

Local Love. Lasting Impact.

OceanFirst Foundation



Together with you, we continue to strengthen the communities we call home.

As winter settles in and a new year begins, our Foundation team has been reflecting on the momentum we built together - and the meaningful work that lies ahead. This season invites us to pause, appreciate where we've been, and refocus on what matters most: supporting the people and communities around us.

Over the past few months, we've seen the impact of your dedication firsthand. Our nonprofit partners have continued to provide critical programs, secure more families, and create opportunities that make our communities stronger and more resilient.

Our two-year General Operating Flexible Support Grants approved in August are fueling progress - providing the stability to meet rising needs with confidence and compassion.

Winter also marks a time when generosity shines brighter.

We're proud of our colleagues and community members who stepped up to volunteer during the holiday season - staffing food pantries, supporting youth programs, assembling gifts for families, and sharing their time and talent at local events. These collaborations highlight the power of civic engagement and collective action in strengthening our communities.

This year, we'll continue to offer workshops to help nonprofit leaders navigate emerging challenges.

As we embrace the new year, we look forward to the possibilities ahead. Working together, we will continue to deepen community partnerships and create opportunities that pave the way for Local Love. Lasting Impact.

Kathy

What's inside...

[CEO & Board
Leader Event](#)

[JOIN! Partner
Spotlight](#)

[What's on the
Horizon](#)

[Impact by the
Numbers](#)

[On the Road](#)

[Candy "Coated"
Trunk-or-Treat](#)

Winter CEO & Board Leader Gathering

Our winter gathering at Monmouth University welcomed 350 nonprofit CEOs and Board Leaders for a morning centered on connection, collaboration, and renewed inspiration. The event featured a powerful keynote from Charles Antelme of the McChrystal Group, whose talk, "Into the Sun", offered candid insights on leadership, teamwork, and perseverance - shaped by his distinguished military service and advisory work with global organizations.

Through vivid stories from his time in the British Army and Special Forces, Charles outlined nine core leadership principles designed to help leaders navigate uncertainty, strengthen their teams, and stay mission-focused.

Acknowledging the challenges nonprofits have faced this year, Charles emphasized the importance of resilience. "Like the weather in New Jersey - if you don't like it, wait a minute - it's bound to change," he shared. "Tenacity, stoicism, and most importantly, the strength gained from strong teams will sustain you."

Read more about Charles Antelme's nine leadership principles at oceanfirstfdn.org.



Thank you sponsors!



Spotlight on JOIN! Building Civic Connection, Driving Change



Healthy Minds, Strong Leaders

Puerto Rican Association for Human Development (PRAHD) hosted CEO's from Middlesex County nonprofits for a morning of collaboration, fun challenges, and meaningful discussion around mental health.

Led by Kristen Mercado, LCSW, participants were challenged with tasks that focused on the 4 M's of Mental Health: movement, mindfulness, meaningful engagement, and mastery. Kristen encouraged CEO's from participating nonprofits to practice each of the 4 M's independently and with their staff, creating workplaces that encourage and support mental health even during the busy and stressful times.



Shaping Tomorrow's Neighborhoods

In November, New Jersey Future hosted a Jeffersonian dinner at the Lobby Club in Trenton. The evening focused on "Making It Easier to Redevelop Our Communities."

Leaders from housing, planning, development, nonprofits, and government explored the challenges of residential redevelopment and shared bold ideas and solutions.

With redevelopment poised to be a top priority for New Jersey's next governor, this conversation was more than timely - it was a spark for change!



From Conversation to Action: Homes & Hope

Habitat for Humanity of South Central New Jersey hosted two powerful conversations. The first on Faith, Hope & Housing, which brought faith leaders together to explore how congregations can support Habitat's mission and spread awareness.

The second event focused on collaborative approaches to affordable housing. CEOs, elected officials, and community leaders explored innovative ways to improve housing services - with one shared goal: building stronger communities where everyone has a place to call home.



Impact by the Numbers



\$51,701,163

Total grants awarded by the Foundation since 1996

10,816

Number of grants awarded to partner nonprofits

8,640

Volunteer hours contributed by 200+ WaveMakers in 2025

\$4,500,000

Scholarship grants awarded to 3,100+ students since 1996

17

Seasons of Home Runs for Heroes with the Jersey Shore BlueClaws, scoring \$772,000 for 18 nonprofits supporting Veterans & Active Military Service Members

HOSTING AN EVENT OR HAVE VOLUNTEER NEEDS? WE CAN HELP!



Do you have a full year of programs, trainings, events, or collaboration opportunities ahead? Reach out to our team so we can help spread the word and recruit volunteers. Be sure to check out the events calendar on our website.

On the Road...Engaging with Our Neighbors and Partners

Operation Homefront Hosts a Star-Spangled Baby Shower

Kathy and Stephanie attended Operation Homefront's Star-Spangled Baby Shower, supported by a Home Runs for Heroes Grant. This incredible gathering helped military families welcome their newest little heroes. Parents to be were provided essential baby supplies to ease the challenges of service and deployment with a little one at home.



From Panels to Partnerships: A Day of Ideas and Inspiration



We were honored to join Community Options, Inc. at their 20th Annual Conference to share our work and exchange ideas with their team. It was inspiring to join leaders Jane Paccione (San Antonio Area Foundation), Elaine Katz (Kessler Foundation), and our great friend Heather Barberi (Grunin Foundation). Conversations like these remind us that collaboration fuels lasting change.

Over the Edge Initiative ...Taking fundraising to New Heights - Literally!

Stephanie took on an incredible challenge in downtown Nashville - climbing to the top of the Omni Hotel and rappelling 20 stories for Move For Hunger's "Over The Edge" event. This wasn't just about the thrill; it was about raising awareness of hunger and food waste. With support from the Foundation, we helped secure 10,000 meals for individuals and families in need. What an amazing way to make an impact!



Candy “Coated” Events Bring Warmth and a Spooky Good Time

OceanFirst Foundation’s Candy “Coated” Trunk or Treat events have turned Halloween into something truly special - combining festive fun with community care. In partnership with Operation Warm, based in Philadelphia, more than 1,600 youth across Middlesex, Ocean, Atlantic, and Cumberland Counties received new warm winter coats.



Thanks to the generosity of The Citta Family Foundation, Grunin Foundation, The Wintrode Family Foundation, Dr. Robert Previti, and The Levine Family Foundation, families enjoyed themed trunks, resources, and treats at events in Toms River, Egg Harbor Township, Millville, and New Brunswick. From dinosaurs to princesses, every child left with smiles - and the warmth of a new coat.

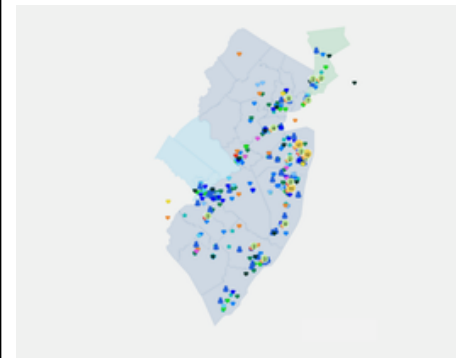
Special thanks to our incredible community partners who hosted resource tables and created welcoming, resource-rich experiences for the attendees. Your support made these events unforgettable!



Looking Forward: What’s Coming Next

As we kick off a new year, we’re excited to spotlight the many ways OceanFirst Foundation is helping community members get involved and give back. As several initiatives continue into 2026, our team is focused not only on funding impactful work, but also on creating meaningful opportunities for volunteers to connect with causes that matter most to them.

In just a few weeks, our JOIN! Grants, Home Runs for Heroes Grants, Summer Camp Grants, and the OceanFirst Foundation Scholarship Program will officially go live. Be sure to keep an eye on our social channels and website. We’ll be also be hosting Grant Information Sessions to help guide applicants through the process. We can’t wait to make 2026 another exciting and impactful year!



New to our website!

Dive into the amazing network of nonprofits we proudly supported in 2025 using our new mapping feature on our website. Discover the incredible organizations making a difference - right at your fingertips! Visit www.oceanfirstfdn.org to see how together, we’re creating lasting impact.

Thank you for reading!