



Nutrition · Education · Connection

General Newsletter

“Food for Thought”

July 2025

Message from the Executive Director

Our theme for 2025: Celebrate, Laugh, Rest

*Celebrate Service
Laughter is good Medicine
Rest in Him*

These words are used as a fresh filter for the mission. It is important to always celebrate the opportunity to serve, remind ourselves that laughter is the best medicine and to rest in our heavenly Father to lead us in this great work.

Neuse River Bridge Run

The Bridge Run happened May 2-3, 2025 “Bridging Communities makes us stronger”. This event helps to keep The Filling Station “running” as we raise awareness and funds. Over 1600 runners from 25 states participated in this event. We are excited that Jones County Recreation supports this event training with the students to get involved for their health and give back to local nonprofits. Thank you David Mallard, Director of Jones County Recreation. A BIG THANK YOU to Cypress Creek Renewables for being the Title Sponsor for the 2025 Neuse River Bridge Run! Another BIG THANK YOU to Bob and Carol Mattocks for being the Trent River Sponsor! Thank you to Sheron Bender, board member, who is the volunteer coordinator for over 250 volunteers to run the event. Save the Date: Back to School Bash on August 9, 2025, Jones County Civic Center - 250 backpacks filled with snacks and other school supplies will be distributed at this 5th annual event.

The Food Pantry

The Food Pantry continues to assist in filling needs here in Jones County thanks to the leadership of Jimmy Bender, Food Pantry Director. Each week we are serving residents from Pollocksville, Trenton, Maysville, Comfort, Long Point and a few from surrounding counties. Partners such as Jones County DSS, Jones County Schools and church partners make referrals to bridge gaps for clients. Our May & June data report shows 5-6 % of all households visit each time the food pantry is open and 32% of households visit once a month. These are individuals/households registered with The Filling Station. Thank you to Geraldine Eubanks, Volunteer Coordinator, for making sure teams from our church partners are in place to serve each week. Thank you Julia Murphy for your consistent and professional oversight of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) for low income clients over 60 years of age. Due to significant improvements to The Filling Station campus and facility, volunteers of all ages are able to access the building and safely volunteer.

The NEW Warehouse

We are awaiting a Certification of Occupancy after the completion of the bathrooms in July. We are looking forward to hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony soon and sharing this milestone with Jones County. We are grateful to Goldenleaf Foundation, Harold Bate Foundation, Duke Energy, Jones County Economic Development and Christ Church in New Bern for their generous support in making this project a reality. Thank you to the Epiphany School of Global Studies/Love in Action program for volunteer

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Column Continued

hours in accomplishing key projects supporting this project. A HUGE thank you to Ed Jekel, Facilities Manager, for leading this major project to enhance capacity for the Food Pantry and our commitment to being a disaster relief partner to the State of NC and Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC.

New Bern Amateur Radio Club

Our in-house partner hosted a Ham Radio education for 7 weeks & 8 people now hold their general license. We are partnering with Jones County Emergency Management to provide this important education. Check out this video to learn more about WHY Ham Radio is important:

[Hurricane Helene and Ham Radio](#)

The NEW Recording Studio

The studio delivers more episodes in May and June. Please visit our [website](#) to listen to recent episodes.

Summer Camp!

We hosted the 5th Annual Dance, Art and Music Camp at the end of June. Thank you to Atlantic Dance Theatre, Community Artists Group, NC Symphony, N.C. Cooperation Extension/Sarah Ware, church partners and amazing volunteers for making this possible. We appreciate funding from LifePlus Foundation. A special thank you to Kate Ladner from Holly Springs, NC for sharing the importance of key leadership characteristics. Thank you to Marcy Hoffman, Administrative Coordinator, for handling the registration and connecting with the parents. This camp grows every year with 2025 being our largest to date with 18 campers.

Donation

We were the recipients of a 2001 GMC YUKON to be used by The Filling Station staff. This vehicle has been well taken care of and will be perfect for local errands. Thank you to this anonymous donor!

SAVE the DATE - A Perfect 10

Annual Event to raise awareness and funds for the mission - Sat, November 8, 2025 on The Filling Station campus. Want to be a sponsor? Check out the details on our website: fillingstation1075.com

**Nutrition, Education and Connection
for the residents of Jones County . . .
all made possible as we stand on our
Core Values:**

Christ Focused

Equip

Empower

Encourage

Educate

(2022-2025 Strategic Plan)

*So looking forward to connecting
in the coming weeks to share
more stories on how your support
makes a difference.*

Mary Ann LeRay



Mary Ann LeRay

Executive Director

The Filling Station, Inc.

"Nutrition, Education and Connection"

fillingstation1075.com

252-224-1127

To book a tour or speaking engagement, please email: fsdirector@fillingstation1075.com



Nutrition · Education · Connection

Neuse River Bridge Run



Neuse River Bridge Run



Shoutout to [Jeremy LeRay](#) with [New Bern Web Design, LLC](#) for being the official photographer of the event.



Huge shoutout to ***Sheron Bender***, rockstar board member for The Filling Station AND Neuse River Bridge Run Volunteer Coordinator for over 200 volunteers to support the bridge run.

Thank you ***David Mallard Jones County Recreation*** for creating running teams promoting health and wellness as well as bridging communities in Jones County. Wow, your leadership set a record in 2025!



Facilities

Warehouse Update

The New Warehouse is nearing completion. It will be fully operational soon!

Thank you for making this possible:

- ♦ ***Goldenleaf Foundation***
- ♦ ***Bate Foundation***
- ♦ ***Duke Energy***
- ♦ ***Our church partners***

We are ALMOST there. Thank you for so many volunteer hours, prayers and love as we work together in filling gaps for our neighbors who need it most.



Thank you ***Romero's Electric*** and ***Kinston Refrigeration*** for all your hard work in making this project possible.



Thank you ***AB's Gravel Driveways*** for all the great work with drainage around the warehouse.

Facilities



Thank you to **Jones County Economic Development** and **Duke Energy** for the mini grant for the refrigeration in the new warehouse.



Thank you **Coastal Carolina Church** team for the labor on the new bathrooms in the warehouse.



Celebrating a Clear Title after paying off the truck loan thank you to our church partners who are behind the scenes making this organization run.



Meet **Bob Gragson**...new Executive Director of **United Way of Coastal Carolina.**

Bob was excited to see the new warehouse and chat with Ed Jekel, Facilities Manager, about the progress and possibilities. It was a wonderful morning sharing with him all the programming we are able to do because of our partnership!

He comes to ENC with a rich knowledge of United Way having been part of 5 offices across the country.

Welcome Bob to NC!



Facilities

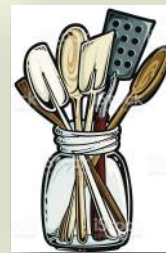
Teaching Kitchen



What classes would you like to take in the Teaching Kitchen?

Complete this survey to let us know:

[N.C. Cooperative Extension - Jones County Center](#)



Great to host **Jones County 4-H** for Chopped Class in the Teaching Kitchen. 12 youth attended this amazing 3 day summer camp with hands on cooking experience learning kitchen safety, cooking skills, and etiquette. On the final-day, they compete in a challenge to see who comes out on top!

Jones & Onslow Family and Consumer Science Program of NC State Extension



Volunteering



Great to welcome back **The Epiphany School of Global Studies** Seniors for their Love in Action project. This is year 5 and on an average, these young people donate over 300 hours each May to help us with spring cleaning and huge projects. Thank you Ed Jekel, Facilities Manager, and Sheron Bender, Food pantry sorting team lead, for overseeing these projects.



Want to be part of our volunteer team?

Our volunteers are our greatest asset. We will provide an orientation and all the training you need to begin volunteering at the Filling Station.

Click [here](#) to go to the volunteer application to get signed up today!

Volunteer Highlight



The Epiphany School of Global Studies

Love in Action Senior Class

In May, The Filling Station welcomed the Love in Action Senior Class for the 5th year in row. Kirk Ronzheimer, Chaplain for The Epiphany School of Global Studies, shares his deep appreciation for the opportunity for the senior class to serve in Jones County. He highlights the leadership of Ed Jekel, Facilities Manager, for organizing, empowering and equipping the youth as they complete many projects over the 3 week period.

Over the past 5 years, 1500 volunteer hours have been donated by the Senior Class bringing \$48,000 in labor value to the organization.

Thank you Epiphany Seniors!



Board Member Highlight



Alicia Gouge

Representing Pollocksville Methodist Church

Alicia is Owner and Operator of StepOut Counseling in Morehead City. She received her BS in Psychology from Tulane University & her Masters in Education from Liberty University. Alicia is married to George Gouge, Army Chaplain and Minister of Pollocksville Methodist Church. They are parents to 8 children. Alicia shares how much she appreciates the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors.

"Thank you to Alicia and her entire family for jumping right in and signing up for the Bridge Run and being part of the Dance, Art and Music Camp", says Mary Ann LeRay, ED.



Recording Studio

We are excited to be able to bring you a **NEW podcast** each week. Each episode, we interview partners, supporters and volunteers who have been part of building The Filling Station.

Please visit our [website](#) to view all the episodes.

Episode #6: Sabrina Bengal



An in-depth look into the life and experiences of Sabrina Bengal as well as the legacy of her mother-in-law, Ella Jones Bengal (born in Trenton), who served as the first woman mayor of New Bern. This conversation highlights her passion for her community and commitment to making a positive impact which has had a ripple effect into Jones County and support of The Filling Station.

Episode #7: Brenda Hall



Brenda Hall traded her executive career in radiation oncology for a mission that feeds both body and spirit. Brenda shares how a personal health journey led her to discover the transformative power of Mediterranean cooking – and how she's now using those lessons to nurture her community through the Filling Station. This episode serves up practical wisdom about healthy eating, the joy of cooking with purpose, and the magic that happens when good food brings people together.

Episode #8: Tharesa Lee



Tharesa Lee, co-founder and leader of the Leadership Jones program, shares her journey of empowering local leaders through this unique curriculum focused on grassroots leadership, local government, and community building.

We explore the origins of the program, its incredible impact on participants, and how it's helping to shape the future of Jones County.

Episode #9: Mary Ann LeRay



Executive Director Mary Ann LeRay brings us exciting news about expanding programs and community impact. Learn how The Filling Station is working to connect people and resources in Jones County, and discover how you can be part of the mission to serve, connect, and strengthen our community.

Episode #10: Souleymane 'Solo' Sana



Malian dance instructor, Souleymane 'Solo' Sana, brings cultural connection and joy to Jones County's youth through The Filling Station's annual dance, art, and music camp. Learn how drumming, dance, and community spirit unite to transform young lives in Eastern North Carolina.

Save the Date: A Perfect 10



Save the Date

TITLE SPONSORS



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2025 | 11AM-2PM

The Filling Station fundraiser,

"Jones County-A Perfect 10"

We are planning a time of fellowship with a lunchtime meal to raise funds and awareness of The Filling Station and our community.

WE ARE "FILLING NEEDS"

We will be asking for support though voluntary donations.

The event will be held at The Filling Station Campus

221 Main Street, Pollocksville, NC

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

*Barbeque Lunch in the Garden Venue, Cloggers and Music, Bake Sale,
Drop in Painting on canvas, Red Farmall Tractor Photo Booth, country games
Educational opportunities: Ham Radio and Forest Service Trailers on site*

*Visit fillingstation.1075 or call Karen
at 252-635-0828 for more information*



A County Wide Mission: Nutrition, Education & Connection

[Click here to download the Sponsor Form](#)

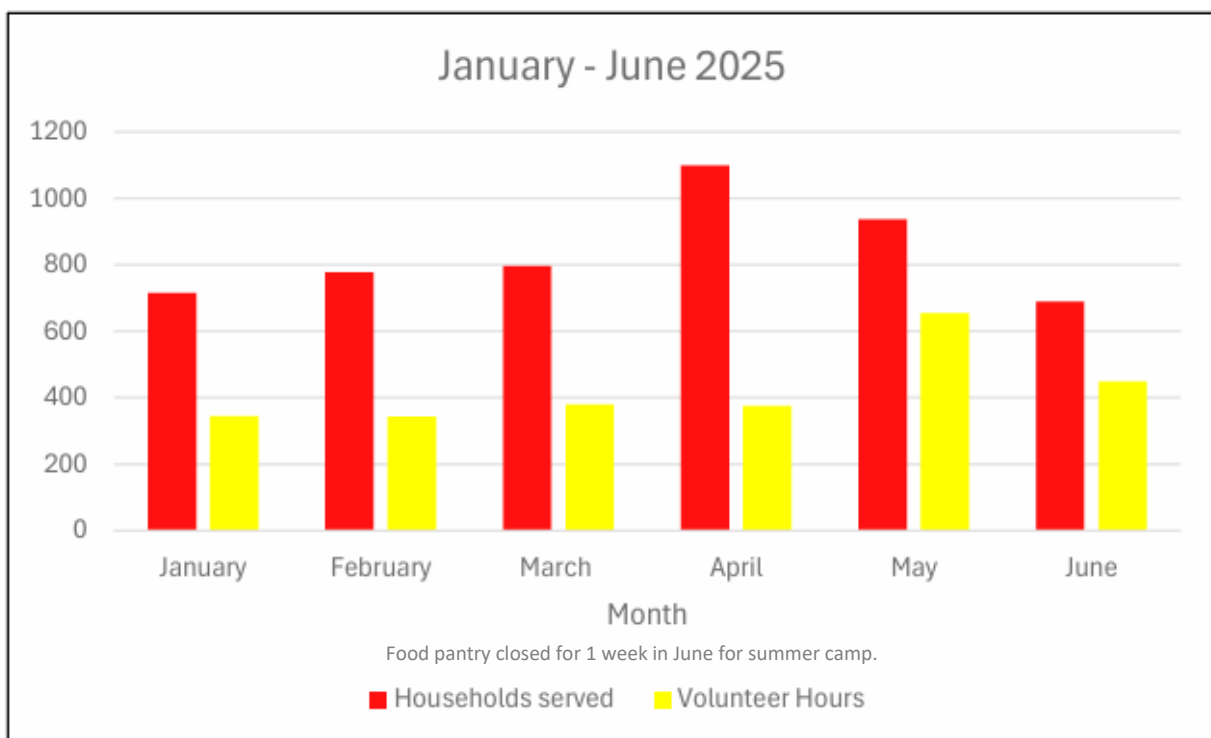
Food Pantry



Thank you to the 4th grade "Leader in Me" group from **Pollocksville Elementary School** for donating \$120 to the Food Pantry. Last year they visited and toured The Filling Station learning how to build an organization. Then attended the Leadership Jones Graduation Jones County Civic Center and were so inspired they raised \$120 to give back to those hungry and thirsty in our community. Thank you Kelly and Nicole for your leadership and partnership to pouring leadership into our future generation.



Pictured here: Nicole Duprey, school counselor, and Jimmy Bender, Food Pantry Director



Dance, Art & Music Camp



*Filling Young Hearts
with the Arts*

**DANCE, ART & MUSIC DAY CAMP
FOR JONES COUNTY RESIDENTS**

Thank you [Atlantic Dance Theatre](#) for your amazing partnership as we bring this camp for the 5th year to [Jones County NC](#)



Camp cont.



State & County News

Governor's Volunteer Service Awards 2025



Governor's Volunteer Service Awards 2025 took place on May 12th at the Capitol in Raleigh, NC.

Mary Ann LeRay, a commissioner on the Commission for Community Service and Volunteerism, was at the event to greet and extend congratulations on behalf of Jones County.

Click [here](#) for more on this.



Happenings

FCS FAMILY CHALLENGES

SUMMER EDITION

Participate in our weekly challenges in our Jones & Onslow FCS Family Facebook Group to earn points!

EVERY MONDAY: JUNE 23RD - AUGUST 4TH, 2025

Thanks to The Filling Station and United Way, the top 3 participants will win a grand prize!

GRAND PRIZES



Visit our website for more info: Please review the official rules and prize details.
www.go.ncsu.edu/FCSFamilyChallenge-Summer





N.C. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IS AN
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER



Nutrition · Education · Connection

Jones County Recreation
5th Annual

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

Saturday, August 9, 2025
10:00 am - 1:30 pm
**While supplies last



**VENDORS . SCHOOL SUPPLIES .
HEALTH SCREENINGS . FUN ACTIVITIES**

**Jones County Civic Center
832 N. HWY 58 Trenton, NC 28585**

Contact: David at Recreation
Phone: 252 - 448- 1660
E-mail: recreation@jonescountync.gov



Jones County Community Closet *Back to School Bash* FREE Shopping Event

Saturday, August 9 | 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
 Jones County Civic Center
 832 Hwy 58 S
 Trenton, NC 28585

We are opening up the closet for a school shopping event, where local families can select the items they need to start the school year with confidence.

Donate Today!

The Community Closet is seeking new or gently used clothing and shoes for school-aged children of all sizes to support this special event.

Donations can be made 24/7 at
418 Hwy 58 N, Trenton, NC 28585
 Behind the Jones County Health Department




*Our mission is to assist with
filling the unmet needs in the
areas of nutrition, education and connection
serving the residents of Jones County.*

- Board Members -

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*The Filling Station is supported through Time, Talent
and Treasure from our church partners.*



If you would like to be part of making difference,
we invite you to scan the QR Code or visit:

fillingstation1075.com/donate



The Filling Station, a dream born out of a long vacant, propane company building, opened its doors on August 28, 2017. Why the Filling Station name? During a walk-through of the building, someone noticed a red hazardous material warning sign with a flame and the number 1075, the DOT classification for propane. The group discovered that Psalm 107:5 read: "They were hungry and thirsty; their lives were slipping away." A new mission was launched and it was called "The Filling Station" to refer to the building's prior use as well as to its new purpose. Our mission is to assist with filling unmet needs in the areas of Nutrition, Education, and Connection serving the residents of Jones County.