

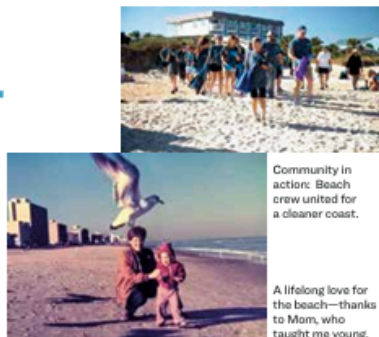


CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE: NONPROFITS IN ACTION

# Healing the Shoreline: One Woman's Mission to Honor Her Mother and Mother Earth

*A beachside mission with heart—discover how one woman's passion for the planet sparked a growing movement to protect, connect, and inspire through community cleanups and coastal care.*

WITH MEGHAN A. HOLDER, FOUNDER OF OUR MOTHER'S STEWARDS



Community in action: Beach crew united for a cleaner coast.

A lifelong love for the beach—thanks to Mom, who taught me young.

**The Spark Behind the Stewardship: A Conversation with Meghan A. Holder, the Founder of Our Mother's Stewards**  
Each spring, a wave of purpose washes over St. Johns County's shores—and it's more than just the tide. It's a movement powered by love, loss, and a fierce devotion to the environment. Our Mother's Stewards is a nonprofit turning grief into impact, founded by someone who knows both intimately. What began as a personal tribute has evolved into a community-driven environmental mission that's cleaning beaches, educating locals, and building a legacy of stewardship for generations to come. We sat down with the founder to explore the heart, hope, and healing behind Our Mother's Stewards.

**What inspired you to create Our Mother's Stewards? Was there a moment that set this mission in motion?**  
After suddenly losing my mother the day after Mother's Day in 2011, I went through a difficult period. Over time, I began leaning into self-care—especially through travel, something my mom and I both loved. By 2018, I was ready to turn that pain into purpose. My mom lived a life rooted in volunteerism, and with my background in marine and environmental science, beach cleanups around Mother's Day became a meaningful way to honor her and give back.

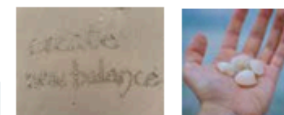
**The name Our Mother's Stewards is powerful. What's the story behind it?**  
The name is a tribute on multiple levels. "Mother" refers to both Mother Earth and my mom. Her maiden name was Stewart—Scottish for "steward"—which ties into the idea that we are all caretakers of our environment. It felt deeply symbolic and perfectly aligned with our mission.  
**Starting a nonprofit is no small feat. What was the first step?**  
We began with community beach cleanups in 2018, thanks to support from St. Johns County Parks and Recreation. As participation grew, we formalized as an LLC called Clean Sweep in 2021. In 2023, we rebranded as Our Mother's Stewards and achieved nonprofit status.



A lifelong love for the beach—thanks to Mom, who taught me young.



In memory of Mom, Dawn Stewart Holder—her spirit guides our mission.



**Why are beach cleanups such a central part of your mission?**  
Our beaches are vital to local wildlife, tourism, and our community identity. Cleanups don't just improve aesthetics—they protect marine life and ecosystems. It's a direct, tangible way to make a difference.

**Can you share a cleanup memory that made a lasting impression?**  
Every cleanup yields at least 100 pounds of waste—things like tires, fishing lines, and forgotten beach toys. Even one person picking up trash can prevent harm to animals or injuries to beachgoers. I pick up litter every time I walk the beach because every bit truly counts.

**How does removing trash tie into broader conservation efforts?**  
Debris can easily get swept into the ocean or blown into dunes, causing damage to wildlife and habitats. Our cleanups also allow us to spot and report injured sea turtles or nests, helping local organizations intervene when needed.

**Why is community involvement so crucial to your work?**  
Community engagement is everything. When families, kids, and neighbors join together, it creates a culture of caring. Our events mix education with fun—live music, local vendors—so people see that giving back can be joyful too.

**What's your favorite part about watching new volunteers get involved?**  
The sense of pride people feel is contagious. Some volunteers travel hours just to participate. Seeing that kind of commitment is incredibly moving.

**How do you keep people inspired?**  
We stay connected through email updates and social media, and we share our progress and impact. Motivation grows when people feel part of something bigger.

**What other initiatives are you working on beyond cleanups?**  
We're launching a beach toy recycling program—collecting gently used toys to resell at a local shop, reducing waste and supporting a local fishing business. We also hope to expand into native plant sales through a partnership with Epic Compost.

**Who do you collaborate with?**  
We love working with other nonprofits, eco-conscious businesses, and local government. These partnerships amplify our reach and impact.

**What's your vision for the future of Our Mother's Stewards?**  
We're planning to expand to other Florida cities and beyond. We're even in talks about hosting a cleanup in Hawaii.

We're also looking to adopt local roads for cleanup and broaden our native plant initiatives.

**How can people support your mission—no matter where they are?**  
Sign up at ourmothersstewards.org to volunteer, sponsor, or donate. Even if you can't attend, you can make a difference: pick up litter, plant native species, support local businesses, and stay curious.



Meghan A. Holder, Founder



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