,000 for the SSKP! We look forward to continuing our matching challenge to support the Shoreline Soup Kitchens in 2021.”

Amy Hollis, Executive Director of the Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries said, “My heart is filled with deep gratitude for each individual connected with the Gowrie Challenge. During 2020 we witnessed unprecedented need and during 2020 we witnessed a river of compassion. Each moment of kindness, fellowship, and food shared is a kind of miracle, and we couldn’t do it without you. On behalf of everyone at Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries, I thank you for joining together in the journey to ensure our neighbors have access to food.”

This year’s Challenge ran from November 1, 2020 to January 15, 2021 and collected 686 total donations from local individuals and companies. In such an unprecedented time, we were fortunate to have several additional entities from the shoreline – Rotary Club of Essex, Clinton Rotary Club, Shore Power, Liberty Bank, Essex Garden Club, and Risk Strategies Charitable Foundation – step up and give a significant donation to the Challenge. These remarkable contributions, along with the increased support from all of our Partner Sponsors, pushed the campaign way above our original 2020 goal of $200,000.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the “Black Friday Benefit Concert” held annually at The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center (The Kate) was changed to a “Virtual Benefit Concert.” With the help of The Kate and Valley Shore Community Television, the benefit concert featuring George Winston, Shanna in a Dress, The Meadows Brothers, Ebin-Rose Trio, Moving Target, Carter Gowrie & Friends was streamed to YouTube and Facebook. This special concert was viewed over 1,000 times between the two networks and raised $6,000!

Carter Gowrie's broad reaching generosity and charitable giving to so many shoreline entities, along with his 16-year commitment to supporting the SSKP, received extra special recognition this year from State Senator Norm Needleman who is also a long time Gowrie Challenge Partner Sponsor though his leadership at Tower Labs. Last week, on behalf of the State of CT, Norm Needleman granted Carter Gowrie a CT State Citation, recognizing the decades of community service and dedication that Carter has committed to the surrounding shoreline towns and organizations.

Norm shared this statement, “Carter Gowrie's remarkable spirit of community service is evidenced by the support and leadership he has shown to so many worthwhile and charitable causes. It is because of that spirit his friends, family and colleagues hold him in the highest esteem. Mr. Gowrie has impacted countless lives in our community for the better and the effects of his generosity will be evident for decades to come.”

Gowrie Group's parent company, Risk Strategies, also believes strongly in the need to give back and support local communities. Risk Strategies’ Fall 2020 charitable outreach this year, like the Gowrie Challenge, was focused on helping those experiencing food insecurity during these very difficult times. The Risk Strategies Charitable Foundation also donated to the 2020 Gowrie SSKP Challenge.

Photo Details (left to right): Whitney Peterson (Gowrie Group Director of Marketing), Laura MacLeod (Gowrie Group Marketing Coordinator), Amy Hollis (SSKP Executive Director), Claire Bellerjeau (SSKP Director of Development) Carol-Ann Myers (BrandTech Representative), Bill Sandberg, Stephen Brinkmann (BrandTech President), Norm Needleman (Tower Labs Owner/President), Jay Madden (Gowrie Group Managing Director), Carter Gowrie (Founder & Managing Director) and Robin Andreoli (The Kate Director of Development & Community Relations). Missing: Chuck Poindexter (Sound Rigging Owner), Bill Psillos (LC Doane Vice President), Lenny Goldberg (Lenny & Joe’s Fish Tale Owner), Chuck Cumello (Essex Financial President & CEO), and Brett Elliot (The Kate Executive Director)
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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