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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Way of Horry County Names 2026 Annual Meeting Award Winners

September 16th, 2026– United Way of Horry County honored five community champions at its 2026 Annual Meeting, held Tuesday, Sept. 15 at Ocean Reef Resort in Myrtle Beach. The awards celebrate the partners, volunteers, and everyday leaders whose work helps Horry County families access healthy communities, youth opportunity, financial security and community resiliency.

2026 Annual Meeting Award Winners

Power of Partnership: Grand Strand Health

Grand Strand Health has partnered with United Way of Horry County since 1978. Its employees serve on the UWHC Board of Directors, volunteer every year at Day of Caring, and its medical staff serve as the on-site medical partner that keeps volunteers safe. This year, the organization's Healthier Tomorrow Fund awarded United Way a \$25,000 grant to help build the Healthy Communities Institute Platform, a shared data system for the whole community.

United Way Champion: Jentry Ward, Santee Cooper

For two years, Jentry Ward led Santee Cooper's employee giving campaign through United Way's Campaign Cabinet. She made sure the message reached every safety meeting, encouraged coworkers to give one conversation at a time, and served as a Day of Caring team lead.

Mission Ready Champion Educator: Maquitta Davis, Conway Elementary School

For more than 30 years, Maquitta Davis has said yes every time United Way came knocking, opening her school's doors to United to Read, Caring for Kindergartners, Legacy United and the Community Baby Shower. When United Way needed a pilot site for Ready, Set, Kindergarten, a new effort to prepare children for kindergarten before day one, Conway Elementary went first.

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Community Impact: Horry County Government

Horry County Government helps lead the Horry County Community Collaborative, helped shape United Way's refreshed Community Game Plan, and leads the SMART Re-Entry Program connecting people returning from incarceration to stable footing. It has also been a steady supporter of the THRIVE program and the 211 helpline.

Hidden Hero: John Rowe III, South Atlantic Bank

John Rowe III has served United Way of Horry County for more than a decade, from the Allocations Committee and Campaign Cabinet to the Board of Directors in 2015. As Campaign Chair, he led the 2016 to 2017 campaign to \$1,428,062, the fourth largest in UWHC's 53-year history. He later served two years as Board Chair, helping lead the shift to a collective impact model, and today still serves on the Finance Committee and leads a Day of Caring team.

"Every year, our Annual Meeting is a chance to celebrate the partners, volunteers and everyday heroes who make it possible for Horry County families to thrive," said Blakely Roof, President and CEO of United Way of Horry County. "This year's honorees showed up for our community in ways big and small, and their commitment moves us closer to a Horry County where everyone has the chance to succeed."



Pictured from left to right: Dr. George Helmrich (Grand Strand Health), Michelle Smith and Elizabeth Tranter (Horry County Government), Maquitta Davis (Horry County Schools), Jentry Ward (Santee Cooper) and John Rowe III (South Atlantic Bank).



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About United Way of Horry County: United Way of Horry County's mission is to unite people, ideas, and resources to advance the common good in Horry County. Together, we can create an equitable community where opportunity is not limited, and every member reaches their full potential. Learn more at unitedwayhorry.org.