



TOWN OF AMHERST, SOPHIA THE FIERCE HOLD TOWN HALL LIGHTING CEREMONY FOR PEDIATRIC CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ceremony held in Memory of Sophia Brielle Benintende

The Amherst Town Board officially declared a September as Pediatric Cancer Awareness Month in the Town of Amherst with support from Sophia the Fierce during a Town Hall Lighting Ceremony held on Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2025 to illuminate the building in gold lighting to bring attention to the need for advocacy, funding, research and treatment for childhood cancer patients. The event was held in memory of Sophia Brielle Benintende, a courageous young girl from Williamsville, whose legacy continues to inspire and impact lives throughout the entire community.



"We stood together on the steps of Amherst Town Hall to honor all warriors during National Pediatric Cancer Awareness Month. Declaring September as Pediatric Cancer Awareness Month

in Amherst is an opportunity for us to support each other, to understand the need for more resources and share our message of not just hope, but action,” said Deputy Supervisor Shawn Lavin. “I am honored to partner with Sophia the Fierce to advocate for all childhood cancer patients and their families.”

Sophia Brielle Benintende created her foundation in 2022 when she was 8 years old while in remission from Ewing Sarcoma. Affectionately known as Sophia the Fierce, the foundation was the vision of Sophia, a bright, compassionate child who, even while undergoing treatment for pediatric cancer, chose to put others first. She envisioned an organization that was dedicated to providing respite, research, and relief to children with cancer, their families, and the selfless medical teams who care for them. Sophia fought hard and despite all her efforts, her condition worsened, and she gained her angel wings on May 9, 2023 at the age of 9. Sophia the Fierce continues to serve the community in her honor.



“I want to thank the Town of Amherst for honoring Sophia and the continued work of her foundation. We are proud to be a part of this effort to raise awareness during National Pediatric Cancer Awareness Month and shine a light on the great work happening in our community. Just like my daughter, Sophia, who wasn’t just brave; she was deeply giving. Even in the hardest moments, she thought about how she could help others,” said her mother, Kristina Benintende, Vice President of Sophia the Fierce Inc. “She started this foundation because she saw a need, and she believed we could do more for the kids, for the families, for the doctors, and for all of the oncology caregivers at Oishei Children’s Hospital and the Roswell Park Pediatric Clinic, who never give up. We are here today, doing more.”

The Town and Sophia the Fierce were joined by Dr. Joyce Ohm, Ph.D., who leads a vital pediatric cancer research trial. Sophia the Fierce proudly supports Dr. Ohm’s efforts.



“We are so grateful for the efforts of the Sophia the Fierce Foundation and the Town of Amherst to bring awareness of the need for increased pediatric cancer research as part of Pediatric Cancer Awareness Month. Our team of physicians and scientists at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center are committed to developing more effective, less toxic treatments for every patient who walks through our doors, and we are so inspired by the strength and resilience that our youngest cancer warriors and their families throughout this community display every day,” said Dr. Ohm, who is Chair - Department of Cancer Genetics and Genomics; John & Santa Palisano Endowed Chair of Cancer Genetics; and a Professor of Oncology with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The Benintende family is from Williamsville, attending Williamsville Central Schools and operating a local business in Amherst. For years, Sophia's story has resonated throughout Western New York and beyond.

Kristina added, "The proclamation from the Town of Amherst reflects the far-reaching impact of her life, her mission, and the compassion she sparked in others. Sophia the Fierce Inc. extends heartfelt thanks to its dedicated Town Board members and the Amherst and Williamsville communities for their unwavering support of Sophia's mission. It is through their commitment that the foundation continues to grow and serve."

The Amherst Town Board and Sophia the Fierce encourages everyone to wear gold this month, share Sophia's story, and take action in honor of the children and families who face pediatric cancer every day.



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The Town of Amherst is located in Amherst, NY. For additional information, please visit www.amherst.ny.us; call (716) 631-7000; email toainfo@amherst.ny.us; or stop in Town Hall, 5583 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221.

To learn more about Sophia the Fierce Inc., please visit www.Sophiathefierce.org or email Sophiathefierceinc@yahoo.com.



BE BOLD – GO GOLD!