



Octopuses were long thought to be solitary creatures.

Then scientists found them building cities together. Nonprofits are often the same way: resilient, scrappy, self-sufficient. But this year, we're naming something different.

GATHER

Off the coast of Australia, researchers discovered [Octlantis](#), communities of octopuses living together, building dens from discarded shells, forming social hierarchies, communicating, and even evicting members who weren't pulling their weight. In California, nearly 6,000 pearl octopuses gathered around thermal vents, protecting one another's eggs in what scientists now call an "octopus garden."

Why would animals known for going it alone choose proximity, conflict, and shared resources?

Because the conditions demanded it.

Food was available. Safety was not. Shelter was scarce. Predators were everywhere. So they adapted by becoming smarter together. One octopus's discarded shell became another's shelter. Over time, those shells stabilized the environment itself. Without cooperation, the habitat wouldn't hold.



Sound familiar?

Nonprofits often operate alone, too. We compete for the same grants, the same donors, the same talent. We protect our turf. And gathering takes time, energy, trust, and space.

But the conditions right now demand it. Funding is shifting. Leadership is turning over. The policy landscape is uncertain. Pressures on the nonprofit sector are real and growing. Going it alone is risk, not resilience.

So what if we strengthened the foundation together?

Not performative collaboration, but real partnership and resource sharing, building on one another's work and showing up for the greater good, even when it's inconvenient.

That's why GATHER is our word for 2026.

- Gather your people.
- Gather your resources.
- Gather at the table.

where we've been gathering lately



Mini Prevention Conference at Wintergreen

We gathered adaptive sports and prevention leaders for a nontraditional "speed dating" model, answering questions like how can we work together and what we can offer, all over cocoa by the fire.



Strategic Planning with ANCOR Foundation

We facilitated a strategic planning session with the [ANCOR Foundation](#), helping them move from priorities to action as they support leadership development across the disability field.



Webinar: Virginia Recreation & Parks Society

We partnered with [VRPS](#) to deliver training on abuse prevention in therapeutic recreation, reaching adaptive sports and recreation professionals who work directly with youth with disabilities.

coming soon: the current



We're building something new for Virginia's nonprofit leaders, a peer learning network where nonprofit leaders can connect around what actually matters.

Our launch was scheduled for January 28, but snow and ice pushed us to **February 11** because even gathering requires flexibility!

If you lead a Virginia nonprofit and want to be part of this, we'd love to have you at the table.

we saved you a seat

what's in the net?

Small comforts we're gathering this month, beyond meetings and to-do lists:

Laura: *Bookish* (PBS) - cozy mysteries set in a post-World War II antique bookshop, from the folks who brought us *Sherlock*.

Shelley: Creating survival strategies (and maybe a little grace) for never-ending snow days with littles at home.

Carter: Staying warm, slowing down, and getting to know a newly adopted rescue dog, Chickpea.

Quillin: Gathering curiosity and community with the start of the spring semester at Richmond Homeschool Collective.

That's a wrap for January. We'll see you at the table!