



OCEAN RIDGE CHARITIES: \$250,000 AND COUNTING

What began in 2010 with a wing and a prayer has now morphed into a fundraising dynamo benefitting over 30 Brunswick County charities.

Since the Ocean Ridge Charities Association (ORCA) launched its first charitable fundraising campaign—to establish an endowed nursing scholarship at Brunswick Community College—ORCA has raised and donated over a quarter of a million dollars to nearly 40 county non-profits. And every dollar that ORCA raises, stays local.

“It’s been quite a journey” said ORCA’s founding President Mike Gildea. “We weren’t at all sure of its success but thanks to the incredible generosity of Ocean Ridge residents, local businesses and an energetic, hardworking and visionary board of directors we have far exceeded expectations. “Surpassing \$250,000 is a real team accomplishment and a major milestone that no one would have predicted when ORCA started out” Gildea stated.

Seventeen neighborhood volunteers comprise ORCA’s Board of Directors. “Not only do they coordinate fourteen different fundraising program including five major events, they also manage other initiatives such as the Hospice Dolls project, weekend backpacks for hungry schoolchildren and participation in the national Make A Difference Day.” noted Claudia Piccarelli, ORCA’s Treasurer.

According to Piccarelli the fundraising events include a Dinner Dance, Trivia Night Championship, Casino Night for Charities, Christmas Home Tour and a Holiday Craft’s Fair. Other appeals include a Memorial Fund, the annual campaign direct mail solicitation, sales of the “From the Kitchens of Ocean Ridge” cookbook, dining discount memberships and participation in Belk Charity Days.

Among ORCA’s biggest successes is its Corporate Sponsors Program. For an annual contribution, local small businesses help underwrite ORCA’s operational expenses as well as contribute to the pool of charitable donations. In return they receive advertising within the community and major space on the ORCA website. “We started with less than 30 business sponsors. Now, because of the work of two board members, they have quadrupled the fund to 133 sponsors raising \$13,500 in 2017” Gildea shared.

In addition to home grown donations, in the last three years ORCA has also generated nearly \$20,000 in corporate matching grants, corporate matching gifts and other business awards.

“In our first year, we raised less than \$10,000” Gildea stated.” We started off with a couple of small grants to local charities of \$250 and \$500. Then after we implemented other fundraising concepts, contributions skyrocketed. Right now we’re raising over \$60,000 a year, giving checks to various charities of \$1,000 to \$5,000 each. Our fervent hope is that those numbers are sustainable year to year and on into the future.”

Included among the many beneficiaries of ORCA's fundraising are an array of Brunswick County charities and non-profits including: Boys & Girls Home at Lake Waccamaw, Brunswick Family Assistance, Brunswick Christian Recovery Center Brunswick Community College, Brunswick Senior Resources, Cape Fear Red Cross (for Brunswick County), Computers4kids, Grissettown-Longwood Fire and Rescue, Habitat for Humanity, Homeless Coalition, Hope Harbor Home, Literacy Council, Lower Cape Fear Hospice, Matthew's Ministry, New Hope Clinic, Power Walking Ministries, Pretty in Pink, Providence Home, StreetReach, Veteran's Welcome Home and Service Center, Waves4 K.I.D.S, Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministry and BEMC's Warm Hearts, Warm Homes initiative.

According to Heather Holbrook, BEMC Marketing and Communications supervisor "Every year like clockwork, ORCA is there for our Warm Hearts, Warm Homes campaign to provide utility assistance to needy families. And we match ORCA's fundraising dollar for dollar" she added.

Laurie Taylor who is vice president of development for Lower Cape Fear Hospice recalled that during the capitol campaign to build SECU Hospice House in Brunswick County ORCA "was one of the first neighborhood based charities to step up and make a \$10,000, multi-year commitment to the construction project and then paid it off in just one year" She added that "ORCA continues to be a mainstay supporter of Hospice."

Shelia Roberts, Executive Director of the New Hope Clinic noted that "Without community support, the clinic couldn't survive" "So we are exceedingly grateful to ORCA and all of the donors in Ocean Ridge. I hope that we see more neighborhood charities like ORCA coming to life." she added.

Jim Fish, Executive Director and CEO of Brunswick Senior Services Inc. recalled an emergency appeal sent out four years ago to the community asking for financial assistance to purchase cold storage trailers for their Meals-On-Wheels program. "I had a check from ORCA twenty four hours later" he noted. "That's who they are and what they do and now we are partnering with them on our largest annual fundraiser—Casino Night for Charity"

ORCA's latest undertaking was participation in the national Make A Difference Day on October 28. The community donated all varieties of golf products—shirts, sweaters, wind shirts, towels, hats, golf clubs and bags along with 26,000 golf balls. The balls were all cleaned, sorted, graded and packaged for sale. Over 150 residents donated to the effort and over 100 volunteers showed up to organize the goods. Overall some \$20,000 worth of resale merchandise was divided and donated to each of the six thrift stores supporting local, ORCA-backed charities.

So what does the future hold for ORCA? According to Gildea "Hopefully, long term sustainability of what we're doing now along with potential fundraising partnerships with other organizations to broaden the base of philanthropic impact."

The Ocean Ridge Charities Association, Inc. (ORCA) is a tax exempt, non-profit corporation situated within the Ocean Ridge Plantation planned community in southeast Brunswick County. ORCA was organized in 2010 for the purpose of identifying and supporting those Brunswick County charities and non-profits that assist disadvantaged citizens. To find out more about ORCA and its activities go to www.orcharities.org or contact the organization at orcharities@gmail.com

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