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CFRF awarded for work in communities

By KENDRA GRAVELLE Dec 28, 2018



The Rhode Island Foundation honors the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRC) with its 2018 Best Practice Award. (L-R) Kim Keck of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island, which sponsors the awards; Fred Mattera and Anna Mercer of CFRC, Neil D. Steinberg and Jill Pfitzenmayer of the Rhode Island Foundation and David Spencer of CFRF at the award presentation.

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — For its work building a community of collaboration among fishermen, scientists, resource managers and food professionals, the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) has received the Rhode Island Foundation's 2018 best practice award.

"It's very exciting for CFRF to receive this award," Anna Mercer, CFRF's executive director, said Thursday. "We are incredibly proud of the work that we've accomplished over the past 15 years or so, and we're very excited to be recognized as really contributing to the wellbeing of the state and of our communities."

Founded in 2004 by a group of fishermen, the Kingston-based non-profit organization today is the only fishing industry-led research foundation in New England, and strives to develop solutions to problems affecting area fisheries.

"We really seek to address the challenges that face our fishing and seafood industries here in Rhode Island and in southern New England," Mercer explained.

Of its many priorities, CFRF works with fishermen to ensure sustainability within their fisheries, collects oceanographic data to help fishermen understand how they may need to adapt their businesses in the face of changing oceans, and develops tools to teach consumers about seafood, to "elevate the profile of the fishing community," Mercer said.

CFRF also just wrapped up a study in collaboration with the University of Rhode Island to assess the Rhode Island fishing community's economic impact.

"We're really just working to support our fishing and seafood sector in any way that we can," Mercer said.

For CFRF, collaboration is "at the heart" of the work, she added.

"We really, as an organization, believe that you can't effectively manage our oceans or our fisheries without involving those who harvest, those who do the science to understand how these systems work, those who make the decisions about how these systems are managed, and those who actually use the product - the chefs and food system professionals," Mercer said.

"In order to actually have a fully sustainable and vibrant fishing and seafood system," she continued, "we really need to work together across the board and across sectors."

CFRF was one of five Rhode Island organizations to be recognized with a best practice award from the Rhode Island Foundation, with each recipient receiving a \$5,000 grant. Other award recipients included the Economic Progress Institute, Family Service of Rhode Island, the Providence Public Library and New Urban Arts.

In a press release, Jill Pfitzenmayer, vice president of the Rhode Island Foundation's Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence, pointed out that the recipients were selected from "a highly competitive process and an extraordinary group of nominees."

"There is something in each of their noteworthy accomplishments that can help non-profits become even more productive," she continued.

And while she's thankful for the Rhode Island Foundation, Mercer added she's especially grateful to the partners who have worked with CFRF over the years.

"Those are hundreds of fishermen, those are dozens of scientists here in Rhode Island and elsewhere, those are fisheries managers and food professionals," Mercer said. "We can't do what we do without the many partners that we've worked with."

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