



COURTESY OF ALLISON SCADUTO



DANIELLA HEMINGHAUS THE COAST STAR

Attendees enjoy the first annual Waves of Change fundraiser hosted by The Ocean is Female Foundation, held at the Reef & Barrel in Manasquan on June 24.

The Ocean is Female founder Allison Scaduto speaks with young members of the group that emphasizes values like courage, kindness and friendship, during an event at Manasquan beach in 2020.

The Ocean Is Female: Perspective, strength and kindness

Local nonprofit empowers young girls

BY LAUREN DOHERTY
THE COAST STAR

BRIELLE — For many Jersey Shore residents, the ocean is a place to just have fun. But the sea is something more powerful — a place to learn how to ride life's tough waves — for Allison Scaduto, founder of a nonprofit group that empowers girls and women.

"Over time, I began to realize the ocean was healing me — and came to appreciate the power of the ocean to help strengthen and heal," Ms. Scaduto said.

The Brielle resident said she is a survivor of child abuse, something she lived in silence with for over 30 years. She says she always felt "a little bit different," and struggled with dealing with her difficult past.

But, with her proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, she began to grow a fondness for surfing.

"My time in the surf instilled a sense of peace in me that I had never experienced — got me out of my head and away from the noise on land," Ms. Scaduto said. "I found perspective and strength in the ocean — and it forced me to face many of my fears, both tangible and intangible."

So, Ms. Scaduto founded the nonprofit organization, The Ocean Is Female [OisF]. As both a mother of two young girls and survivor, Ms. Scaduto uncovered the importance of sharing her knowledge and comfort in the ocean to others.

"I wanted to harness the simple truth that I had discovered about the therapeutic powers of the sea in a way that would empower women and girls, and help them to discover the strength and greatness

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ALLISON SCADUTO, Founder of The Ocean Is Female.

they have within," Ms. Scaduto said.

The OisF has enlisted more than 200 young girls as OisF Riders, who aid in events and come together to share their love for the sea and community. The Riders are typically elementary- and middle-school aged girls, but include some high schoolers and women as well.

In the past year, the group has conducted beach cleanups, sewn masks for domestic violence victims and taken classes on mindfulness and goal setting. The Riders embrace Girl Scout-like initiatives that emphasize values like courage, kindness and friendship.

"We want to create a community that inspires goodness

and strength in each other — a community where differences are embraced, and challenges are faced together," Ms. Scaduto said.

Additionally, The OisF Foundation, a nonprofit charitable organization, has been created to support the group through fundraising and the sale of merchandise. The foundation is volunteer-based and no funds are used to cover salaries or other such expenses.

At the foundation's most recent event, the first annual Waves of Change fundraiser held at the Reef & Barrel in Manasquan on June 24, more than \$15,000 was raised.

"It is through The OisF Foundation that we run

events for the OisF Riders, support local organizations with boots-on-the-ground initiatives to help survivors and their families, and where — later this year — we hope to run our first surf therapy event for survivors," Ms. Scaduto said.

Each event that the foundation hosts is aimed at a certain purpose and encourages participants to make nominal donations.

Each year, The OisF sponsors the Ms. Race at the Atlantic Highlands Yacht Club, a fully female sailing race. The event is aimed at benefiting 180 Turning Lives Around, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending domestic and sexual violence.

The OisF also sells gear, "not only to help raise awareness of The OisF brand and our mission to empower women and girls, but in an effort to raise funds for The OisF Foundation," Ms. Scaduto said.

"As the organization grows, we have begun to organically raise more capital," Ms. Scaduto said. "This will allow us to expand the Rider program and provide more opportunities for the girls, as well as to fund larger endeavors in furtherance of our core mission of introducing survivors to the therapeutic energy of the ocean."

The OisF is both an organization and a community for girls, Ms. Scaduto said, and she strives to inspire young girls "to live with courage, and above all kindness; to always support each other along the way; to give back to the community as often and as meaningful as possible. Being a girl today is not easy — we need to raise strong girls."

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