



the
como

annual report

**Mission: To inspire a welcoming,
collaborative, and engaged
community through intellectual
growth, active play, and creative
expression.**

A Note from the CEO

I am filled with gratitude for the people who made the COMO a place of connection, generosity, and service throughout 2025.

Each story featured in this year's annual report reflects a common thread: people coming together to strengthen our community. Thank you for being part of that work. Whether you volunteered, donated, participated in a program, or simply championed our mission, your support makes all of this possible.

Together, we are fulfilling the COMO's mission to inspire a welcoming, collaborative, and engaged community through intellectual growth, active play, and creative expression. I look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Haugen".

Matthew Haugen, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer



2025 COMO Board of Directors

The Board of the Stonington Community Center are dedicated to delivering on our mission to inspire a welcoming, collaborative, and engaged community. Through their commitment and energy, they help foster intellectual growth, active play, and creative expression, ensuring that the COMO remains a vital resource for all.

President: David Dyer
Vice President: Carole Nossek

Treasurer: Jill Corr
Co-Secretaries: Beth Chapin, Brian Griffiths

Dave Appleman
Matt Berger
Jessica Bradley

Nicole Jones
Valerie Kelsey
Doug Lyons

Breck Perkins
Carol Scheman
Norton Wheeler

A Fun Day of Friendraising: COMO Village Fair

The COMO Village Fair, in its 73rd year, was a great success, bringing together neighbors, families, tourists, and local partners for a day of celebration and community connection. The event featured over 60 talented artisans and crafters, children's games and prizes, live music through a partnership with the United Theatre, floral sales supported by the Stonington Garden Club, sweet bread, pottery, and the popular Flavors of the Fair pie tent, which was stocked with donations from local bakeries and restaurants. Thanks to the generosity of the Stonington Free Library, participants, volunteers, sponsors, and community partners, the fair raised more than \$18,000 to support COMO programs and services. Beyond its financial impact, the Village Fair continues to shine as a day to bring the community together and create special summer memories for all who attend.



Giving Tuesday Generosity Brings Stories to Life



Thanks to the generosity of donors who supported our Giving Tuesday campaign, COMO preschoolers enjoyed a special literacy-focused experience during National Literacy Month. Donor gifts helped bring a local puppeteer to the COMO to perform *The Little Red Hen*. Through characters, storytelling, and audience participation, children learned about friendship, kindness, and cooperation.

Puppets are incorporated into the Doris Muller Preschool curriculum throughout the year. They can help make learning feel safe, build language skills, and enhance social-emotional learning. Thank you for helping create meaningful opportunities that inspire curiosity, creativity, and literacy in our youngest community members.

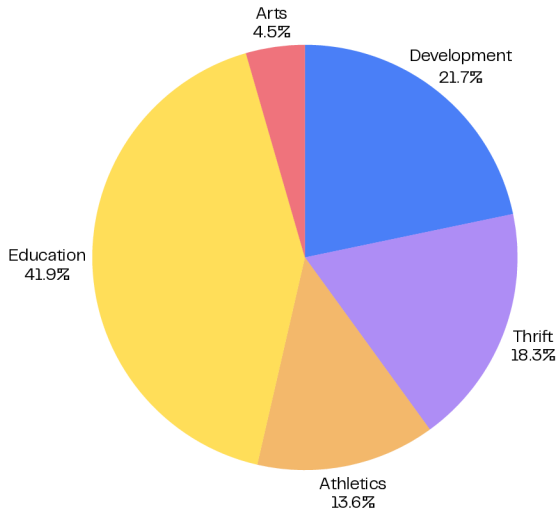
Community Shines at Annual Gala

The largest fundraiser of the year, Stars Over Stonington, our annual gala, took place at the beautiful Stone Acres Farm and sold out in record time. Community partners and honorees Lisa Konicki and the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce shared the importance of businesses and organizations building one another up and investing in our shared neighborhood. The event brought in a net increase of 4% over prior years – raising over \$50,000 through the generosity of sponsors, members, and event attendees.

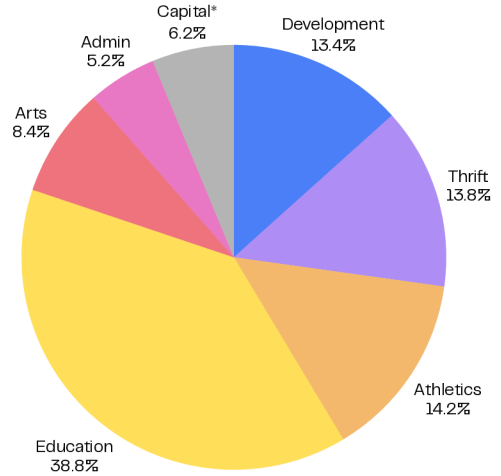


by the numbers

2025 Income - \$2,451,793

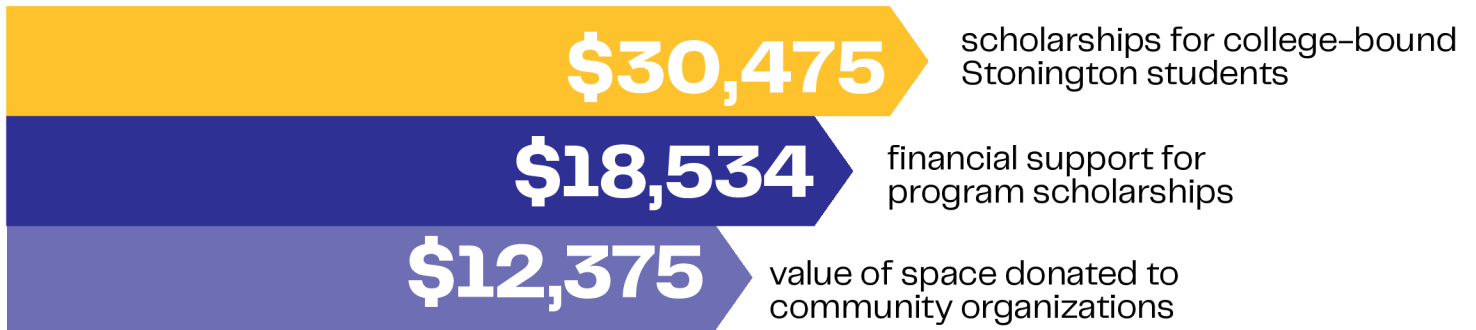


2025 Expenses - \$2,427,409




*Capital expenses included the relocation and expansion of the COMO Pottery Studio

Community Support



Community Engagement & Economic Impact


506
 Hours of volunteer athletic coaching, equivalent to **\$17,603** in labor costs


3-84
 Age range of community members served through programs


38
 Full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff


17,963
 Hours of safe, supervised after school care for working families through bus partnership with Stonington Schools

Building Strong Foundations Through Learning and Partnership

In 2025, our Early Childhood Education programs continued to grow as a place where children, families, and educators learn together. Our NAEYC–accredited preschool deepened its focus on developmentally responsive learning through curriculum enhancements, family engagement events, and meaningful community partnerships. Highlights included a Preschool Curriculum and Parent Night that brought families into the classroom experience, and an end-of-year Learning Assembly where children proudly shared what they had learned through music, storytelling, and play.

We are proud to have strengthened our collaboration with outside organizations and consultants to support our staff and children in our care through partnerships with a nurse consultant, education consultant, Stonington Garden Club, Yellow Farmhouse, United Theatre, and the launch of a parent representative group.



A Deeper Look at the CT Center–Based Educator Registered Apprenticeship Program

A major milestone this year was the launch of our ECE Apprenticeship Program, creating a pathway for educators to grow professionally while strengthening classroom quality. Apprentices participated in monthly meetings, intensive training hours, and hands–on mentoring, supported by professional development opportunities such as ECEPTS Bootcamp, CPR/First Aid, medication administration training, and statewide conferences. The COMO was one of only 12 programs in the state awarded this funding, which aims to expand and enrich Connecticut’s early education workforce. This initiative, funded by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood and in collaboration with the DOL, will empower aspiring educators by offering paid hands–on experience and professional development at the COMO while working toward the national Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

Education Program Highlights



Launch of new programs:

- Writing Camp
- Youth Cooking Classes with Yellow Farmhouse
- Dungeons & Dragons



United Theater partnership for preschool music classes



3 new parent representatives for COMO parent group



Grant with the CT DOL

cheers to 80 years

In 2025, the COMO hit a remarkable milestone – 80 years of serving and strengthening our community. To celebrate, donors, staff, and friends gathered for a special 'Cheers to 80 Years' anniversary event celebrating the people and partnerships that have made eight decades of impact possible.

The celebration featured live music, a nod to the infamous COMO dances of the past, refreshments, and opportunities to reconnect with longtime supporters and community members. Attendees could see the COMO through the ages through a historic photo wall that showcased the COMO's past and present and how its programs and services have changed, pivoted, and supported shifting community needs over the years. For 80 years, donor support has helped create a welcoming place where people can learn, play, and create. This celebration was a testament to what a community can achieve when people come together in support of a shared vision.

Thank you for helping make the past 80 years possible and for investing in the future of the COMO. We look forward to continuing this important work together for generations to come.



COMO Milestones Through the Years

- ◆ **1945** – First Meeting of the Stonington Community Center
- ◆ **1946** – COMO Opens its Doors at Ambulance Corps Hall, Hosts the First Friday Night Dance, and The COMO Thrift Shop Opens on Water Street
- ◆ **1952** – COMO Hosts First Stonington Village Fair
- ◆ **1957** – Land for Tennis Courts is Donated to the COMO
- ◆ **1969** – Building Moves to 28 Cutler Street to House the Doris Muller Preschool, Gymnasium, Auditorium, and Classrooms
- ◆ **1974** – COMO Thrift Shop and Annex Building Acquired
- ◆ **2013** – Paddle Tennis Reintroduced at the COMO
- ◆ **2018** – Main Building Renovation, Tennis Court Renovation, COMO Receives NAEYC–Accreditation for Doris Muller Preschool
- ◆ **2025** – COMO Celebrates 80 Years!



awards

Whitman Award – Sophie Hryn



Sophie is a camp COMO alumni and has been involved with the COMO's Junior Leadership Program, volunteering in a variety of COMO spaces, including the Thrift Store and summer camps. She has a passion for the performing arts and environmental advocacy, singing in select choirs, participating in theater as an actress and hair and makeup director, and founding and leading her school's Environmental Club. Through these experiences, she has developed a deep appreciation for community, service, and leadership, especially within the Stonington community. This fall, Sophie will attend Northeastern University to study biochemistry, with the goal of pursuing a career where she can make a meaningful impact on people's lives, whether through medicine, research, or another healthcare-related field.

Volunteer of the Year – Andrew Field



Local business owner and COMO supporter, Andrew Field, was our 2025 Volunteer of the Year for his contributions to the COMO and community. As owner of Noah's Restaurant and the Boro Bodega & Scoopery, Andrew's entrepreneurship and heart bring something amazing to the local area. A COMO parent, his kids "have been raised by the COMO" and he shows his consistent support through volunteer coaching basketball, sponsoring youth athletics programming, providing refrigeration for the COMO Village Fair "Flavors of the Fair" pie tent, donations, and more. He uplifts local businesses and nonprofits with initiatives like "Give Back Saturdays" at the Scoopery, as well as, his volunteer work constructing the Ocean Chamber's Lobster Trap Tree each year. We had a delightful evening honoring Andrew at the America250-themed gala event, Stars and Stripes Over Stonington.

"I get to see how many local families and people get to benefit from these things [COMO fundraisers] and all your [donors] hard work pays dividends in the long run and I have to thank you immensely for it."



AI3 basketball camp combining on and off the court skills

In its second year at the COMO, AI3 basketball camp served a total of 74 kids ages 7-14, a significant increase from its debut in 2024. The AI3 Leadership Academy basketball camp is a unique partnership focused on basketball training, leadership development, and mentorship. The five-day camp creates meaningful opportunities for young athletes to build skills both on and off the court.



The program, designed by former NBA player Anthony Ireland, emphasizes intentional skill development, teamwork, discipline, and character-building. Participants at the COMO engaged in basketball instruction while learning valuable leadership and communication skills to positively impact themselves and their community. By combining athletics with mentorship, the camp creates an environment where young people feel supported, challenged, and empowered to succeed. In 2025, AI3 welcomed three special guests including Heather Buck, former Stonington and UConn Women's Basketball player, former NBA player, Jordan Williams, and Garvin McAlister, former Division 2 basketball player and Head Coach at Millbrook School. Guest visits provide inspiration and real-world guidance throughout the week, helping campers envision pathways for their own futures.

The AI3 Leadership Academy camp strengthens youth development and creates lasting value for families throughout the region.

“One young participant arrived at our basketball class convinced they ‘weren’t good’ because they had never made a shot before. With encouragement, proper instruction, and a supportive environment, they hit the rim—then made their first basket. The class erupted in applause. Two classes later, that same child made the most shots in the group. Sometimes all it takes is confidence, support, and proper instruction.”

Athletics Program Highlights



AI3 Basketball Skills Academy grew participation 76% over 2024



Travel basketball three state championships and two runner-up finishes



Athletic Director TJ Faeth is nominated 50 Under 50



Offered 60 individual program sessions

An Upgraded Space for Creative Expression

For over 65 years, community members have come to the COMO to play with clay. What started as a small studio has grown into a much larger community of kids, teens, and adults coming together to share their creative ideas and make together.

In 2025, the COMO Pottery Studio was relocated to the annex building, adding an additional 800 square feet of space, and accommodating more pottery wheels, larger class sizes, dedicated workspaces for artists, and improved accessibility for participants of all ages. The new studio space represents an investment in creative expression as a tool for connection and well-being.



The expanded space also allows the COMO to deepen our reach into the community. With additional programming capacity, the studio can host more workshops, community partnerships, demonstrations, and ensure that financial barriers do not stand in the way of participation.

This move was made possible in part through the generosity of supporters, volunteers, and participants who believed in the vision of a more inclusive and creative space. We are grateful to be able to provide more people the opportunity to create together.



Thrift Donations Support New Sewing Program

Thanks to generous donations of sewing machines, fabric, and creative tools, the thrift shop began hosting beginner sewing classes and workshops in 2025. Using upcycled clothing and fabric scraps, community members came together to learn basic sewing skills, pattern-making, and ornament creation. COMO Thrift hosted 2 workshops and a 4-part pattern series in 2025.

Pottery + Arts Program Highlights



Over 40 independent potters



Added new seasonal one-day workshops



180 workshop attendees



Offered 30 classes to both youth and adults