

2026 NEW HANOVER COMMUNITY ENDOWMENT

Q1, 2026 Quarterly Report



New Hanover County Student
Participating in The
Endowment's Youth Leaders
Engagement Session
January 28, 2026



Letter from the President & CEO

As President and CEO, I am honored to continue leading The Endowment and serving the New Hanover County community. As I move from interim leadership, I am energized by the progress we have made together. Over the past several months, one thing has become especially clear: meaningful change begins by listening, showing up, and working alongside our partners.

This quarter, our team has been steeped in our community, attending groundbreaking ceremonies, celebrating ribbon cuttings, leading youth convenings, and joining local events and speaking engagements. These moments are more than appearances; they are opportunities to build relationships, understand evolving needs, and ensure our work remains grounded in the lived experiences of the people we serve.

We were proud to announce 41 grants through our 2026 Spring Community Grants Program, investing \$500,000 into organizations that are making a tangible difference across our region. Each award reflects not only strategic alignment, but also the voices and priorities we continue to hear directly from the community.

At the same time, we are deepening our commitment to informed, responsive grantmaking through several landscape assessments now underway. These include analyses of behavioral health, early childhood systems, and recreational opportunities, each designed to help us better understand gaps, strengths, and opportunities for long-term impact.

We also launched the 2026 Arts and Culture program. The Arts Council of Wilmington and New Hanover County, serving as The Endowment's intermediary partner, opened the grant application window in February, with awards to be announced in April. Supporting creativity and cultural expression remains an essential part of building a vibrant, connected community.

As we close the first quarter, we've awarded 46 new grants totaling \$35.4 million (including new, prior and multi year). Net of prior year commitments our remaining 2026 grants budget stands is \$22.6 million. Since our inception, The Endowment has awarded 409 grants totaling \$190.7 million. While these numbers are significant, what matters most is how these investments translate into stronger systems, expanded opportunities, and improved quality of life for our community.

Looking ahead, my team and I are committed to showing up, listening intentionally, and working in partnership to create lasting impact. I am grateful for the trust placed in us and excited for what we will continue to build together.



In service, with gratitude,

Sophie Dagenais
President and CEO

THE MISSION

The Endowment's mission is to improve the health, education, safety, and economic opportunity of every person in New Hanover County.



**Social and Health
Equity**



Education



**Community
Safety**



**Community
Development**

The Endowment Board of Directors names

Sophie Dagenais President and CEO



The Endowment's Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Sophie Dagenais as President and Chief Executive Officer. Dagenais has served as Interim President and CEO, providing continuity of leadership and supporting the organization's mission and strategic priorities.

"I am delighted to announce the appointment of Sophie Dagenais as The Endowment's new President and CEO. The Board's decision reflects our shared commitment to strong leadership and our confidence and excitement about The Endowment's future," said Shannon Winslow, Board Chair of The Endowment. "Sophie stepped forward at a pivotal moment and led with focus, discipline, and purpose. Under her leadership, we've strengthened our investment strategy, fostered a collaborative team culture, and sharpened our ability to deliver meaningful results for the community. The Endowment is well-positioned to advance our mission, and we are excited to build on our momentum."


Dagenais has guided The Endowment through a period of continued progress, prioritizing data-driven analysis, strategic partnerships, and disciplined investments aligned across each of the organization's strategic pillars. Her leadership has reinforced The Endowment's approach to identifying opportunities that move the needle on the most pressing needs in New Hanover County.

"The Endowment's vision, values, and commitment to impact are not changing," said Dagenais. "I'm grateful for the Board's confidence and support, and for the talented team that makes this work possible. Together, we will continue to strengthen our partnerships, apply rigorous analysis to our decisions, and invest in solutions that benefit all of New Hanover County. We are still early in our history, and I am honored to help shape our next chapter carefully, and thoughtfully, in service to the community we have been called to serve."

Bill Blair, Vice Chair of the Board, added, "Sophie's vision is firmly focused on the future. She brings a thoughtful approach to strategy, a strong sense of stewardship, and a clear understanding of The Endowment's mandate. The board values her leadership and looks forward to continued progress. We are happy to have her on board to lead the team."

The Endowment will continue to advance its work across all pillars by identifying strategic opportunities, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and funding solutions that respond to the county's evolving needs.

**Guiding The Endowment
with stability, continuity,
and long-term vision.**



2026 Spring Cycle Community GRANTS PROGRAM

The Endowment is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2026 Spring Community Grants. In the first cycle of its annual Community Grants Program, The Endowment's board approved 41 grants totaling \$500,000 to nonprofit and community-serving organizations across New Hanover County. These grants support efforts to expand opportunities, strengthen services, and improve residents' well-being, including 13 awards in Social & Health Equity, 9 in Education, 9 in Community Safety, and 10 in Community Development, with many initiatives spanning multiple pillars reflecting the interconnected nature of our community's needs.

"Community Grants support local leaders and organizations that make a direct difference in people's lives," said Sophie Dagenais, President and CEO of The Endowment. "Just as importantly, we learn from our applicants and grantees. This program gives us a real-time view of what's happening in our community and helps strengthen our understanding of the community we serve."

The 2026 Community Grants Program is built on lessons from the 2025 pilot. In 2026, the total Community Grants budget doubled to \$1 million, split evenly between a Spring cycle and a Fall cycle, with individual awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

The spring round was highly competitive, with 134 applications requesting \$1.78 million in total, including 51 from organizations that had not previously received funding from The Endowment. Applicants were limited to one submission per organization per cycle, and all proposals were independently reviewed and scored by pillar-based subcommittees made up of The Endowment staff and Community Advisory Council members representing each of the four pillars.

"Each application reflected the degree of creativity, dedication, and collaboration taking place throughout New Hanover County," said Shannon Wick, Network Associate. "These 41 grants support kids and families countywide in a wide array of programs and activities that build stronger, more connected neighborhoods."

Grant funds must be used by December 29, 2026, with final grant reports due by January 29, 2027. The Fall Cycle of the 2026 Community Grants Program will open in July.

The complete list of Spring 2026 Community Grant recipients can be found on our [website](#). The Endowment's report on the reach and impact of our 2025 Community and Capacity Grants Program will be available on [The Endowment's website](#) in April.



Photo provided by Autism Society of North Carolina, Inc.

SOCIAL & HEALTH EQUITY

Grants Awarded Q1 2026

(Awards are subject to the execution of grant agreements.)

3Wheel Therapy



\$5,000

Pillar: Social and Health Equity

To support 3Wheel Therapy's insurance, fuel, maintenance costs, and safe transport of adaptive tricycles to partner agencies and local parks/trails to provide an accessible and therapeutic riding experience for anyone unable to ride a traditional bicycle.

Autism Society of North Carolina, Inc.

4th Trimester Mission



\$12,500

Pillar: Social and Health Equity

To sustain postpartum doula home visits and new mother meetups, providing essential emotional and physical support and resource connections for families in Greater Wilmington.

Cape Fear Area Doulas



\$5,000

Pillar: Social and Health Equity

To purchase music, art, and sensory supplies for the Autism Society's Wilmington Social Recreation after school and summer camp programs for children with autism to develop precursor skills necessary for academic success.



\$15,000

Pillar: Social and Health Equity

To expand scholarships for birth and postpartum doula care for families with financial barriers in NHC and support advanced training to strengthen quality, equitable maternal care.

SOCIAL AND HEALTH EQUITY GRANTS AWARDED | Q1 2026

Cape Fear Veteran Resilience Project



\$15,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To strengthen suicide prevention efforts and expand coordination access to critical mental health, employment, financial literacy, and training services and support for veterans and their families in the Cape Fear region.

Coastal Bringing Up Down Syndrome



\$12,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To support "Down to Stay Healthy", offering fitness and nutrition programs for individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities in the Cape Fear area to lower chronic disease risk.

El Cuerpo



\$10,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To fund essential medical costs, including lab work, supplies, and volunteer and staff training to support El Cuerpo's free medical clinic addressing barriers to health access for the Latino community in NHC.

Feast Down East, Inc



\$10,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To support Farmers Fighting Hunger by covering a portion of food costs for partner agencies, providing fresh, local food to an estimated 7,000 individuals in NHC.

North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services



\$75,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To support implementation of the 2026 Sun Bucks program serving North Carolina children in New Hanover County.

Restored Souls Foundation



\$10,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To support Restored Styles Mobile Salon, a trauma-informed, accessible program serving children in foster care and individuals with disabilities in NHC to reduce barriers to accessing personal care services due to mobility limitations, sensory sensitivities, trauma histories, or lack of accessible facilities.

The Coastal Therapeutic Riding Program



\$10,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To support approximately 130 therapeutic riding lessons for low-income NHC residents, expanding access to adaptive equestrian therapy for individuals with disabilities.

The LGBTQ Center of the Cape Fear Coast



\$5,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To enhance the LGBTQ Center's capacity to assess community needs and provide accessible resources through program evaluations and a new website for LGBTQ+ residents in NHC.

The Wilmington Farmers Market



\$13,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To support the Wilmington Farmers Market's SNAP Double Bucks program, increasing access to fresh, locally grown food for low-income families in NHC.

Wilmington CareNet Counseling Center



\$15,000
Pillar: **Social and Health Equity**

To cover mental health counseling fees for clients unable to afford care, including children, teens, adults, couples, and families in NHC, and support key operational costs, including administrative pay, office rent, and supplies.



The Wilmington Farmers Market



EDUCATION

Grants Awarded Q1 2026

(Awards are subject to the execution of grant agreements.)

Assistance League of Greater Wilmington



\$15,000
Pillar: Education

To support the Operation School Bell Care Closet Program in three Title I high schools in providing essential resources like clothing, hygiene supplies, and school supplies which are critical necessities to learning.

Cameron Art Museum



\$15,000
Pillar: Education

To address the achievement gap in NHC by offering two evidence-based arts integration professional development sessions for teachers to evolve Cameron Art Museum's Closing the Gap (CTG) workshops for NHC schools.

Cape Fear Community College Foundation, Incorporated



\$3,000,000
2025 Q4 Drawdown: \$1,350,000
Pillar: Education

CFCC's NHC Apprenticeship Accelerator Program will expand and strengthen the pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship pipeline by creating a unified Apprenticeship Department with dedicated staff. This expansion will scale programs, better support employers and students, and directly advance workforce and economic growth in New Hanover County.

Cape Fear Community College Foundation, Incorporated



\$147,843
Pillar: Education

The Construction Career Skills Training Program will provide students with foundational construction knowledge, workplace safety certification, and essential employability skills that align with regional workforce needs. The program will provide students with direct access to residential construction employers to achieve job placement goals and help students transition to the workforce.

EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED | Q1 2026

Child Development Center



\$15,000
Pillar: Education

To support delivery of a seven-week summer program during the school closure period to provide consistency, structure, and developmentally appropriate support for students with special needs.

Greater Wilmington Chamber Foundation



\$2,000,000
Pillar: Education

To support the Career Leadership Development Academy (CLDA) which aims to provide district-wide, career-connected industry exploration for all 7th grade students in NHC Schools and extended mentor programming for students in grades 8-11. This continues the expansion of the program, which as made possible by a special legislative appropriation sponsored by Senator Lee.

The Children's Museum of Wilmington



\$15,000
Pillar: Education

To support 'Building Bright Beginnings' to address gaps in kindergarten readiness and access to high-quality early learning opportunities for young children in NHC through educator-led, play-based programming and hands-on STEM and literacy experiences.

Theatre for All, Inc



\$8,000
Pillar: Education

To support the Public School Outreach Program in providing instruction to students with intellectual and developmental disability in "Specially Designed Academics" classrooms to enhance skill-building and employability through performing arts education.

United Way of Cape Fear



\$12,900
Pillar: Education

To provide two new books across genres and languages to students in grades K-5 at six NHC schools, impacting approximately 1,922 students in advancing early childhood literacy.

University of North Carolina at Wilmington - Watson College of Education - Teaching with Joy Network



\$15,000
Pillar: Education

To further develop and expand the Teaching with Joy Network, with a focus on educator well-being, student belonging, and joyful teaching practices, across NHC schools to increase retention and recruitment of educators.

Williston Middle School PTA



\$12,000
Pillar: Education

To fund filtered water bottle filling stations for 668 middle school students to provide access to safe drinking water and improve health and education outcomes for Title I students in an economically disadvantaged school.

Wrightsboro UMC



\$8,000
Pillar: Education

To support the Backpacks of Dignity Project in partnership with local public schools to ensure students from under-resourced families begin the school year with the essential school supplies and hygiene items they need to succeed.



Wrightsboro UMC



Wrightsboro UMC



COMMUNITY SAFETY

Grants Awarded Q1 2026

(Awards are subject to the execution of grant agreements.)

100 Black Men of Coastal NC



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Safety

To expand the number of African American middle and high school youth that participate in evidence-based success academics and engage in high-impact workshops and competitions at the local Youth Summit and 100 Black Men of America's Annual Conference to expose them to pathways to success via economic opportunities.

Better Is Possible



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Safety

To support the Teen Summit, a free, full-day experience for youth in NHC to address a critical need in NHC for safe, affirming, youth-led spaces for teens to openly address the social, emotional, and economic challenges shaping their lives.

Camp Schreiber Foundation



\$12,000

Pillar: Community Safety

To purchase fractional accounting services to reduce their administrative duties to allow for full time staff to expand direct programming to remove financial, social, and practical barriers standing between young men and college graduation.

Family Promise of the Lower Cape Fear



\$10,000

Pillar: Community Safety

To support a strategic marketing initiative that strengthens brand visibility and messaging to better reach families experiencing housing instability, domestic violence survivors, and other vulnerable populations, while increasing community awareness and support.

First Fruit Ministries



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Safety

To fund a new oven and maintenance to ensure safe, uninterrupted meal preparation and increase kitchen efficiency, allowing meals to be prepared more quickly and consistently for individuals experiencing homelessness in NHC.

Freedom Sailing



\$14,600

Pillar: Community Safety

To secure the operational stability needed to keep these therapeutic sails free of charge and funding an accessible slip and safety equipment to eliminate time-consuming logistics to directly increase capacity to serve more veterans and first responders.

paws4people foundation



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Safety

To allow paws4people to support acquisition of puppies and adolescent dogs to more comprehensively address it's waiting list for highly trained Assistance Dogs, Facility Dogs, and K9-assisted intervention service dogs in NHC.

Purpose International



\$10,000

Pillar: Community Safety

To support the Purpose Youth and Teen Camp to reduce summer learning loss, strengthen emotional resilience, and increase clarity around future pathways by integrating academic enrichment with trauma-informed supports and applied learning.

Rescue Mission of Cape Fear



\$10,000

2025 Q4 Drawdown: \$1,010,810
Pillar: Community Safety

To provide funding for basic necessities, stabilization support, and recovery-focused services for NHC men in Rescue Mission of Cape Fear's residential recovery program experiencing homelessness or housing instability challenges.





Community Enrichment Initiatives Inc. (CEII)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Grants Awarded Q1 2026

(Awards are subject to the execution of grant agreements.)

2SHARE, Inc

\$15,000

Pillar: Community Development



To purchase approximately 75 good quality mattresses, platforms, and sheets at no additional cost for low-income NHC households in need.

Alliance for Cape Fear Trees

\$15,000

Pillar: Community Development



To plant 130 native or regionally-adapted trees in Wilmington's Southside and Bottom neighborhoods – historically underserved areas and areas of low tree canopy.

Carolina Small Business Development Fund

\$11,000

Pillar: Community Development



To support the Cash Flow Confidence Program, a two-part workshop that will serve 30+ business owners and teach an understanding of cash flow fundamentals and business operations.

City of Wilmington Economic Development

\$7,750,000

2026 Q1 Drawdown: \$7,750,000
Pillar: Community Development



The City of Wilmington, New Hanover County, and The Endowment have partnered to support the acquisition and preservation of approximately 25 acres of green space located off Greenville Loop Road for the development of a future public park. The total acquisition cost of \$9.75 million will be funded through a joint commitment, including a \$7.75 million grant from The Endowment and \$1 million contributions from both the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS AWARDED | Q1 2026

Community Enrichment Initiatives Inc



\$14,500

Pillar: Community Development

To support greenhouse repairs, refrigerated storage, and operation support for Willowdale Farms to address food insecurity in NHC through growing food, feeding food insecure residents, and teaching regenerative gardening classes.

Making Waves Foundation



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Development

To provide fare subsidies to human service nonprofit agencies who provide assistance to members of the community in need and individuals who otherwise would not have access to transportation.

Wilmington Minority Chamber of Commerce



\$10,000

Pillar: Community Development

To provide operations funding for the Wilmington Minority Chamber of Commerce to create a brand presence and hire core staff for overall support for minority-owned businesses in NHC.

Young Mogul Development Group



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Development

To provide young students of color with in-depth career development activities, and training with the aim of early exposure to employable skills such as verbal communication, CPR/First Aid certifications, and developing STEM, digital, and market-relevant skills.

Genesis Block Foundation



\$7,500

Pillar: Community Development

To support the Resident Cohort Meetup initiative that addresses the need for continued connection, support, and resource access for small business owners after completing formal entrepreneurship programming through the Block Academy Program.

Pine Valley Elementary PTA



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Development

To fund outdoor play space improvements at Pine Valley Elementary by providing access to hydration, safe outdoor play spaces, and quality recreational equipment to support physical health and well-being for students.

Working Films



\$15,000

Pillar: Community Development

To present the Story Leads half-day conference in Wilmington in early Fall 2026, bringing together current and emerging nonprofit, public service, media professionals, and college/university students pursuing careers to support organizations using film and storytelling to communicate impact.



Arts & Culture 2026 GRANTS PROGRAM

Building on its successful 2025 pilot, The Endowment launched the 2026 Arts & Culture Grants Program to support arts and cultural initiatives that strengthen the local economy and create opportunities for residents of all ages.

Grants of \$5,000–\$15,000 will be awarded to nonprofit arts and culture organizations and public agencies.

The Arts Council of Wilmington and New Hanover County serves as intermediary and will administer \$430,000 in available funding, with applications accepted February 1–28, 2026. Grantees will be announced in April 2026.





BEHAVIORAL HEALTH *Landscape Analysis*

This initiative, in partnership with Mosaic Group, explores New Hanover County’s mental health and substance use systems of care, identifies opportunities to strengthen services and address barriers, and engages community voices to guide future strategies and grantmaking. The county has made significant investments in behavioral health services and brings substantial resources and leadership to this important work. The landscape analysis will complement these efforts by identifying opportunities to align and strengthen community-wide strategies.

A multi-faceted process includes analysis of New Hanover County’s behavioral health system, national and local funder landscapes, listening sessions and site visits, best practices and evidence review, and engagement of The Endowment Board and staff.

Engagement includes interviews with agency leaders, providers, schools, justice partners, and grassroots organizations; listening sessions with individuals and families with lived experience; and community forums to validate findings and align recommendations with local priorities.

The assessment will produce a strategic roadmap of evidence-based, need-driven recommendations to guide The Endowment’s grantmaking within its mental health and substance use portfolio.

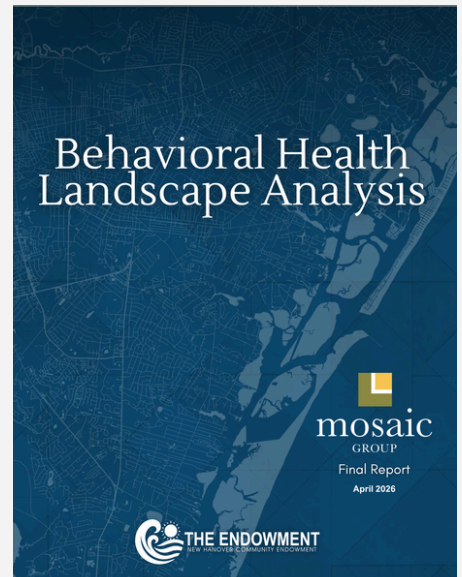
This assessment takes place from November 2025 to March 2026.

Findings will be shared publicly, and a report will be published on The Endowment’s website once complete.



“Access to mental health and substance use services is essential for a healthy and resilient community. This work will help us understand what’s working—and where gaps remain—so we can invest in solutions that are community-informed and integrated, grounded in data, and guided by impact.”

Sophie Dagenais, President & CEO



60+ Stakeholder Interviews Across Providers, Government, Law Enforcement, Schools, and Faith Leaders

6 Community Listening Sessions: High School Students, Postpartum Women, Caregivers, School Support Teams, Reentry Participants, and Employers

95+ Provider Organizations Inventory Mapped by Service Type, ZIP, and Insurance Acceptance



EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS *Landscape Analysis*

In partnership with NC Child, The Endowment is conducting a comprehensive landscape and fiscal analysis of early childhood services and funding streams in New Hanover County. By mapping providers, enrollment, and unmet needs—and reviewing evidence-based strategies from local and statewide programs—the effort will reveal where resources exist, where gaps persist, and what approaches most effectively improve outcomes for children and families.

This analysis includes a landscape assessment and capacity mapping to identify pressing community needs, fiscal and funding mapping to show existing investments, and the integration of community voices to reflect lived experience. It also includes a review of evidence-based strategies to identify effective practices, policy translation to inform scalable recommendations, and collaboration with local partners to ensure the work is aligned with community context.

Community voices will shape this work through partnerships with families, early childhood providers, and local organizations. Input will be gathered through listening sessions, interviews, and collaborative convenings to ensure recommendations reflect real needs and on-the-ground perspectives.

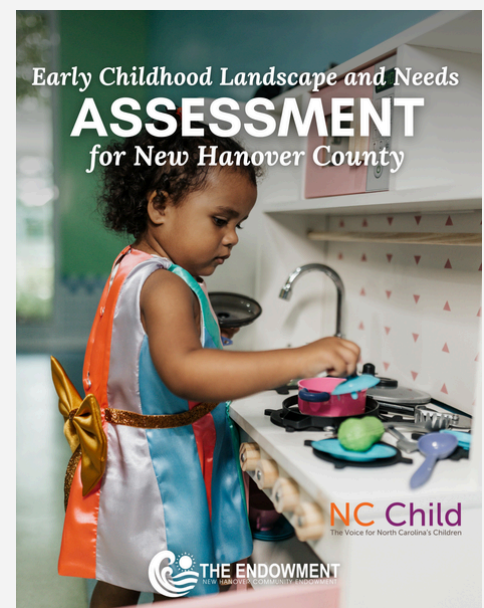
The results of this assessment will inform action. By combining research and policy expertise with local partnerships, the assessment will enable The Endowment to invest in solutions that address systemic barriers, target root causes, and strengthen long-term outcomes for children and families.

This analysis will take place from January through April/May 2026.

Findings will be shared publicly, and a report will be published on The Endowment's website once complete.

“This analysis will give us the information we need to target investments where they will have the greatest impact for children and families. It ensures our work is intentional, coordinated, and responsive to the needs of our community.”

David Stegall, Director of Education and Community Development



21-60 Parents/Caregivers
in Focus Groups

7-12 Interviews with Direct
Service Providers in
New Hanover County

5 Interviews with Direct Service Providers





Comprehensive Assessment of RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Endowment is undertaking a comprehensive assessment of parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, athletic fields, and other public-use recreation spaces across the New Hanover County. The Endowment has retained Weston & Sampson to lead this assessment and to prepare findings and recommendations to inform our decisions about future investments in parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, athletic fields, and other public-use recreation spaces.

As part of its work, Weston & Sampson will:

- Identify existing parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, athletic fields, and other public-use recreation spaces, including fields, courts, and sports programs,
- Gather input from residents of all ages regarding desired improvements, programs, and facilities, and
- Evaluate gaps in access to parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, athletic fields, and other public-use recreation spaces, and recreational opportunities.

Engagement efforts involve collaboration with residents and stakeholder groups through public meetings, surveys, focus groups, and pop-up events. Diverse input ensures the plan reflects the full range of community needs and interests.

The process began January 5, 2026, with a full-day on-site kick-off and continues through inventory analysis, engagement, and reporting phases. More than 75+ community consultations have occurred to date, supported by biweekly meetings and ongoing site assessments. The timeline is scheduled for completion in October 2026.

The results of this assessment will inform our decisions about future investments in parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, athletic fields, and other public-use recreation spaces

Findings will be shared publicly, and a report will be published on The Endowment's website once complete.

“Universal access to parks, programs, and public spaces is essential for a healthy, resilient, and connected community. This assessment grows directly out of our updated strategic plan, which prioritizes a vibrant economy and quality of life for all. A key part of that vision is expanding recreational opportunities across New Hanover County.”

Sophie Dagenais, President and CEO

Comprehensive Assessment of Recreational Opportunities in New Hanover County



75+ Ongoing Consultations

1000+ During May Engagement Activities

**More Opportunities
to Engage!**

Community ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) was continuously engaged in The Endowment's strategic work and grantmaking processes during the first quarter of 2026.

A major focus of this quarter was the Spring Community Grant cycle. Following dedicated training, CAC members served on pillar-specific teams alongside Endowment staff to rigorously vet and score grant applications. This collaborative approach ensured that community perspectives were directly integrated into the analysis and evaluations of these grants. Looking ahead, an additional cohort of CAC members will undergo similar training to participate in the vetting and scoring process for the second cycle of community grants in July.



For our formal quarterly gathering, members participated in a focused work session with Weston & Sampson to help guide the Recreational Opportunities Comprehensive Assessment. This focus group provided an important opportunity for the CAC to share perspectives on parks and recreation, ensuring that recommendations regarding community priorities, existing providers, service gaps, and potential future investments reflect the needs of New Hanover County residents.

CAC members also supported The Endowment's broader community and economic engagement efforts. In January, the Council assisted in nominating young residents for the Youth Leaders Engagement Session (detailed further in the following section of this report). Additionally, members were invited to join Endowment Board and Staff at regional events focused on workforce and economic development, including the Open House for the New Hanover Healthcare Career Partnership (NHHCP) and the Wilmington Business Journal Power Breakfast regarding jobs.

As the quarter progressed, attention turned toward governance and transition planning. Staff met with outgoing CAC members finishing their three-year terms to gather feedback and acknowledge their dedicated service and support. Simultaneously, preparations began for the recruitment of five new members for appointment to the CAC in 2026. Current and outgoing CAC members were invited to help recruit this next generation of Endowment volunteers, viewing the upcoming application cycle as a new chapter that builds upon the vision they helped establish. To further expand The Endowment's recruitment reach, CAC members were engaged to share internship and staff opportunities within their networks as The Endowment grows its team.



CAC members participating in the Recreational Opportunities Assessment





Youth Voices

SHAPING THE FUTURE FOR NEW HANOVER COUNTY

On January 28, The Endowment hosted the third workshop in a series designed to guide its youth development initiatives and ensure youth voices inform our work. The Youth Leaders Engagement Session took place at the UNCW Trask Coliseum and brought together New Hanover County youth ages 14–24 to share their experiences, perspectives, and ideas with The Endowment team.

Led by Mary Vail Ware, Director of Social and Health Equity and Community Safety, alongside The Endowment’s Programs and Grants team, the session engaged students in a series of interactive activities designed to spark conversation and reflection. Youth shared their perspectives, including what defines success in their lives, the challenges they see around them, what helps them thrive, and the people and organizations that support them. They also spoke of the barriers they face, where they turn for support, and what they wish adults and community leaders understood better.

In welcoming the audience, Interim President and CEO Sophie Dagenais emphasized the importance of seeking and gathering youth perspectives, noting, “You know what it’s like to grow up here: to go to school, work, look for opportunities to be happy and comfortable, and imagine your future. If we want to build a community where everyone can succeed, we need to learn directly from you.”

We are grateful to the youth who shared their time, ideas, and voices during the session. We are also thankful to the youth-serving organizations that helped plan the event and took the time to coordinate and ensure youth were able to participate.

continued...



...continued

Youth Voices

SHAPING THE FUTURE FOR NEW HANOVER COUNTY

The session also included participation from the Weston & Sampson team, who gathered youth input to inform The Endowment's Comprehensive Assessment of Recreational Opportunities in New Hanover County that is underway. Hearing firsthand where teens spend time and how they use parks and recreation facilities will help strategy recommendations reflect the needs and experiences of young residents.

We are grateful to UNCW for hosting the session. As a place where ideas grow, lifelong friendships form, and futures begin to take shape, UNCW provided the perfect setting for the meeting. We extend special thanks to Dr. Christine Reed Davis, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and her team for their warm welcome and for the work they do every day to support students as they explore and navigate college life at UNCW.

This is just the beginning! We look forward to hosting additional convenings with youth from across New Hanover County. Their voices, insights, and experiences will continue to guide our work as we strive to build a community where every young person thrives academically, socially, and emotionally and can succeed in school, work, and life.



WHAT WE HEARD

Insights from Youth and Youth-Serving Organizations



43+

Youth-Serving Nonprofit Organizations

25+

Government and Education Agencies Representatives from Law Enforcement, Schools, and County Agencies

28

Youth Leaders from Across New Hanover County





JC Lyle, Cassidy Santaguida, Mayor Bill Saffo, Chakema Clinton-Quintana, LeAnn Pierce, Sophie Dagenais, Rob Zapple, Salette Andrews

AVENUE FLATS BREAKS GROUND

Advancing Workforce Housing Through Partnership

On Wednesday, February 25, 2026, leaders from across New Hanover County gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking of Avenue Flats, a new 184-unit, family-focused workforce housing development.

Avenue Flats will feature three residential buildings, a central clubhouse, and direct access to a multi-use path, creating a welcoming environment for working families who are members of New Hanover County's essential workforce.

The approximately \$57.8 million development is financed through Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) equity from RBC and First Citizens, alongside support from The Endowment, the City of Wilmington, New Hanover County, and other partners.

Public and private partners played essential roles in assembling the layered financing structure. The City of Wilmington invested \$4 million, New Hanover County contributed \$1.5 million, and the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency provided a \$28 million tax credit allocation purchased by RBC and First Citizens. This collaborative effort supported a partnership between Shelter America, a national nonprofit affordable housing developer, and Blue Ridge Cascade, a regional, mission-aligned developer.

continued...

Sophie's Remarks:

Thank you, Sam Weldon, Mr. Mayor, Commissioner Pierce; always good to see you.

Good morning to our city, county and state leaders, partners, and friends. I'm Sophie Dagenais, President and CEO of The Endowment. I'm honored to be here with you for the groundbreaking of Avenue Flats.

Today is an exciting day!

- A day of possibility.
- A day of partnership.
- And a day for the families who will call Avenue Flats home.

Avenue Flats shows what is possible when public leadership, private expertise, and philanthropy align around a shared goal. Alignment matters.

Housing affordability is one of the defining challenges of our time, the response to which is rooted in policy, infrastructure, regulatory clarity, adaptability and adaptiveness, finance, long-range planning, and partnerships with multi-dimensional solutions.

As with other challenges, while we cannot grant our way out of them, philanthropy can help to accelerate progress.

Today, we celebrate more than a building; we celebrate a shared response, a model of alignment for progress.

The Endowment is proud to help make Avenue Flats possible, with all of you. Our investment of nearly 10% of the project costs alongside significant commitments from the city, the county, the state, and private capital, reflects our belief that dignity, stability, and opportunity grow when we work together.

To be sure, the Endowment has made other investments in housing production and stability, including a more than \$24M grant portfolio in 2024 and additional housing investments in 2025.

But housing, a home is shaped not just by its walls but by the systems that sustain the families within them. Housing affordability requires not only manageable housing costs, but the ability for families to thrive, grow and prosper.

That is why housing affordability, for us at the Endowment, will be supported by education, health, workforce development and pathways to higher wages, as our community's essential social infrastructure, and the levers to address the human side of housing.

Our work recognizes that housing affordability requires progress on two sides of the equation: expanding the supply side and strengthening the human side. These approaches are complementary.

And today's groundbreaking reflects that complementarity. Avenue Flats stands as a strong supply-side response: 184 units designed to meet real supply needs with intention and care.

I'm grateful to our Board for supporting this project; to our Community Advisory Council for their constant guidance; and to our team, especially Terri Burhans, for shepherding this effort with agility and care.

Congratulations to Blue Ridge Cascade, Shelter America, the city, the county, the state, and every partner who brought this vision to life. Thank you for your leadership. And above all, congratulations to the future residents of Avenue Flats.

May it be a place of stability, opportunity, love, and growth for years to come.

Thank you.

Sophie Dagenais
President and CEO



OPEN HOUSE YOUTH SHELTER OPENS ITS DOORS TO NEW HANOVER COUNTY YOUTH

Less than seven months after [The Endowment awarded a \\$1,475,000 grant to Coastal Horizons](#) for the purchase and upfitting of a new youth shelter, the community gathered today to celebrate a major milestone: the ribbon cutting and official opening of [Open House Youth Shelter](#).

The grant, made in August 2025, supported the acquisition and preparation of the facility to provide secure, homelike services for children and adolescents experiencing crisis.

At the ribbon cutting, community leaders and partners gathered to celebrate the opening, with remarks from Margaret Weller-Stargell, President & CEO of Coastal Horizons, Sophie Dagenais, President & CEO of The Endowment, and Shannon Winslow, Chair of The Endowment's Board, who both spoke about The Endowment's investment and its lasting impact on youth and residents in New Hanover County. Their remarks underscored what many in attendance felt: Open House is not just a new building, but a new source of safety and hope for families in New Hanover County.

Open House Youth Shelter serves children and adolescents ages 6–18 through emergency placements, offering a safe and stable environment when families and systems are under strain. The shelter accommodates an average of 12–14 youth at a time, with stays ranging from less than a month to several months, depending on each young person's circumstances. Referrals primarily come from Child Protective Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and law enforcement, and the shelter is designed to support youth with complex needs that typical emergency foster care cannot accommodate. Capacity may fluctuate depending on the ages and needs of the youth being served, but Open House remains a cornerstone of stability and care in times of crisis.

Open House does more than just meet youths' basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Personal growth is encouraged through counseling services, vocational and educational opportunities, life skill building, and recreational activities.



All confidential services are provided at no cost to youth and their families, and continue for a period of three months after discharge to maximize the success of the family reunification plan. For many families, that ongoing support makes the difference between short-term crisis response and long-term stability.

The impact of this project reaches beyond one building. With the new youth shelter open, Coastal Horizons can dedicate additional space on its main campus to expanded adult services, strengthening the local safety net for residents of all ages. Coastal Horizons works in close partnership with community-based teams and coalitions, including the New Hanover County Community Child Protection Team, Child Abuse Prevention Coalition, Community Crisis Response Team, Tri-County Homeless Interagency Council, and the Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry System. The free programming is supported through a diverse mix of funding sources and partners, including the City of Wilmington, New Hanover County, United Way of the Cape Fear Area, Federal Emergency Management Assistance, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, the Administration of Children and Families-Family and Youth Services Bureau, foster care and Child/Adolescent Crisis Respite reimbursements from the Department of Social Services, local foundations and charitable donations.

This project aligns with The Endowment's pillars of Social and Health Equity, Education, and Community Safety, and it represents what is possible when local partners come together around shared goals. By investing in Open House Youth Shelter, our neighborhoods become safer, families become stronger, futures become brighter for young people across New Hanover County.

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Remarks: Sophie Dagenais, President and CEO

Thank you, everyone, for being here. Good afternoon, it's my pleasure to be here. I'm Sophie Dagenais, President and CEO of The Endowment. As you just heard, I am joined by my Board Chair, Shannon Winslow, and members of my team. You heard about Mary Vail; Tyler is here; Amber is here. I am grateful to my team, because a grant such as this, a grant to enable what is happening today, does not happen without my whole team.

I won't say a lot; suffice it to say, what more can we celebrate than to provide a safe place for our youth? And for that, let me also celebrate what I may call a double bottom line. Because by being here today, by having this home for our youth, we are also creating additional space, an additional resource, for adults in our community who also require the services of Coastal Horizons.

Above all, before I turn it over to our Board Chair, Shannon Winslow, I will say this: I do wish our youth who stop here in their journey find here a warm, safe, nurturing, and inspiring stop in the journey that is life. It is our distinct honor to be a part of this project. Thank you to all of you who are making it possible.

Remarks: Shannon Winslow, Board Chair

My name is Shannon Winslow. I am Chair of the Board of the New Hanover Community Endowment, and first and foremost, I would like to thank Margaret Weller-Stargell and the entire board and staff of Coastal Horizons, and may I add, those that have helped fluff pillows and all the things. This is truly amazing. We are so blessed, so fortunate to have Coastal Horizons. I have often joked with Margaret that she looks 20 years old, but she has been doing this for 40 years, and through her leadership, we are so fortunate to have the community resources with Coastal Horizons.

I will say again, on behalf of the Board, thank you to Margaret and your team. Also, what is really near and dear to the heart, and very special, is the impact that this will have in the community. We do have four pillars at the Endowment, and this particular project hits two of our four pillars, social and health equity and community safety. So this is amazing, to have this type of project and the impact that we know it will have on the lives of youth in our community. We could not be more thrilled to support this type of project, particularly with the leadership we have. So again, thank you all, we are thrilled to be here.





LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

On February 10, 2026, Shannon Winslow, Board Chair, and Sophie Dagenais, President & CEO, presented to The Wilmington Rotary Club sharing The Endowment's mission and work in New Hanover County.

Special thanks to Cedric Dickerson, Endowment Board Member and Rotarian, for extending the invitation and for his continued support of the good work in our community.



On March 18, 2026, Holly Sullivan, Amazon's Vice President of Worldwide Economic Development served on a panel for the Greater Wilmington Business Journal Power Breakfast: Big Jobs.

We're especially grateful for Holly's service on The Endowment's Board of Directors and the expertise and leadership she brings to The Endowment.

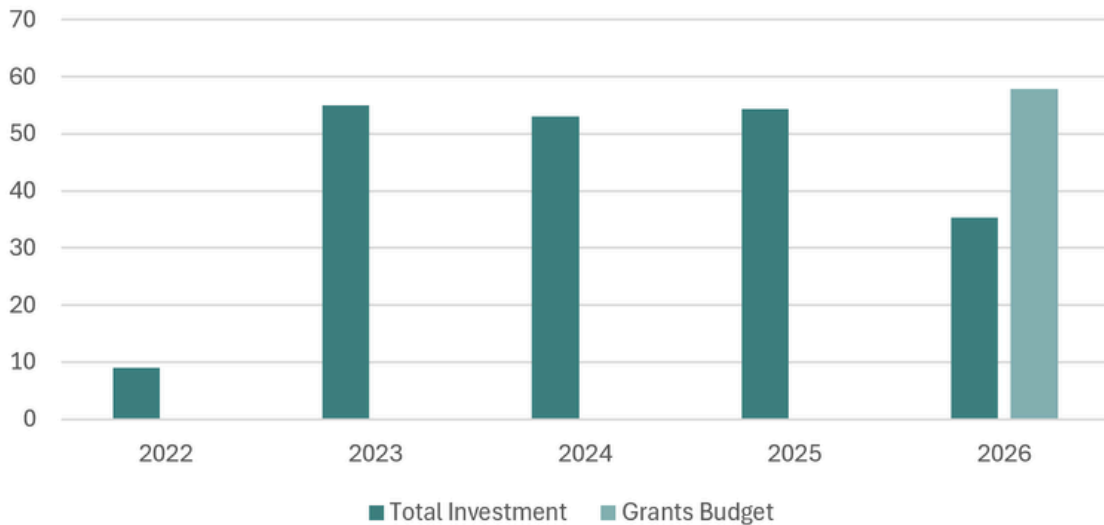


On March 18, Sophie Dagenais presented to the Women's Impact Network at their annual Philanthropy@Work event, an educational program designed to inspire, educate, and empower members to engage more deeply in collective giving.

grant award **HISTORY**

as of March 31, 2026

GRANT AWARD HISTORY



Annual Grants Awarded (rounded totals)

2022: Grants Awarded: 111 Total Awarded: \$9.3 million

2023: Grants Awarded: 33 Total Awarded: \$55 million

2024: Grants Awarded: 50 Total Awarded: \$53 million

2025: Grants Awarded: 169, Total Awarded: \$54 million

2026 (Preliminary, YTD)

Total 2026 Grants Budget: \$58 million

New Grants Awarded in 2026: 46

Total 2026 Commitments (including new, prior and multi-year): \$35.4 million

2026 Budget Remaining: \$22.6 million

Historical & Cumulative Totals

Cumulative Grants (Since Inception): 409

Cumulative Awards (Since Inception): \$190.7 million



Community-Informed. Grounded in Data. Driven by Impact. | theendowment.org