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Florida Shows How Philanthropic Map Is Changing Amid a Great Wealth Transfer

Michael Kavate | July 8, 2026



DOWNTOWN MIAMI. CREDIT: SEAN PAVONE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Americans have headed to Florida to retire for generations, but a case can be made that relatively few, whether newcomers or locals, have left a lasting philanthropic legacy in the Sunshine State, particularly in foundation form.

Florida has the nation's third-largest population and fourth-largest economy, but ranks about seventh by the volume of grantmaking



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dollars going to nonprofits in the state, according to [Candid](#). Its richest private philanthropy, the \$2.5 billion Knight Foundation, ranks 77th in the country by endowment size, according to Grantmakers.io, and until recently, most of Florida's other top foundations had only a fraction of Knight's wealth. Heck, Knight is not even the nation's biggest grantmaker by that name any more, with less than half the assets of Nike founder [Phil Knight's Oregon philanthropy](#).

In the last few years, however, Florida has started producing substantial homegrown foundations as prolifically as the state's better-known crops of oranges, flowers and Republican presidential candidates. As is happening [across the country](#), the Great Wealth Transfer is reshaping the Sunshine State's philanthropic landscape, even if none of the new foundation arrivals can yet match the Knight Foundation for size.

"Florida is experiencing one of the largest transfers of wealth in its history, driven by migration, business growth, trust and estate settlements, and intergenerational giving," said Sabeen Perwaiz, president and CEO of the Florida Nonprofit Alliance, in a statement. "The emergence of so many new, major foundations reflects both the concentration of wealth in the state and a growing commitment to generosity."

Nearly half of Florida's top 10 largest private foundations either did not exist or were too small to qualify for that list just five years ago, and nearly a third did not qualify as recently as 2021, based on my comparison of 2024 rankings from FoundationIQ against historical [Candid data](#). Expand to the top 20, and the trend holds true. Nine of the state's top foundations did not make the list in 2019, and half of those are new since 2021. With [several billionaire donors](#), including Ken Griffin and Tom Golisano, moving to or ramping up their giving in the state in recent years, more Florida mega philanthropies could be on the way.

Florida is not the only state whose philanthropic elites have been reshuffled by the Great Wealth Transfer. I previously covered how this was [playing out in Virginia](#), where a series of new operations have emerged as major funders after years of the big players

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shifting very little. Florida's neighbors, too, are also seeing new philanthropies rise in the ranks, if not at quite as dramatic a clip. In both Alabama and Georgia, about a third of each state's top 10 foundations are new names versus five years ago, and only one or two in each have arrived since 2021.

"That's something we're seeing that's applicable across a range of states," said Stephen Sherman, senior director of engagement and learning at Philanthropy Southeast. Many in the boomer generation are passing away, while others are reaching the state of life where they donate more heavily, and those factors add up. "It's the greatest transfer of wealth in our nation's history."

Florida's flush philanthropic new arrivals have not yet swept the state's largest foundations from their perches at the top. Along with Knight, the supermarket chain philanthropy [Publix Super Markets Charities](#), which is structured as a private foundation, and hedge fund billionaire John Paulson's [Paulson Family Foundation](#) have been the state's largest foundations for the past decade-plus.

But below the peak, change is afoot. Half the top 10 in 2024 — specifically, the state's fourth-, fifth-, sixth-, seventh- and ninth-richest foundations — reached the list in the last decade. Some are not entirely new faces, like the Frederick A. Deluca Foundation, which joined the state's top 10 in 2018. But about a third of Florida's biggest foundations rose to the top in just the last few years.

Paul J. DiMare Foundation: Produce fuels billion-dollar operation

Possibly the largest of the Florida newcomers, fittingly, was founded by a produce titan known as Mr. Tomato. Born to a father who got his start selling vegetables from a pushcart on the streets of Boston, Paul DiMare came to Florida in the 1960s to build the family's farming business and never left.

DiMare died in 2023, but the Paul J. DiMare Foundation is now the fourth-largest in the state, at least by market value. The foundation reported that its holdings of "Goldman equities" grew 10-fold in 2025 to reach more than \$1 billion in value, according to its latest IRS filing. The DiMare Foundation has not yet counted those gains

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in calculating its required payout and thus is not yet funding on that scale, with \$12.6 million in grants last year. But grantmaking should roughly quadruple if the increases hold.

Medical research has benefitted most so far, with the foundation writing a couple big checks and a lot of small ones last year. The biggest was nearly \$8.9 million to the University of Massachusetts Medical ALS Research Fund, but the rest of the foundation's dollars landed in Florida. The other mega award went to the Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis (\$3.6 million), while the next-largest grants were five-figure awards to the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens (\$50,600) and the Coral Gables, Florida, outpost of the American Red Cross (\$50,000).

Betty Wold Johnson Foundation: Johnson & Johnson heir leaves mega funder

The next-largest Florida newcomer, the [Betty Wold Johnson Foundation](#), was only formed in 2020, but the West Palm Beach, Florida-based grantmaker was the state's fifth-largest foundation in 2024. Its \$856 million endowment is the result of a series of transfers from the estate of its namesake founder, who was a Johnson & Johnson heir, as I [covered](#) in greater depth last year.

John and Daria Barry Foundation: Financial fortune grows Miami operation

Another up-and-comer in the Sunshine State is the John and Daria Barry Foundation. John Barry is the head of a pair of financial firms, Prospect Capital Corporation and Prospect Capital Management. The Miami-based operation's endowment reached \$741 million in 2024 — a nearly three-fold increase over 2020 — and grantmaking topped \$25 million. The foundation names three focus areas: veterans, education and the environment. Health also seems like a priority.

(Platforms including Candid, Grantmakers.io and ProPublica call this operation The Invisible Hand Foundation, yet a site search of the foundation's website — which is under the URL barryfamilyfoundation.org — did not turn up that phrase, nor does it seem to appear in the operation's recent 990s.)

Top recent grantees include the D.C.-based crime-reduction group Woodson Center (\$4.9 million in 2023), New York City education nonprofit Inner-City Scholarship Fund (\$4.7 million), and the Princeton, New Jersey-based college group Foundation for Excellence in Higher Education (\$4.3 million in 2022). It has also given \$1 million-plus to the Prostate Cancer Foundation and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation: Business empire goes to philanthropy

One more relative newcomer is the [Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation](#). Charles Barancik made his wealth by acquiring and running companies, including manufacturing and industrial concerns. The foundation's assets quadrupled in 2020 after the couple died in a car accident. Today, it is the state's ninth-largest philanthropy, with a \$701 million endowment. Nearly all its grants, including its largest awards, have gone to local nonprofits in recent years, mostly in Sarasota and Venice. Top grantees include the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Community News Collaborative, The Florida Center for Early Childhood and The Bay Park Conservancy.

New arrivals: Carl Angus DeSantis and Barbara Newington foundations

Expand the survey to Florida's top 20 largest foundations and there are two newly large foundations: The Carl Angus DeSantis Foundation (no relation to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis) and the Barbara Newington Foundation. In 2024, DeSantis grew by nearly \$300 million to reach \$386 million in assets, and Newington received a \$150 million contribution that capped several years of growth, bringing its assets to \$374 million. Each will likely have scaled their grantmaking over the past couple of years.

Few, if any, of these foundations have a national profile. But the new faces among Florida's philanthropic elite are a reminder that funding landscapes across the country are changing as the Great Wealth Transfer proceeds. Even if only a small share of the estimated trillions in wealth that is now changing hands lands with

philanthropy, it will be enough to produce new players in many states and sectors. In fact, it already has.

Michael Kavate covers climate philanthropy and billionaire donors. He welcomes all feedback, and tips.

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