



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Florida Blue Foundation invests \$525,000 in community health innovation through 2026 Sapphire Awards

Nine honorees recognized for advancing impact in maternal health, mental well-being, crisis response, and community-based support.

Key highlights from this year's event and awards include:

- \$525,000 awarded to this year's honorees
- Nine programs, organizations, and individuals recognized
- 600+ attendees
- 60 speakers, experts, and innovators
- Two days of learning, collaboration, and connection
- 166 Sapphire Awards presented since 2005
- \$8.5M+ invested in community health impact

ORLANDO, Fla. – [April 17, 2026] - The [Florida Blue Foundation](#), the philanthropic affiliate of [Florida Blue](#), announced the 2026 Sapphire Award recipients, recognizing nine programs, organizations, and individuals improving health and well-being across Florida.

This year's honorees collectively received \$525,000 to advance innovative approaches in maternal health, mental well-being, crisis response, and community-based support. The awards were presented during the Foundation's annual Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards on April 16 in Orlando.

"Each of this year's honorees is pushing community health forward in powerful ways," said Florida Blue Foundation Executive Director Susan Towler. "Their innovation, compassion, and commitment to improving the lives of Floridians inspires us, and we are honored to support their work."

2026 Sapphire Award Honorees

Programs:

- The [TEACUP Preemie & NICU Support Program](#), led by [The Children's Healing Institute](#) (West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County) provides free, bilingual emotional support, maternal mental health screening, lactation education, and resource navigation for families with infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The program strengthens maternal well-being, supports healthy infant development, and helps parents build confidence during a challenging time. It has received a first-place award and \$100,000. Watch their [video](#).
- The S.A.F.E. program, led by [Women's Center of Jacksonville](#) (Jacksonville, Duval County) delivers trauma-informed medical care, forensic exams, and advocacy for survivors of sexual assault. By uniting medical, legal, and social supports, S.A.F.E helps survivors begin the path toward healing while strengthening community safety. The program was honored with a second-place award and \$50,000. Watch their [video](#).
- The Obstetrics Program, led by [Banyan Community Health](#) (Doral, Miami-Dade County), provides integrated primary and behavioral health care for high-need mothers. The program, provided through the Federally Qualified Health Center, is known for increasing maternal health access and achieving exceptional outcomes. It received a third-place award and \$25,000. Watch their [video](#).

Organizations:

- The [Homeless Empowerment Program](#) (Clearwater, Pinellas County) serves more than 3,000 individuals annually with integrated health care, behavioral health, workforce readiness, and housing. Since its inception, the program has achieved a 44% reduction in ER visits, improved physical or mental health for 68% of participants, and a stable housing rate of 92%. The organization received a first-place award and \$100,000. Watch their [video](#).
- The [South Florida Wellness Network](#) (Fort Lauderdale, Broward County) is a peer-driven recovery model supporting individuals facing mental health and substance use challenges across Broward and Miami-Dade counties. Innovative programs help bridge the gap between mental and physical health, while also strengthening recovery pathways. The organization received a second-place award and \$50,000. Watch their [video](#).
- The [Center for Progress and Excellence](#) (Fort Myers, Lee County) provides 24/7 crisis intervention and mental health services to children and families. Through its innovative, trauma-informed approach, the organization embeds mental health professionals within schools, hospitals, and law enforcement networks, resolving 90% of crises on site. The organization received a third-place award and \$25,000. Watch their [video](#).

Individuals:

- Dr. Joseph H. Davis of [Anchor House](#) Services (Auburndale, Polk County) is a lifetime advocate for youth in foster care. Under his leadership, Anchor House has grown more than 600%, expanding housing, education, and therapeutic services. He received a first-place award and \$100,000, which will be directed toward his work at Anchor House Services. Watch his [video](#).
- Robert Ranieri of [House of Hope](#) (Stuart, Martin County) is a tireless advocate for those in need. Throughout his career, he has built transformative cross-sector partnerships and innovative programs, strengthening food security, health access, and economic stability. Ranieri has expanded House of Hope's reach to 30,000 people monthly. Ranieri was honored with a second-place award and \$50,000, which will be directed to the House of Hope. Watch his [video](#).
- Faye Johnson, CEO of [Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition](#) (Jacksonville, Duval County) is a servant leader who has devoted 35 years to championing maternal and child health. Throughout her career, she has advanced programs and policies addressing the root causes of infant mortality and health access. Johnson was honored with a third-place award and \$25,000, directed towards Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition. Watch her [video](#).

Florida Blue established the Florida Blue Foundation more than 25 years ago and introduced the Sapphire Awards in 2005 to recognize excellence and innovation in community health, leadership, and programs across Florida. Since then, the Foundation has presented 166 Sapphire Awards, totaling more than \$8.5 million in community support and impact.

This year's symposium, themed "The Power of Connection," featured 60 experts and innovators exploring maternal mental health, community-academic research, nonprofit technology, and strategies for building meaningful connections. More than 600 attendees participated from across the health care, government, higher education, and nonprofit sectors.

To learn more about the Florida Blue Foundation's impact on communities across the state, read GuideWell's latest [impact report](#).

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About Florida Blue Foundation

[Florida Blue Foundation](#) enables healthy communities by making grants, building coalitions, and embracing solutions that create a meaningful impact in communities across the state. An average of 10 million Floridians receive services each year as a result of its community investments. Founded in 2001, Florida Blue Foundation is committed to improving health by impacting food security, advancing mental well-being, growing healthy communities, and addressing health disparities. Florida Blue Foundation is a trade name of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Foundation, Inc., an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more information, please visit www.FloridaBlueFoundation.com.

About Florida Blue

Driven by its mission of helping people and communities achieve better health, Florida Blue is the leading health insurer in Florida, and part of GuideWell, a not-for-profit health solutions company. Florida Blue offers a range of health plans and personalized care programs for individuals, families, businesses of all sizes, and Medicare beneficiaries. For over 80 years, the organization has been member centric and committed to making health care as accessible and affordable as possible. Serving more than six million members across all 67 Florida counties, Florida Blue has more than 7,000 employees and is headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., is owned by its policyholders, and is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

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