



Calmer Choice

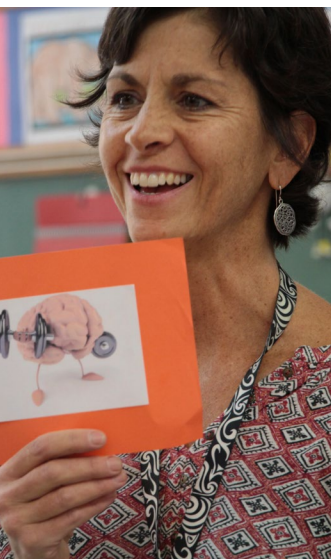
Cultivating Awareness • Living Mindfully • Enhancing Resilience



**2018–2019
ANNUAL REPORT**

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“

I liked how I can walk in and my stress temporarily disappears. I learned to look at someone else's point of view and it was a great way to calm down. I use mindfulness now when I get worried and before tests. I loved this class so, so much. It has made such a difference in my year!

– Sixth-grade student

What We Do

Calmer Choice partners with schools and community organizations across Cape Cod and Southeastern Massachusetts to deliver an evidence-based prevention program that helps children and adults increase inner resilience, reduce the impact of stress, manage emotional responses, learn self-control and increase their sense of well-being.

Our goal is to provide skills that can diminish the risk of violence, substance abuse, and other self-destructive behaviors. Ultimately, Calmer Choice envisions a world in which people lead lives of kindness and compassion toward themselves and others.

Calmer Choice delivers its innovative programming through three distinct arms: in schools directly with Calmer Choice instructors called Calmer Choice in the Classroom, by training school staff to deliver programming as Calmer Choice Partner Schools, and by partnering with community-based organizations to deliver services across a broad population of Cape and Southeastern Massachusetts residents, from children to adults.

We also provide an extensive array of training and support services for school staff, parents and other community members who are interested in developing a personal mindfulness practice and/or becoming certified to teach the Calmer Choice program.

Calmer Choice programming is original, innovative, responsive, and versatile – informed by experiences in local schools and based on academic research, student survey data, parent and school feedback, community partnerships and continuing staff professional development with experts from around the world.



Message from Our Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends,

Another year gone. Amazing. Every year it seems amazing to me. I am filled with such awe.

So much has changed since our first programs were introduced nearly 10 years ago. In response to a community crisis, we had one instructor work with 64 children, starting in January 2010. As we head into the 2019-2020 school year, we now have over 12 Calmer Choice instructors, 22 trained school based teachers and have reached over 32,000 students and teachers, including over 20 community programs! What started as a vision of simply helping the kids in my daughters school has turned into one where the whole community is involved and supported.

We have been fortunate to have attracted the likes of Tufts, Yale, MIT and the Harvard School of Education to study the efficacy of our program with startling results. The latest news that an MIT research study confirmed a link between Calmer Choice and better academic performance and mental health. How fortunate are we to have been the program being studied!

And yet there is so much that hasn't changed. Many children continue to say they struggle with anxiety and depression, have problems getting along with others at school, and have difficulty managing and navigating challenging emotions. Substance use, self harm and mental health challenges remain a concern for both children and adults alike. We are still very much needed.

Community problem requires community solutions, and I am deeply thankful for those who are with me on this journey – our small and AMAZING staff, our dedicated tencious board, our committed instructors and our generous donors. I am oh so very grateful to all of you!! Thank you being part of the solution!

With much love and gratitude,



Fiona Jensen
OTR/L



Our Mission

Cultivating Awareness
Living Mindfully
Enhancing Resilience

Our Vision

Our goal is to provide skills that will diminish the risk of violence, substance abuse and other self-destructive behaviors.

Ultimately, Calmer Choice envisions a world in which people lead lives of kindness and compassion toward themselves and others.

A Year in Review

RECOGNITION

For the second year in a row, our impact and success earned validation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as Governor Charlie Baker recently allocated \$50,000 from the state's 2020 budget to support our work as a substance abuse prevention program in schools on Cape Cod. This funding – for an unprecedented second year in a row – establishes Calmer Choice as a key partner in the state's anti-addiction efforts and a valuable resource for all young people Cape-wide. We would like to offer a special thank you to Senator Julian Cyr and the entire Cape Cod delegation for championing the effort to secure this critical funding.

\$50K

ALLOCATED FROM THE
STATE'S 2019 BUDGET TO
SUPPORT OUR WORK
AS A SUBSTANCE ABUSE
PREVENTION PROGRAM IN
SCHOOLS ON CAPE COD

2019

NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR,
NAMED BY SCORE CAPE
COD AND THE ISLANDS

9

YEARS PROVIDING
RESEARCH-SUPPORTED
MINDFULNESS CURRICULUM
ON CAPE COD

OUR NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

In the fall of 2018, as Calmer Choice entered its eighth year of operation as an innovative primary prevention program delivering research-supported secular mindfulness curriculum to schools and communities on Cape Cod, the organization embarked on a strategic planning process. Engaging Calmer Choice's leadership, board and staff, the team began a process of developing a three year-strategic plan, charting the course for the organization as it prepares to enter its second decade of serving children, families and community members.

The outcome of the strategic planning process, which concluded in March 2019, is an exciting and transformative three-year roadmap for the organization. Successfully executing this plan will establish Calmer Choice as a world-class leader, teaching young people and community members to effectively and safely manage stress and resolve conflict so that they live happy, healthy and successful lives. It will also create a path for financial sustainability for the organization, allowing our important work to expand beyond the current reaches of Cape Cod.

SPREADING THE WORD

*We love to share what we've learned with other communities in need.
Here are a few highlights from the year!*



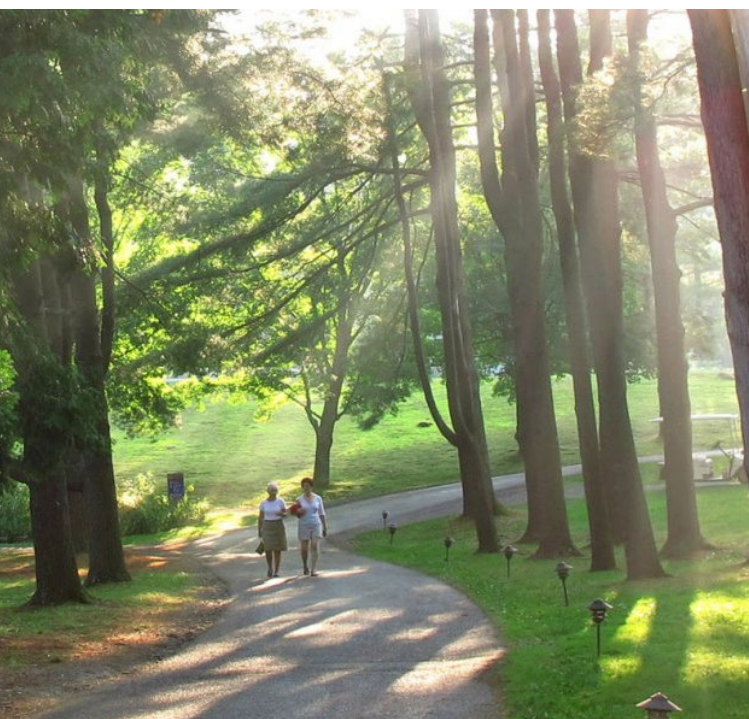
Program Director Katie Medlar and CEO Fiona Jensen attended a national convening of organizations and educators who teach mindfulness to youth and who are committed to equity and justice. The purpose of the convening was to build stronger relationships, to learn from each other, and grow capacity as equitable educators and organizations. This invite-only event was organized by iBme (Inward Bound Mindfulness Education) and sponsored by the Ford Foundation.



Fiona presented at the Mindfulness in Education Conference, held at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, N.Y. This conference brings together influential leaders in the fields of mindfulness and social and emotional learning, including psychologists, educators, administrators and teachers.



Fiona and Calmer Choice instructor and board member Paula Reardon Webster presented at Dr. Christopher Willard's 2019 "Making Mindfulness Stick" week-long seminar at Boston University. They shared information about bringing secular mindfulness to schools.



THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR

Calmer Choice instructors and our school-based instructors taught together in over 250 classrooms, spanning an area of six school districts and two private preschools, where we piloted our new Pre-K curriculum.

We recently completed our first “over the bridge” teaching at the Sippican Elementary School in Marion. We are excited to build a partnership with the Old Rochester Regional School District.



4,820

CHILDREN SERVED
IN SCHOOLS

250

CLASSROOMS, IN
21 SCHOOLS, IN 6
DISTRICTS

31

INSTRUCTORS,
INCLUDING CALMER
CHOICE AND
SCHOOL-BASED

A lesson in action #1

When a classroom of students was asked if they had practiced any of their mindful awareness tools, a first-grade student shared that while the students were waiting in the hall to speak before the school board, they felt nervous. To help calm down, they used their five-finger breath, a breathing strategy/tool that we teach to elementary students. Many of our students report that they continue to use this practice, which helps support self-regulation, year after year.

A lesson in action #2

When we completed our first parent/child course, it was very well received by both adults and children. Here are a few of the feedback comments from the parents:

“

The course changed the way in which I relate to my child, in that it has helped me calm down and not react so quickly when he fires me up.

“

(This workshop) allows us creative exploration about ways we can calm ourselves when feeling upset. I'm grateful my daughter is learning these skills at a young age – mindfulness is like learning another language if you weren't raised with it.

“

Since taking the course, we practice gratitude at dinner and try to remember/remind each other of tools.

COLLABORATIONS



We launched an eight-week adult program in collaboration with the Homeless Prevention Council in Orleans. We are grateful to be part of this creative approach to supporting the well-being of our community members.



We launched an eight-week Parent-Caregiver Child Program in the mid-Cape area for children 6 to 9 years old and their adults. The Cape Cod Foundation generously donated use of their facilities for these classes.



We work with a group of women through the Motherhood Project in a collaboration with the district courts.



We have a partnership with the makers of the film “Angst, Raising Awareness Around Anxiety.” The goal of the film is to start a global conversation about anxiety. We brought “Angst” to Cape Cod, led panel conversations after the film was shown and had resource tables. Given that the onset of anxiety disorder is now age 6, this film and the hope it offers is timely and important.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

19


COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

1000+

PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

100+

VOLUNTEERS

A young boy in a light blue button-down shirt is looking up and reaching his right arm towards a blue paper airplane flying in the sky. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

**GRATITUDE MAKES SENSE OF
OUR PAST, BRINGS PEACE FOR
TODAY, AND CREATES A VISION
FOR TOMORROW.**

Melody Beattie

New Leadership Roles

In June 2019, Calmer Choice announced the appointment of Fiona Jensen – formerly Executive Director – as Chief Executive Officer and the promotion of Emily Smalley – formerly Development Manager – to Chief Operating Officer.

“As we prepared to enter our 10th year of service in 2020, it became evident to our board and leadership that we needed to develop a strategic vision for our future in order to ensure our sustainability for years to come,” said Jensen.

“We embarked on an incredibly successful and collaborative strategic planning process. We have set a transformative course for the organization over the next three years to build and professionalize our infrastructure, expand our programs and services, and support our Board of Directors as we launch into our second decade of service on Cape Cod and beyond.”

In their new roles, Fiona will continue to lead the organization’s vision and focus on expanding and cultivating school and community partnerships, leading advocacy and collaboration efforts, and establishing Calmer Choice as a world-class leader in mindfulness as a primary prevention effort.

Emily will focus on ensuring Calmer Choice has the operational infrastructure to support the refinement and growth of our programs and services and creating and implementing models for financial and programmatic sustainability.

Together with Calmer Choice's dedicated and compassionate team of leaders, staff, instructors, and school and community partners, Calmer Choice is poised to have a transformative impact on the field of secular mindfulness in education.



MIT Research

STUDY CONFIRMS EFFECTIVENESS OF CALMER CHOICE CURRICULUM

A pivotal study released by MIT in 2019 suggests that Calmer Choice's mindfulness-based curriculum can enhance academic performance and mental health in middle schoolers, as well as reduce disciplinary actions like suspensions and decrease stress among participants. The study was led by John Gabrieli, the Grover M. Hermann Professor in Health Sciences and Technology, a professor of brain and cognitive sciences, and a member of MIT's McGovern Institute for Brain Research.

The study was performed on students in the 6th grade who participated in Calmer Choice's school-based program, administered in 2016 at Boston Collegiate Charter School in Dorchester. 40 of the participants also participated in the first ever brain imaging studies before and after the program. Both surveys of participants and results from the imaging study showed, for the first time, that mindfulness can alter brain activity in students.

Sixth-graders who received the Calmer Choice program not only reported feeling less stressed, but their brain scans revealed reduced activation of the amygdala, a brain region that processes fear and other emotions. "Together, the findings suggest that offering mindfulness training in schools could benefit many students," said John Gabrieli, senior author of the study.

Furthermore, the studies of Calmer Choice participants suggested that "mindfulness training could potentially help prevent or mitigate mood disorders linked with higher stress levels," researchers say.

“

Calmer Choice is an organization near and dear to the class of 2008. We lost several members of our class to mental health related issues and have all experienced the devastating ripple effect that trauma and loss can have on an entire community. During a very sad and hopeless time, Calmer Choice provided hope and reassurance that the adults in our community cared and wanted to help. Now that we are adults ourselves, I think so many of our graduating class feel a desire to give back in hope that today's Cape youth will never have to go through what we went through.

– Caroline Hemeon, class of 2008



Events

Fundraiser and fundraisers are an important of ever year for us. While many of these events help support our ongoing programs, we love that each one gives us a chance to let the community know about their work we do every day. We thank all of the people who planned, organized and attended these events.

8 DINNER PARTIES, ONE CAUSE

August 2018

FALMOUTH ROAD RACE

August 2018

CALM, COOL & COLLECTED CELEBRATION

October 2018

CAPE COD 100

October 2018

SPECTACLE OF TREES

December 2018

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

June 2019

TOUR DE BARNSTABLE

June 2019



Giving Options

Calmer Choice compliments the work being done in the community and schools as a pro-active prevention program that hopefully reaches young people before they start the negative behaviors which then require the services of the many community organizations that provide after-the-fact treatment and counseling services.

Calmer Choice occupies a remarkably neglected space, at the confluence of education, healthcare, and mental health. Nation-wide shortages of mental health counselors are old news; and such shortages are particularly acute on Cape Cod. By adopting the Calmer Choice Program, communities and schools fill a major portion of this shortcoming with sustainable instruction that can last the lifetime of the students who participate. This is no small matter.

The need is ongoing, potentially horrific, and unmet by both the educational and healthcare systems. The Calmer Choice Program works and is thriving in Cape Cod schools. Calmer Choice has reached an inflection point and needs the resources necessary to reach all Cape Cod children and beyond, create a sustaining model with handoff to the school systems, and program development and the infrastructure to reach beyond Cape Cod.

We need your help. There are a variety of ways to support Calmer Choice. Visit our website at calmerchoice.org or contact Emily Smalley, chief operating officer, at 508-398-0808 or esmalley@calmerchoice.org.



BECOME A DONOR

Support our mission any time you feel moved to do so, or support one of our seasonal appeals!



CALMER CHOICE CHAMPIONS

With a recurring monthly donation, you can provide unrestricted support to Calmer Choice. Giving levels start at \$5 a month, but we encourage you to dig deep.



BUSINESS ALLIANCE PARTNERS

It's smart business to invest in your community. Business Alliance Partners can sponsor individual students, a classroom or an entire school.



VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

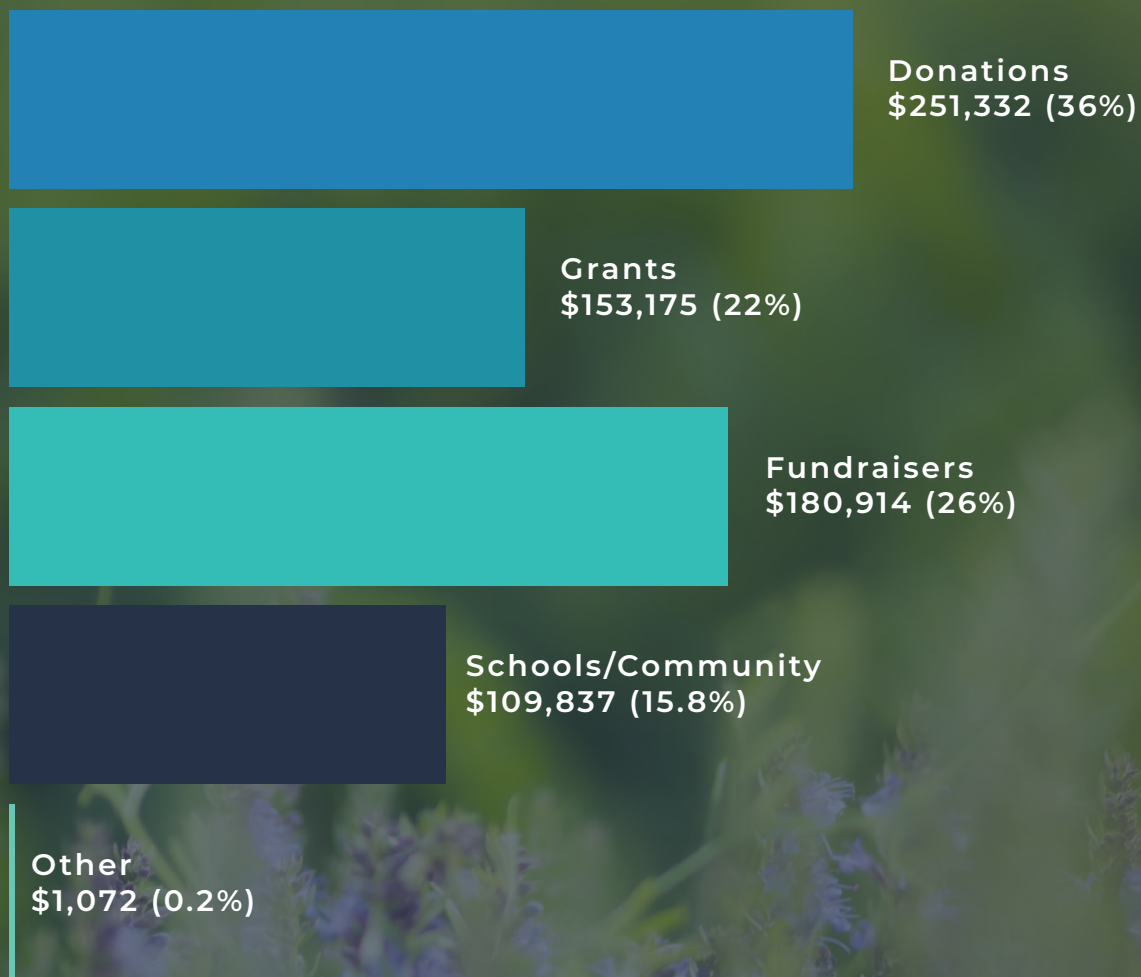
Calmer Choice wouldn't exist without the people who gave their time to create, build and nurture this organization. Do you have the time, skills and knowledge to help us serve students, schools and the Cape Cod community?



**YOUR LIFE REQUIRES YOUR
MINDFUL PRESENCE IN ORDER
TO LIVE IT.**

Funding Sources

FY 2019



“

When my daughter knows she has Calmer Choice, she actually looks forward to going to school. (It) has helped her know how to respond when life starts to feel overwhelming.

– Hadley Luddy, executive director of the Homeless Prevention Council

Our Donors

\$50,000–\$99,999

Barry and Taylor Joyce
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

\$25,000–\$49,999

Leslie and Jenny Jonas

\$10,000–\$24,999

Cape Cod Charitable FUNraisers
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The Bilezikian Family Foundation
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The Cooperative Bank of Cape Cod Charitable
Foundation Trust
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The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation
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Global Fund

\$5,000–\$9,999

Bassick Family Foundation
Cape and Islands United Way
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The Cape Cod Five Charitable Foundation Trust
The Lombard Trust
Whiteley Plumbing and Heating

\$1,000–\$4,999

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BizChecks Payroll
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Deborah Sloane
SLYK Shades
Maureen Strafford
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Wilkinson Ecological Design
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Wood Lumber Company

\$500–\$999

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Daniel Schwenk
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Michael and Jill Stansky
The Loft
The Yoga Collaborative
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YMCA Cape Cod

\$100-\$499

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 Amy Smith
 Brienne Snyder
 Kathi Sommers
 Bruce Specia
 Kerry Spence
 John Stackhouse



I donate to Calmer Choice because I believe in their mission. As a parent who lost my beautiful daughter to suicide, I truly wish Calmer Choice existed when Siobhan was a young child. So many children begin struggling with these emotional, behavioral and mental health issues during early childhood. Calmer Choice can provide the tools to help these kids cope with and overcome these challenges.

– Community member / donor

Doreen Sugermeyer
 Anne Sullivan
 Phil Sullivan
 Penny Sullivan
 Virginia Sullivan
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We apologize for any omissions and errors and trust that you will bring them to our attention.

Our Business Alliance Partners

Affordable Mattress of Cape Cod
Beanstock Coffee
Cape Air/Hyannis Air Service, Inc.
Cape Associates, Inc.
Cape Cod Aggregates Corp
Cape Cod Animal Hospital
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Foundation Trust
The Cooperative Bank Of Cape Cod
True Value Hardware of Orleans, Inc.
Unique Boutique
Whiteley Plumbing and Heating
Wilkinson Ecological Design
Wood Lumber Company

“

Calmer Choice gives kids important tools they can use not just in adolescence, but for the rest of their lives. If you think about the future of our community, you have to think about our kids in school. Anything we can do to help them through the tumultuous years of adolescence is an investment we make in them, as well as our community.

– Tony Shepley, Shepley Wood Products
Business Alliance Partner



A photograph of a young child with curly hair, wearing a red and blue striped shirt, leaning over a woman who is lying down and laughing. The child is also laughing and looking down at the woman. The background is blurred, showing other people's legs. The entire image has a blue tint.

NO ACT OF KINDNESS, NO
MATTER HOW SMALL, IS
EVER WASTED.

Aesop

Calmer Choice Champions

Mary Acunzo
Melanie Appleman
James Barnes
Terry Bergeson
Abigail Bowes
Betsy Bowes
Jacqui Bowes
Jimmy Bowes
Heather Brown
Shaelyn Costello
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Nicholas Milewski
Katherine Miller
Rob Padgett
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Sherry Santini
Bassma Sayeh
Maureen Strafford
Joanne Sykes
David Troutman
June Webber
Paula Webster
Richard and Peggy Wolman
Janet Woodbury

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Bayside Realty Consultants
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Bob Eckel and Cheryl Bartlett
Cape Cod Aggregates Corp.
Cape Cod Five Cents Savings Bank
Cape Cod Neuropsychology, LLC
Cleat and Anchor
Forte Fitness Center
Karen Galvin
Frank and Lin Horgan
Kerry Insurance
Bart Main and Donna Buonopane
Pam Murray
Patricia Murphy
Natixis Investment Managers
Osterville Home and Garden
Platinum Auto Service, Inc.
Premier Companies
Puzio Eyecare Associates
Ryley Construction
Daniel A. Schwenk, CPA, LLC.
Solstice Day Spa
Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital of Cape Cod
Jeff and Pam Swartz
The Cooperative Bank of Cape Cod
Robert and Carol Trow
Unfinished Business of Cape Cod
Vetorino's Landscaping and Irrigation, LLC.
Wequasset Resort and Golf Club
Whiteley Plumbing and Heating

In Kind Sponsors

6A Salon and Spa
Agway
Anejo Restaurant
ATD
Attention to Detail Autopolishing
Baskin's Ace True Value Hardware
Bikram Yoga Cape Cod
Bobby Byrne's Restaurant and Pub
Boston Red Sox Community Partnerships
Beanstock Coffee Roasters
Jimmy and Betsey Bowes
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by Design Salon
Cake and Islands
Candy Manor
Cape Abilities
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Cape Codder Resort
Cape Cod Massage
Cape Hook Designs
Cape Playhouse
Captain Freeman Inn
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Cleat and Anchor
Cooke's
Cosmetique
Country Gardens
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Crescendo Fitness
Sue Curran
Dennis Public Market
De Paris Nails
Matthew Dunn
Drs. Marc and Patricia Fater
Ed's Homestead
Eight Cousins Book Store
Estia Restaurant
Falmouth Country Club
Michael and Betsey Fitzgerald
Four Seas Ice Cream
Harvey and Brenda Freishtat
Deb Genoa Skincare
George's Pizza House
Mark and Royce Gussack
Hanlon Shoes
Hazy, Hot and Humid Band
Holly Ridge Golf Club
Hy-Line Cruises
InnerGlow Yoga
Barry and Taylor Joyce
La Cucina Sul Mare Restaurant
Land's End Inn
Lisa Nelson's Massage Therapy
Loft Restaurant at the Cove
Lushie Nails
Molly's Tea Room
Nauset Disposal
Organic Market
David Peterson and Laura Lorusso Peterson
John Picard Hair at Salon at 339
Quidley & Company Fine Art Galleries
Quiet Moments
Red Face Jack's Pub
Red Jacket Resort
RideAway Adventures
Royal II Restaurant
Robert and Peggy Smith
Salon at 339
Salon 700 and Day Spa
Sasa's Yoga and Massage Studio
Scargo Café
Seafood Sam's
Siena
Simply Devine Pizza Restaurant
Steamship Authority
Swing East Jazz Band
Chuck and Jane Tardanico
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The Ridge Club
Thumbtastic of Cape Cod
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Unique Boutique
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Whydah Pirate Museum
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Ying's
Yoga on the Beach Cape Cod

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“

Calmer Choice is important to me as a parent whose child is growing up in a world that sometimes seems absent of compassion. My daughter has been taught these skills since kindergarten and applies them to her interactions with her classmates.

– Mother of a third-grade student

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**MINDFULNESS ISN'T DIFFICULT,
YOU JUST NEED TO REMEMBER
TO DO IT.**

Sharon Salzberg



thank you

Calmer Choice 

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