

Miki Ohlsen

Founder, Newport, Rhode Island Chapter

Armstead Barnhill Foundation for Sickle Cell Anemia

The Newport, Rhode Island Chapter of the Armstead Barnhill Foundation for Sickle Cell Anemia (ABF) was founded in 2023 by Miki Ohlsen.

Miki first became aware of the Armstead Barnhill Foundation and its mission when her son married the daughter of the Foundation's founders. Never one to sit idly by when there is work to be done, Miki embraced ABF's mission and used her creativity, leadership, and community connections to introduce Newport and the greater Rhode Island community to the realities of sickle cell disease.

Through her leadership, Miki has worked to increase awareness of sickle cell disease, its many serious complications, the need for greater public education and research funding, and the importance of addressing the unmet needs of sickle cell warriors and their families. Each year, she hosts an educational and fundraising event in Newport that brings the community together in support of those living with sickle cell disease.

Miki is the founding Artistic Director of Island Moving Company, now Newport Contemporary Ballet. She led the company from its inception in 1982 through August 2022, building a distinguished career centered on dance, creativity, collaboration, and community engagement.

Miki also co-founded Momentum Learning Lab, a movement-based team-building and leadership workshop designed to help individuals and organizations gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their team dynamics. These workshops have been presented to corporations, nonprofit organizations, and sports teams throughout New England.

A lifelong advocate for making art a part of everyday life, Miki brings her artistic vision to her work with ABF. Each year, the Newport event includes an "Artistic Moment"—a special presentation using art and movement to express the pain, courage, strength, and resilience that sickle cell warriors experience every day.

Through her leadership of the Newport Chapter, Miki has brought together her passion for the arts and her commitment to service to help give greater visibility and support to the sickle cell community.