

## Message from Interim Executive Director Mary Ann LeRay

We are in the right place at the right time. As we transition out of the pandemic, our conviction deepens to carry out the mission to which we have been called. On March 22, 2021, I rotated off the Board of Directors and accepted the role of Interim Executive Director. What a privilege to be able to serve the residents of Jones County!

We have an amazing team of volunteers, donors, and partners who have made it possible to serve 800-1000 households each month. This is a 55% increase from March 2020. Although the stretching has been intense at times, everyone continues to grow into new molds of servant leaders. It has been an absolute joy to strategize and continue to dream about the next 30 years.

We are refining the Food Pantry Operations and continuing to renovate the campus to accommodate the mission to fill unmet needs relating to Nutrition, Education and Connection. The second phase of our renovation will provide a computer lab, classroom, teaching kitchen and meeting space which is possible through a grant from The Bate Foundation. Lenoir Community College will be bringing new classes for the fall to our facility.

We are collaborating with Jones County Cooperative Extension. It has been wonderful working with Sara Ware, Food Coordinator, to teach our clients how to prepare healthy meals.

The garden space located behind The Filling Station continues to unfold. Lisa Rayburn, Jones County Horticulture agent is helping us create a sustainable, educational venue. The garden project has been made possible through the generous donation of LifePlus Foundation.

Thanks to a new partnership with Atlantic Dance Theatre, we are able to bring an art and

dance day camp which will be held in July in this beautiful new space.

Thanks to a partnership with Eastern Carolina Broadband and Neuse Regional Libraries, we are pleased to offer free drive-in WiFi from our parking lot and front grounds. Speaking of connection, The New Bern Amateur Radio Club Repeater is located in our building. They support public events, provide emergency communication and offer education on HAM radio. Learn more: <https://nbarc.org>

As with any new organization, there are many details in creating a strong foundation. The consultant volunteer hours in the areas of writing policy and procedures, strategic planning and overall operating procedures has been the key to where we find ourselves today. I often get messages asking, "What's on the wish list?" and "How can I help?" Very soon we will post this information on our website—so stay tuned! We are so very grateful for the community's generosity.

There are a couple of "BIG SAVE THE DATES" so please mark your calendars.

- Friday, August 27th 11:30-1:00 - 4th Anniversary held at The Filling Station
- Sunday, October 10th 1:00-6:00 PM - "Perfect 10" Fundraiser located on 10 Mile Fork Road

Thank you for your time, talent and treasure. You make a difference!

*Mary Ann LeRay*

## Board Member Spotlight: Maria Robles, Chairperson

Maria Robles was born at Charleston Naval Base SC and spent her time traveling the world as military child. Following in her father footsteps she joined the military where she served with distinction for 21 years before retiring and calling Jones County home. She currently holds an Associate's Degree from the Community College of the Air Force and a B.A in Healthcare Administration, a B.S. and M.S. in Organizational Leadership. Maria is passionate about working/mentoring people to become the best versions of themselves. She was a substitute teacher for the Jones County school district before she moved to Lenoir Community College -Jones County



Center as a Occupational Program Coordinator and finally became the Associate Dean of the Jones County Center. She takes great pride in helping students enroll in classes that will lead to direct employment and will benefit themselves and their families. With Maria background in Organizational Leadership she bring strategic planning experience to The Filling Station which will help them expand their service to provide more outreach programs and sustain a long term commitment to the organization and to the community. In her free time Maria loves spending time with her family and her animals. She also loves knitting, scrapbooking, reading, gardening and baking.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Sheron Bender

Volunteer extraordinary Sheron Bender is a retired Craven County school counselor. While working at an elementary school one of her favorite projects was helping families with gifts and food for the holidays—a project that continued for about 20 years—serving as many as 100 families. For about 13 years Sheron has led the youth group at the Pollocksville Presbyterian Church and accompanied them on a number of mission trips—a labor of love for her. Helping others is in Sheron's DNA. For the past 12 years she has served as a Weight Watchers International coach. Sheron has also served on the Neuse River Bridge Run Board.



Backpack Blessings is another program she is involved with, having served for about 10 years on that Board. The program serves Jones, Craven, and Pamlico counties, packing food for students with food insecurities. Aligned with that mission is her involvement with the Filling Station—primarily the food pantry. Sheron is responsible for organizing and stocking donations as they come in from individuals and community groups—no small task! To sum it up, Sheron's passion is putting food into the hands of those in need. The Filling Station is indeed fortunate to have her as a volunteer!

## Wonderful Email of Affirmation from Client

While the smiles and words of thanks we receive from our clients on distribution days are gratifying, it is always nice to receive written confirmation that the work we do is appreciated and meaningful. Below is an email from Millie Belfort. She gave us permission to print it.

*Subject: Gratitude*

*I've been coming to The Filling Station since shortly after I lost my job last year. This Pandemic was here for the long haul and things were looking really bleak for an older adult like me. To be honest, it took me a while to get the courage to come. It wasn't until things got really rough for me, that I decided to accept help.*

*The volunteers have been amazing, friendly and compassionate. This is a no judgement zone. I've made some friends and enjoy seeing the warm smiles as I drive up to have my vehicle loaded with healthy, generous portions of food. I usually pick up for myself and a neighbor (that is a shut-in) and she enjoys her boxes of goodies as much as I do.*

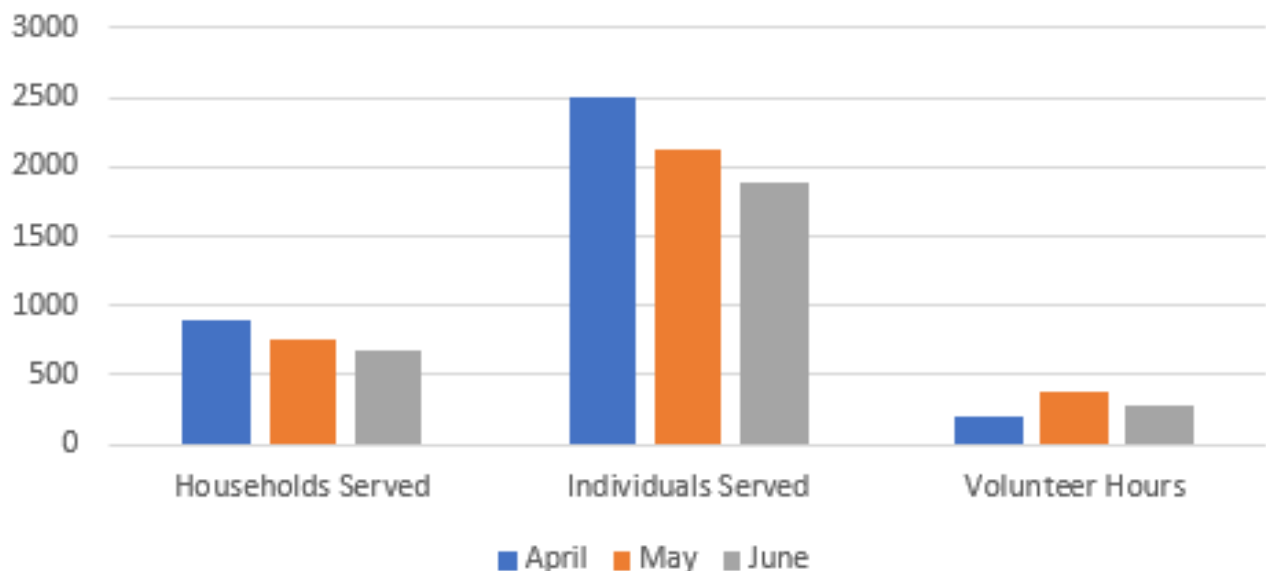
*I am now working again, but my time of being unemployed at the height of the pandemic has netted me quite some debt and I'm still trying to catch up with my bills. So I continue to come to The Filling Station for healthy, nutritious edibles.*

*Thank you for your service and the loving manner in which you do it!*

*Millie Belfort*

## WE DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### Filling Station Statistics April to June 2021





## Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina: Letter of Support

Recently we applied for COVID-19 relief grant from the state. Below is a letter of support from the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina.

North Carolina Community Foundation  
Re: Healing Communities Grant  
3737 Glenwood Ave  
Suite 460  
Raleigh, NC 27612

To Whom It May Concern:

The Filling Station has been a tremendous partner in combating hunger insecurity throughout Jones County, particularly over the last year during the COVID-19 pandemic. They serve an incredibly needy area, with 1 in 4 people, or 25% of the residents of Jones county being food insecure. Their volunteers and staff go above and beyond to make sure that these residents get the support and services they need to make ends meet.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March of 2020, The Filling Station has distributed more than 608,730 pounds of food, which equates to more than 500,000 meals into the community. Among these meals is more than 65,000 pounds through a federal food program that serves seniors in need every month. They have maintained these numbers while struggling through food shortages, major staff changes, and health concerns, always managing to serve those in need around them. They are responsive, responsible, and deeply enmeshed in their community. I truly believe that with more support, they will be able to continue expanding their outreach and impact, serving even more of their neighbors.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any further questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 919-863-9520 or [cmallasch@foodbankcenc.org](mailto:cmallasch@foodbankcenc.org).

Sincerely,



Christi Mallasch





Education · Nutrition · Connection

*Providing for the unmet spiritual,  
nutritional and development needs  
of Jones County residents.*

PO Box 222

221 Main Street  
Pollocksville, NC 28573

252.224.1127

[info@fillingstation1075.com](mailto:info@fillingstation1075.com)  
<https://fillingstation1075.com/>  
[Facebook.com/FS1075](https://Facebook.com/FS1075)

### Board Members

Chair: Maria Robles

Vice-Chair: Charlie Dunn, Jr.

Treas: Dr. Norma Sermon-Boyd

Secretary: Sheri Smith

John Bender

Bobby Darden

Willie Jones

Zack Koonce

Sylvia Miller

Clyde Murphy, Jr.

Karen Plaster

Cheryl Simons

Willie Smith

John Taylor

Carol Mattocks, Board Advisor

Tharesa Lee, Consultant

Mary Ann LeRay, Interim Ex. Dir.

Judy Hills, Editor

## Epiphany School Seniors Get A Workout!

In the month of May, 12 Seniors from the Epiphany School of Global Studies served at the Filling Station. Javier Alcon, Charlotte Antry, Caroline Bender, Huiling Chen, Lucas Coveli-Schneider, Colin Donahue, Kali Eason, Nicholas Eickhoff, Paden Kitchen, Curtis Kreutz, Leland Morris, and Hayden Ritchie put in over 200 volunteer hours through the Love In Action Community service program

These seniors helped us clean and organize our facility. And work, they did! If you had seen the place before, you would not believe the progress we made with their help! They washed, scrubbed, moved, trimmed, stacked, and organized. We are so very grateful for their assistance. The Filling Station has never look so good!

