

# Celebrating Ten Years of Calmer Choice

2010–2020





**“ What lies behind  
and what lies before  
us are tiny matters  
compared to what  
lies within us. ”**

Henry Miller



## Welcome to our 10 Year Anniversary Legacy Report coming to you in a not very average period of our lifetimes!

We actually had big plans for this year. Celebrations. Parties. Public acknowledgements and thank you's to those who have been so instrumental to us being here 10 years later. And then, on March 13, everything shut down and the bottom seemed to fall out of what we as a planet knew to be "normal". Overnight everything stopped – programs, training, fundraising events – as we grappled with regulations put in place to slow the spread of the virus. Organizations struggled to adapt, with many absorbing irreversible damage. Calmer Choice was not and is not one of those organizations. To the contrary, our incredible team of dedicated professionals and outpouring of support from our funders and friends and the broader community allowed us to pivot like few other organizations.

We did this – together, as a community – with the confidence that comes from knowing we were born from crisis 10 years ago, and will persevere again through this next crisis, with the wind from your support at our backs.

To honor and thank the hundreds of community members who have become our friends, employees, board members, volunteers and donors over the past decade, we are thrilled to present you with this historical timeline of Calmer Choice, from our humble beginnings to this current crisis. One thing is clear – without you, and your unwavering commitment to the communities we serve here on Cape Cod and beyond, Calmer Choice would have just been the spark of an idea that may have never taken off. Each and every one of you are the fans to the flame, who keep us fueled and energized as we face what may be our most difficult challenge yet at the start of our second decade of service.

I hope you enjoy seeing Calmer Choice come to life in the timeline that follows, and that you can feel our gratitude for each of the people, businesses and organization named in our "special gratitude" section at the end of the document.

Forever and always, I will be grateful for the lessons, challenges and triumphs of the past decade, and looking forward to seeing where the next ten years takes us.



*Much Love Always,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fiona Jensen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fiona Jensen

# 2008—2009

Between December 2008 and August 2009, Cape Cod experiences a community crisis from the tragic deaths related to mental health and addiction issues among its youth. Concerned Barnstable High School parent Fiona Jensen wonders ....

*“What if we could do something to help?”*



A few of the teens “left behind” that inspired us to create what we have created.

**We LOVE and appreciate you all.**



## July '09—June '10

- Fiona Jensen and a team of concerned community members organize the “DeStress Express 5K Road Race”, raising \$5,000
- The Cape Cod Times covers the race and creates public interest in the need for stress reduction and suicide prevention tools for kids in school communities across Cape Cod
- First program is launched at Barnstable High School in January followed by a second program at Mashpee High School in March
- First adult training for Faculty and Administration with Mashpee Public Schools created by *Cape Stress Reduction* “Mindfulness Based Inner Resilience Training & Social and Emotional Learning for Teachers”. This training sparks interest and a request for the Calmer Choice Program from an elementary school principal in Mashpee for elementary school students
- As interest continues to grow, a small and dedicated group of concerned community members decides to organize and start the process to apply for non-profit status under the name “The Inner Resilience Project”
- First official Board Meeting held in June 2010 with name officially changed to CALMER CHOICE standing for Cultivating Awareness, Living Mindfully, Enhancing Resilience. Executive Director sits as Board Chair and 501C3 status approved
- Suffolk University *Masters in Marketing* students helps guide marketing and branding of the organization and name changes to Calmer Choice
- First Mission, Vision and Values Statement are created along with marketing materials, logo and official website
- \$5000 raised through fundraising. All programs offered free of charge

## July '10—June '11

- Early donor supports first instructor to train at Mindful Schools in California and later funds an additional six people for further training in NYC, creating first pool of trained instructors
- First Grant Writer hired to help raise funds for increasing program demands across Cape Cod. Limited financial resources. Few operational routines
- Now recognized as an established non-profit in the community, Calmer Choice invited to participate in “Spectacle of Trees” community fundraiser
- National Public Radio interview with Mindy Todd sparks goodwill from thought leaders in the world of mindfulness including world re-known mindfulness expert, Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn
- First poster presentation “Teaching Mindfulness in Schools” at the UMASS Center for Mindfulness
- Collaboration begun with Tufts University School of Occupational Therapy to create an Outcomes Evaluation process. Committee forms to create evaluation tool to measure efficacy of the program being taught in schools
- Core instructor group seeks continued training with experts in the field of mindfulness and children
- Driven by the Board of Directors, organization raises \$15,000 through donations, grants and fundraising activities including events such as the first ever Calmer Choice Golf Tournament and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual DeStress Express

## July '11—June '12

- Calmer Choice branded curriculum starts to be developed by the Programming Team
- Organization's first SWOT and Strategic Business Plan created by early Board Member with collaboration from both Board of Directors and staff
- Executive Director now paid one day a week; instructors paid hourly while all other operations remain driven by volunteers
- Demand for programming in schools grows to the point where it exceeds capacity programming in schools
- First Case for Support created along with growing awareness of the need for contracts and memorandum of understandings between schools and Calmer Choice
- \$60,000 raised through grants, donations and fundraising. Schools asked to pay what they can.



## July '12—June '13

- "Calmer Choice" name is trademarked
- First Calmer Choice Speaker Series Event featuring Dr. Jon Kabat Zinn is sold-out, raising \$18,000 and showing further credibility for the organization
- Tufts University research begins with students attending Mashpee, Dennis-Yarmouth, and Chatham elementary schools
- Instructors continue training with support from experts in the field including Inward Bound Mindfulness Education in Virginia and the Mindfulness in Schools Project in England
- Ohio Congressman Timothy Ryan hears of Calmer Choice at the Mindfulness & Education Conference at Omega Institute and advocates for the organization, including a shout out for Calmer Choice to be featured in the first issue of Mindful Magazine
- \$130,000 raised through grants and donations including first major gift of \$25,000. Funds also raised with events such as the 1st Cape Cod 100 Mile Road Race, Spectacle of Trees and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual DeStress Express
- Hired part time Program Director and Director of School and Community Based Programs

## July '13—June '14

- Mindful Magazine article brings Calmer Choice national attention including interest from Yale University researchers and others across the country
- Yale University research study begins with students attending Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School, Mattacheese Middle School and St. Francis Xavier Preparatory School with support from the 1440 Foundation
- The first official *Calmer Choice Instructor Training Program* launches
- Executive Director now hired full-time and steps down as Board Chair
- Early committed volunteer and Board Member David Troutman nominated as incoming Board Chair
- Organization grows with hire of part-time Administrative Assistant and first shared office space
- The Peace Abbey Foundation presents Fiona Jensen and Calmer Choice with the *2014 Courage of Conscience Humanitarian Award*
- Tufts University researchers report favorable outcomes from their research and presents findings to the Board of Directors
- First *Calmer Choice Spelling Bee* fundraising event raises \$5,000
- The Peter & Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation grants funds for creation of the 2nd Strategic Business Plan involving staff, board and professional consultant
- Support for Calmer Choice continues to grow with increased public recognition, resulting in \$224,000 raised from a combination of donations, fundraising events, and grants along with focus on increasing school programming fees



## July '14—June '15

- Cape Cod Healthcare Community Benefits Foundation awards \$30,000 to Calmer Choice, further increasing the organization's credibility and attracting new funders
- The Peter & Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation awards Calmer Choice a 3-year technology grant that helps with the formation of a Technology Committee and increased stability within the organization
- *Partner School Model* is piloted, teaching school staff to provide their own programs in-house over time
- Organization continues to grow with the addition of the Program Director and School/Community Based Program Director to full time positions
- Organization moves to larger office space in South Yarmouth
- Calmer Choice invited to present at first national "Bridging Hearts & Minds" conference in San Diego, California
- Falmouth School psychologist writes grant to bring Calmer Choice program to Falmouth middle school students creating districts own funding stream
- Donor funds a 6-month contract for a development expert, and the Cape Cod Foundation funds the first development staff hire. Together they elevate the organization's fundraising and marketing capabilities
- Calmer Choice presents at *The New Directions in Violence Prevention Conference* at Curry College, One Day Professional Training for Newton Educators-Practical Applications of "Mindfulness in the Classroom" as well as an All Day In-Service for Cape Cod Teachers "Calmer Choice: Mindfulness Based Practices for the Classroom"
- Dan Harris, award winning journalist and popular mindfulness author, speaks at sold-out *Calmer Choice Speaker Series* event
- Yale University researchers present their positive results at Cape Cod Community College. Coverage in The Cape Cod Times creates further interest from experts across the country
- SCORE, an organization of retired professionals, volunteers to help create updated strategic plan for organization
- George Mumford, mindfulness and sports performance expert, speaks at Calmer Choice events
- First "Annual Meeting" held at Sandwich Quaker Meeting
- Executive Director and Board Chair attend Wisdom 2.0 Conference at Google, NYC meeting experts in the field of mindfulness, education and business expanding Calmer Choice brand recognition
- Financial results grow to \$394,000 as grants and donors start to account for a larger portion of funding





## July '15–June '16

- Landmark annual operating budget of \$500,000 approved by the Board of Directors
- First funding received from Cape and Islands District Attorney's office directed towards supporting prevention in local elementary schools
- Calmer Choice's Business Alliance Partnership launches with full page ad in The Cape Cod Times
- Letter to the Editor titled, "Calmer Choice Brings Satan to Cape Cod Schools" causes a concerned parent to challenge Dennis-Yarmouth school district's participation in Calmer Choice programing and leads to legal action
- School district stands in unwavering alliance with Calmer Choice along with support from the American Civil Liberties Union and a law firm that offers pro bono defense of secular mindfulness in public schools
- Public relations firm hired to advise and support Calmer Choice with appropriate response
- Extensive internal research into the First Amendment/ Establishment Clause and the teaching of Calmer Choice programs in public schools is completed
- Eventually the legal action dropped, with the experience and exposure catapulting Calmer Choice into becoming nationally recognized "thought leaders" in the area of teaching secular mindfulness in public schools
- World renown OMEGA Institute invites Calmer Choice to create a Secular Mindfulness in Schools conference with 24 other experts from across the country
- Seaside Le Mans selects Calmer Choice as fundraising beneficiary with gift of \$50,000
- Falmouth School District writes own grant and is awarded \$100,000 over three years by The Tower Foundation to create the Calmer Choice Partner Schools Model for its elementary schools
- First time participation in Tour de Barnstable fundraising bike ride event
- MIT research begins studying the impact of Calmer Choice programming on students at Boston Collegiate Charter School in Dorchester, MA, featuring the first ever brain scans on children
- Calmer Choice receives the Vocational Services Award from the Yarmouth Rotary
- Grant from the 1440 Foundation helps fund collaboration with Toronto-based "Mindfulness Everyday" to train Calmer Choice to teach educators and other adults in their own mindful awareness practice
- Calmer Choice invited to present at the Massachusetts Superintendent Conference
- Financial results total \$617,000—+57% over the previous year—as the organization continues to grow

## July '16–June '17

- Professionalized operational procedures initiated, and new and improved website launched thanks to continued funding from The Tower Foundation
- Calmer Choice invited to present to legislative delegation at Massachusetts State House
- Calmer Choice invited to be keynote speaker presenting, “Secular Mindfulness in Schools” at *Bridging Hearts and Minds Conference* in San Diego, CA
- Nominated for the Non-Profit Excellence in Innovation Award at the Massachusetts State House
- First Falmouth Road Race fundraising team created
- Important landmark paper written in collaboration with Mindfulness First and Daniel Rechtschaffen describing the do’s and don’ts of teaching Mindfulness in Public Schools
- Board member term limits instituted. Vice Chair of the Board position created
- Renowned clinical psychologist Dr. Chris Willard featured at Calmer Choice Speaker Series event
- First annual celebration of gratitude to donors and community partners, “Calm, Cool & Collected”, is held at the Cultural Center of Cape Cod
- Presentation at the *Mindfulness in Education* conference at Tufts University
- PR/Marketing Volunteer Committee dissolves as duties are absorbed by professional staff and outsourcing
- Tour de Barnstable team raises an amazing \$19,000
- Workshops for Business Alliance Partnership employees piloted
- Financial results approach \$650,000, with nearly 40% coming from grants



## July '17–June '18

- Betsy Bowes, long time champion and founding board member accepts nomination to be next Chair of the Board of Directors
- Sold-out event featuring Dr. Dan Goleman, psychologist, and prominent author regarding social emotional learning and brain and behavioral sciences
- Tower Foundation Grant allows for the 2017-2018 Calmer Choice Instructor Training Program to be hosted by the Falmouth School District featuring participation from eight other districts across Cape Cod
- First full-time management position recruited from off-Cape with expertise in Development and Business operations
- First Two Day Calmer Choice Mindfulness Retreat offered with 18 in attendance
- Increased in-house marketing and communication procedures implemented with support of new administrator
- Calmer Choice team invited to attend the newly established 1440 Multiversity Service Week in California
- Addition of Community Based Program Director, separating the School/Community Based Program Director into two distinct roles
- Invited to the “Learning and the Brain” Poster Session in NYC presenting results from Yale University research
- Driven by Governor Charlie Baker and State Senator Julian Cyr, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts allocates \$50,000 to Calmer Choice as part of Cape Cod Addiction Prevention strategy
- Calmer Choice invited to present “Teaching Secular Mindfulness in Public Schools” at the University of Hartford
- Board Member organizes the first Overcoming Obstacles family-fun event raising funds and awareness for Calmer Choice
- Staff development consultant hired to support organizational changes as Calmer Choice continues to grow and expand
- Financial results approach \$660,000



## July '18–June '19

- First “Stars Come out in August” Dinner Parties fundraiser launched with much community excitement
- First Off-Cape school program initiated in Old Rochester Regional School District
- Board of Directors expands with addition of professionals with expertise in various needed areas
- Multi Year Strategic Planning Process initiated, including concept of the “Calmer Choice Institute”, embracing the expansion of Community programming and elevating the organization to a new level
- Administration restructures, formalizing the position of Chief Executive Officer (formerly Executive Director) and creating a Chief Operating Officer position, allowing CEO to focus on relationship building and fundraising
- Leadership team created including CEO, COO and Program Director
- Invitation to attend Multicultural Convening at the Ford Foundation in NYC
- Budget passes at \$712,000 for the next fiscal year



# July '19–June '20

- Long time business community supporter and board member, John Fulone, transitions to Calmer Choice's Chair of the Board of Directors
- Year 1 of the organization's new 3-Year Strategic Plan is launched
- Organizational growth continues with two new office hires. Longtime instructor joining administrative programming team and development professional hired in response to demand of increased need for in-house support
- Growth of off-Cape programs continues with funding from Plymouth County District Attorney's office
- Newly established 2020 Event Committee begins preparation for 10th Anniversary Celebrations including an anniversary gala along with other events
- Presentations at Learning and the Brain Conference at Boston University, the Mindfulness and Education Conference at the Omega Institute and the MIT Student Life Counsel
- Presented with the Jaffe Foundation Award out of NYC and the ACES Essential Agent of Change Award related to work being done with women and children
- Demand for adult and parent community programs increases with custom built programs for organizations like Helping our Women, the Gannon Foundation (Mindfulness for First Responders) and the Homeless Prevention Council
- With support from the Kelley Foundation, organization moves to larger office space to allow for in-house instructor trainings, community programs and board meetings



## And Then Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of March...

*COVID-19 pandemic impacts the entire world and changes everything:*

In-person programming stops

Fundraising Events cancelled

Calmer Choice responds immediately to ensure adequate funding is available to sustain operations

At a time when our programs are needed more than ever before, the Calmer Choice staff of dedicated professionals pivots to create online programming and uses social media to get the word out and virtual meeting platforms to deliver the programs.

With demand at an all-time high, the programming team launches first online programs for educators and adults with fantastic results.

Calmer Choice launches its Spring Campaign, "Help Calm to Carry On", and thanks to the enormous effort from the Calmer Choice staff and the outpouring of support from our incredible funders, the organization completes its most successful fundraising campaign on record, confirming both the importance of our programs and the generosity and commitment of our funders and the communities we serve.

While it's impossible to forecast what happens next, Calmer Choice is poised to continue to provide its programming for children and adults on Cape Cod and beyond because of the hard work and dedication of its staff and volunteers and the amazing support of its funders.



## *In Special Gratitude*

I would like to honor Jim DeCoito, Jordan Mendes, Sam D'Olimpio and AJ Passalugo, the boys who tragically passed away and who sparked the beginnings of Calmer Choice. I think about these boys and their families and friends left behind often, always remembering their lives and spirits when the day to day tasks of running a non-profit seems daunting. The memory of these boys reminds me of why the mission of Calmer Choice is vital and why we must push on.



Back in 2012, after attending a sold-out Calmer Choice event featuring Jon Kabat-Zinn, my parents, Jennifer and Leslie Jonas realized the impact Calmer Choice could make and provided the initial financial support for me to be able to leave my job as an Occupational Therapist and give Calmer Choice the attention it would require. They were our first major donors and it is important to acknowledge their visionary impact on the legacy of Calmer Choice. I love you. I appreciate you and we are all very grateful for you both!

Calmer Choice could also never have reached a milestone decade of service without the incredible contributions from our AMAZING staff and community members. We are grateful for our volunteers, current and past board members, current and past instructors, staff, consultants, event organizers and participants, educators and school administrators, local and state government leaders, local businesses, our faithful donors and foundation funders, our family members who graciously gave of their time, talent and treasures. Most importantly we thank the young people who inspired this spark of an idea and all those that we have had the privilege of teaching through the years.

To those that did not get special mention in our list below, we apologize. There are so many who support us in helping the world lead lives of kindness and compassion towards themselves and others and for that, I thank you. It is incredible what we have built together over ten short years and it is thrilling to think about what we will build together in this next decade.

With kindness,  
Fiona Jensen



The 1440 Foundation  
 Mary Acunzo  
 Bonnie Alcott  
 Jo Ahola  
 Molly Alvin  
 Governor Charlie Baker  
 Art Balzotti, Faded Design  
 James Barnes  
 Mary Barnes, OTD, Tufts University  
 Cheryl Bartlett  
 Clemens Bauer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
 Jill Beardsley  
 Mark Bertin, MD  
 Melanie Black  
 Andrea Binder\*  
 Benton Bodamer  
 Christina Bologna  
 Heidi Bornstein, Mindfulness Everyday  
 Barry Boyce, Mindful Magazine  
 Betsy Bowes  
 Jimmy Bowes  
 Heather Brown  
 Sally Burke  
 Janell Burley Hofman  
 The Cape Cod Five  
 The Cape Cod Foundation  
 The Cape Cod Healthcare Community Benefit Foundation  
 The Cape and Islands United Way  
 Patience Cabrera  
 Laura Caton  
 Michael Cestaro, Up Above Creative  
 Steve Chadwick, Mindfulness Everyday  
 Charles Colston  
 Lynda Comolli  
 The Cooperative Bank of Cape Cod  
 Ernie Cornellson  
 Tamsen Cornell  
 Diane Corriera  
 Jeff Craddock  
 Michael Crowley, Yale University  
 Augusta Rose Cullity  
 Sue Curran  
 Senator Julian Cyr  
 Patty DeBoer, Mashpee School District  
 Pam Danforth  
 Kathy Downey  
 Laura Eldridge  
 Theresa Egan  
 Deb Ennis, Healing Therapies of Cape Cod  
 C. Patricia Fater, MD  
 The Federated Church of Orleans  
 Randy Fernandez, Mindful Schools  
 Josh Fitzmaurice  
 Peter Freeman  
 Shirley Frye  
 John Fulone  
 John Gabrieli, Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
 Joe Gargon  
 Annie Gibbons  
 Mark Goldberg, SCORE  
 Dan Goleman  
 Laura Groark  
 Mary Helen Guilmette  
 Mark and Royce Gussack  
 Lisa Guyon  
 Karen Hanesian  
 Kathy Hanlon  
 Nancy Hardaway  
 Dan Harris  
 Roy Heffernan  
 Shaelyn Hegarty  
 Michaela Herlihy  
 Bill Holden  
 Representative Randy Hunt  
 Ed Jacobs, Plymouth County District Attorney's Office  
 Monica Jalbert  
 The Jensen Family and Joseph Collins  
 Leslie and Jenny Jonas  
 Marc and Lucie Jonas  
 Dallas Jones  
 Taylor and Barry Joyce  
 Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD  
 Susan Kaiser Greenland  
 Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD  
 Amy Kaiser  
 Sabrina Kane  
 Adria Kennedy  
 Diane Kovanda  
 Scott and Joanie Kreins, The 1440 Foundation  
 Hayden Kuhn  
 Karyn Kuhn  
 Adam Liss, Cape Stress Reduction  
 Stephanie Lundegren  
 Bart Main, MD  
 Forest Malatesta  
 Manny Marrero  
 Laurie McAnagh

Janet McCartin  
Caroline McCutcheon  
Annalise Mecham  
Connor Medlar  
Katie Medlar  
Nicholas Milewski  
Jessica Morey, iBme  
George Mumford  
Philip Murphy  
Annie Murray  
William Murray  
Laura Newstead  
Sarah Nicholls, Yale University  
Moirá Noonan-Kerry  
Elizabeth O'Boyle, JD, MBA  
Chris O'Brien, Dative  
Michael O'Keefe, Cape & Islands District Attorney  
Pam and Pierre Omidyar  
Tracy O'Neill, Two Crows Creative Group  
Sally Orcutt  
Rob Padgett  
Rodrigo Passos, Dative  
Chris Perry  
Kimberly Perry  
Gioia Persuitte  
Det. Chuck Peterson  
Courtney Poignant  
Judge Joseph Reardon  
Paula Reardon Webster  
Daniel Rechtschaffen  
Rose Resnick  
Dan Richards  
Sandy and Will Rubenstein  
Congressman Timothy Ryan  
Amy Saltzman  
Sherry Santini  
Ila and Dinabandu Sarley  
Dave and Diane Scott  
Secure Networks  
Frank and Nancy Selldorff  
Tony Shepley  
Peter Shea, Ed.D.  
Deborah Sloane  
Jonathan Slomba  
Maureen Strafford, MD\*  
Suffolk University  
Virginia Sullivan  
Joanne Sykes, Falmouth School District  
Raymond Tamasi

Robert Thrasher\*  
Mindy Todd, National Public Radio  
The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation  
David Troutman  
Meg Valdes, Falmouth School District  
Svea Van Langerhoven, Tufts University  
Maura Weir, MA Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition  
Representative Timothy Whelan  
Mary Frances White  
Sara Whiteley  
Christopher Willard, Psy.D  
David Willard  
Heidi Sarles-Whittlesey  
Carol Woodbury, Dennis-Yarmouth Regional  
School District  
Dan Wolf  
Zoe Wolf  
Peggy Wolman  
Doug Worthen, iBme

*\* In Memoriam*







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**Calmer Choice is an organization near and dear to many of us from Barnstable High School.**

We have 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.** Calmer Choice's mission not only contributes to preventing risky behaviors and mental illness, but also **arms young people with tools to face the inevitable challenges of life.** These are tools that should be taught in every school and provided to every child.

As a secular, accessible, and inclusive organization, Calmer Choice meets the needs of our increasingly diverse community. As a current mental health professional, I appreciate that Calmer Choice's services are supported by research and the best clinical practices available.

**If anything positive has come from the terrible heartbreak that Cape Cod has endured over the years, it is Calmer Choice.**

”

**Caroline Abbott MA**  
*Clinical Psychology Doctoral Candidate  
Barnstable High School, Class of 2008*

# Thank You!

