



**Nutrition · Education · Connection**

General Newsletter

## ***“Food for Thought”***

November 2025

### **Message from the Executive Director**

***Celebrate, Laugh, Rest has been our theme for 2025.***

***Celebrate Opportunities to Serve***

***Laugh...it's great medicine***

***Rest In Him***

September and October were action-packed at the Filling Station! Since our last newsletter, we kicked off Cohort #6 of **Leadership Jones**, our grassroots Leadership Academy, hosted a **Ham Radio Technician Course** as well as a **Wellness Seminar**. The **Food Pantry** continues to bless over 250 households each week and over the last 2 months, we have experienced an increase with over 40 NEW households requesting assistance. The timing was perfect ... just as this need increased, we celebrated the opening of our new warehouse with a Ribbon Cutting on September 8th.

Two years ago, we hosted the [Blue Cross Blue Shield Extra Mile Tour](#). This was an opportunity to talk with our community partners about the pressing issues here in Jones County. As a result of this meeting, BCBS hired a community liaison to address these needs. We have been able to elevate our check in process at the food pantry and use funding to purchase local fresh produce from our farmers. Thank you **Blue Cross and Blue Shield** for making a difference!

We also welcomed **Dean Garey Fox, NC State University Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences**, to tour the teaching kitchen. Thank you Jacob Morgan, Director of NC Cooperative Extension, for including us for this special visit. In September, on the one year anniversary of Hurricane Helene, I visited Western NC to meet with the **N.C. Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism** to discuss the State Service Plan. Our group had the opportunity to serve with Baptist on Mission in Swannanoa on this trip. There is nothing like taking a trip outside of your normal service area to serve others. When we continue to cultivate compassion for our neighbors, the light outshines the darkness.

Each week we make it a priority to “roll out the RED carpet” for our clients making them feel important as we assist in filling unmet needs. As we head into the holiday season, there will be several opportunities to join our mission. **Giving Tuesday**, December 2nd, is a day set aside for organizations to highlight and celebrate their mission. We will be participating in the **6th Annual Carry it Forward event** at the New Bern Farmer’s Market from 5-7 pm. This is an opportunity to visit 40-50 non-profit organizations who are serving those who need a “hand up”. A special Giving Tuesday link will be posted on our [website](#) highlighting the opportunity to give on Dec 2, 2025.

**Continued on p. 2**

## Column Continued

Please join us for **"Christmas on Main"** in Pollocksville to kick off the holiday season on Sat, Dec. 6th at 5:30 PM - there will be a golfcart parade, food trucks, vendors, and a tree lighting. You will find Santa as well as coffee and cocoa in the front gathering space of The Filling Station and a place for children to write letters to Santa and do photos. We are excited to support **Pollocksville Rotary Club** as they host this event for the community.

Our team continues to "rest in Him" with every opportunity to serve and to overcome challenges. We have the best Board of Directors, staff and volunteers in the world! I can't wait to see you on November 8th at **The Filling Station for our Annual Fundraiser, The Perfect 10**, so we can show you all the wonderful things you have helped to make possible.

Much gratitude,

*Mary Ann LeRay*

May you and your family have a wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas season!



### Mary Ann LeRay

Executive Director  
The Filling Station, Inc.

"Nutrition, Education and Connection"

[fillingstation1075.com](http://fillingstation1075.com)

252-224-1127

To book a tour or speaking engagement, please email: [fsdirector@fillingstation1075.com](mailto:fsdirector@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)*

**We can't wait to see you at  
The Perfect 10  
event on November 8!**



**Nutrition · Education · Connection**

# ***A Perfect 10 Event***



## *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 through 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](http://fillingstation.1075) or call Karen  
at 252-635-0828 for more information*



**A County Wide Mission: Nutrition, Education & Connection**



# ***A Perfect 10 Event***

## ***"Jones County – A Perfect 10" Raffle!***

This year's grand prize is an unforgettable dining experience for you and nine of your guests — a five-course **Prime Rib and Shrimp & Grits** dinner, prepared and served by The Filling Station Board of Directors.

Tickets are just **\$10 each or 5 for \$40**, giving you multiple chances to win this incredible evening of food, fellowship, and community celebration. Proceeds from the raffle directly benefit The Filling Station's programs, helping us continue our mission to fill unmet needs in Nutrition, Education, and Connection for Jones County residents.

***The winning ticket will be drawn on November 8, 2025.***

You do not need to be present to win.

Click **HERE** to get your tickets today and support a great cause!

## ***"Jones County – A Perfect 10"***



• ENTER TO WIN A •  
**PRIME RIB / SHRIMP &  
 GRITS-DINNER FOR 10**  
**\$10 each | 5 for \$40**

A chance to win a special dinner for you and 9 of your friends to be served a 5-course meal by The Filling Station Board of Directors



PROCEEDS ARE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FILLING STATION. PAYMENTS ARE NOT DEDUCTIBLE AS CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS. DRAWING WILL BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 8, 2025 NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN

Visit [www.fillingstation1075.com](http://www.fillingstation1075.com) for more information.



## ***New Warehouse - Ribbon Cutting***



The ***Filling Station*** marked a historic milestone on September 8, 2025, with its first-ever ribbon-cutting ceremony, celebrating the completion of a new food warehouse building that will expand the organization's capacity to serve Jones County residents through enhanced nutrition, education, and connection programs.



The \$310,000 facility represents the culmination of a four-year planning and development process, made possible through funding from the ***Golden Leaf Foundation*** (\$227,720 grant), ***Harold H. Bate Foundation***, ***Jones County Committee of 100***, and ***Filling Station church partners***. The ceremony coincided with The Filling Station's 8th anniversary, which was celebrated on August 28.





## ***New Warehouse cont.***



Thank you to The New Bern Sun Journal for sharing the [press release](#).





## ***New Warehouse cont.***

***"This new facility represents so much more than just metal and concrete. It reflects the heart of our mission here at the Filling Station, which is to assist with filling unmet needs in the areas of Nutrition, Education, and Connection for the residents of Jones County," said Bobby Darden, Board Chair for The Filling Station. "We are dedicated to being more than a food pantry. We're a place where individuals and families can find help, hope, and a sense of belonging."***



Pulaskiville Filling Station celebrates new warehouse for food pantry

Click [here](#) to watch  
WNCT's coverage of  
the event.





## Western NC



*September 2025 marked the 7th anniversary of Hurricane Florence.*

Executive Director, Mary Ann LeRay, traveled to Western NC for a commissioner meeting with the **N.C. Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service**. They discussed the State Service Plan for 2026-2029 which includes lessons learned, connections made, how to prepare for disasters in NC. and promoting awareness for service in our communities.



While in Western NC, Mary Ann and Holly Ladner, alongside **VolunteerNC** staff and fellow Commissioners had the opportunity to volunteer at a house in Swannanoa, NC damaged by Hurricane Helene. The project was led by **Baptists On Mission**. Baptist on Mission have repaired 512 homes to date and have a waiting list of over 1,300!



The group worked on Ms. Allison's home and hopefully she will be back in it soon. Thankfully, she evacuated before the river rushed through her home making its way halfway up her walls. Her 83 year old neighbor unfortunately did not and was immobilized in the mud for over 24 hours before help arrived. Their stories are just 2 of hundreds.



Visit **Activate Good**, one of our friends who has amazing connections for volunteering in Western NC.



Here in Jones County NC, we are blessed to have received so much support in our own hurricane recovery efforts. **Asheville** has amazing restaurants in their rebounding and vibrant downtown. Make plans to visit and give back.



# NC Cooperative Extension



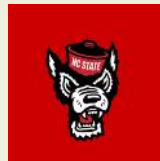
Dean Fox's  
Expedition Extension



NC STATE EXTENSION



*"The county support that we get for Extension is so critical for what we want to be able to do," said Dean Fox. "What happens at the ground level is the engine of our college, it's the engine of our university."*



On Monday, September 22, 2025, **Dean Garey Fox** from **NC State University** visited the Filling Station on his Expedition Extension tour. On this statewide tour, Dean Fox visited all 101 local Extension centers across NC. The tour amplified how Extension transforms science into everyday solutions across our state. Thank you **Jacob Morgan, Director of NC Cooperative Extension**, for including us for this special visit.



Click here to watch a video about the tour.

## N.C. Cooperative Extension - Jones County Center



NC State University and N.C. A&T State University work in tandem, along with federal, state and local governments, to form a strategic partnership called N.C. Cooperative Extension, which staffs local offices in all 100 counties and with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.



## Save the Date

# HOME *for the* HOLIDAYS

A GIVING TUESDAY CELEBRATION

## Tuesday, Dec. 2nd

5-7 PM ♡ New Bern Farmers Market

- JINGLE & MINGLE with over 50 Nonprofits from New Bern and the surrounding area
- HOLIDAY SPIRIT - Hot Cocoa and a Giving Tree
- LIVE MUSIC - Enjoy some of New Bern's favorite musicians!
- FOOD TRUCKS & MORE





## Save the Date

# Christmas ON MAIN STREET

Pollocksville, North Carolina



SPONSORED BY  
POLLOCKSVILLE ROTARY CLUB

GRAND MARSHALL  
SYLVIA M. MILLER

LIGHTING OF CHRISTMAS TREE | PARADE - GOLF CARTS & ANTIQUE CARS  
FOOD VENDORS | HANDMADE CRAFT VENDORS | CAKE WALK  
STOCKING RAFFLE & DRAWING

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2025  
5:30 - 7:30 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: (252) 229-6545 OR (252) 671-7725



# Save the Date



## Getting Through The Holidays

### GRIEF SUPPORT WORKSHOP

at The Filling Station in Pollocksville, NC

*The upcoming holidays can be a difficult time for those who are experiencing loss in their lives.*

*Cardinal Hospice Care is offering a workshop to provide education, information, and support for those who are dealing with grief and loss.*

The workshop is free & open to adults of all ages. Some topics discussed will include:

*Dealing with Difficult Emotions During the Holidays*

*Survival Tips for Handling the Holidays*

*Making Decisions About Holiday Traditions and Rituals*

**Tuesday, December 16, 2025 – 10AM**

Join us at The Filling Station, 221 Main Street, Pollocksville

**Facilitated by Dr. Deneen Glasco, D.R.E., D.Div., D.C.Cl.,**

**Clinical Hospice Chaplain and Bereavement Coordinator**

**TO REGISTER, PLEASE CALL 252-224-1127**



**CARDINAL**  
HOSPICE CARE





## Volunteer Highlight



### *Christine VanDyck*

Thank you Christine Van Dyck for volunteering your services in writing a grant with **NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF) Town of Trenton's project**, 2025-1005 - Trenton - Comprehensive Stormwater Management - Pilot Project at The Filling Station. Grant funds in the amount of \$111,650 will be available for the project.

This partnership to safeguard our state's water supplies, natural heritage, military mission, and cultural and historic resources is critical to protect North Carolina's environment and economic vitality.



## Board Member Highlight



### *Emily Andrews*

Emily has served on the Board of Directors representing Cypress Creek Church since April 2023. She is currently serving on the Executive Committee as Secretary and Program Committee Chair. Cypress Creek Church serves in the food pantry once a month bringing a great team of volunteers. This vibrant church participates in supporting the Dance, Art and Music camp each summer and her family enjoys being part of the Neuse River Bridge Run. "As a lifetime resident of Jones County, I am eager to help wherever I can", says Emily.

Emily retired from Jones County Schools as a teacher and media specialist, served as President for Delta Kappa Gamma 2006-2007, serves as Treasurer for Jones County Historical Society, and served as Sunday School Director for Cypress Creek Church 2016-2023.

"We are blessed to have Emily Andrews on our Board of Directors. The mission continues to be fueled with her servant leadership", says Mary Ann LeRay, Executive Director.

# Heritage Festival



JONES COUNTY  
**HERITAGE FESTIVAL**  
unearthing our past cultivating the future





# Recording Studio

Check out our ***NEW Filling Station podcasts.***

In our in-house Recording Studio, we interview partners, supporters and volunteers who are part of building The Filling Station. Visit the Filling Station [website](#) to view all the episodes.



## **Episode #15: Zack Koonce**

In this episode, host Mary Ann LeRay sits down with Zack Koonce, a founding board member of The Filling Station, lifelong Jones County resident, and owner of the beloved family store, Zaks of Mallardtown. Together, they reflect on the organization's eighth anniversary and the powerful role it has played in strengthening the county through challenges and celebrations alike.



## **Episode #16: Renee Sutton**

In this episode, Mary Ann has an inspiring conversation with Renee Sutton, founding Board Member of the Filling Station, as she shares the remarkable story of how our community came together to bridge service gaps in Jones County. In this heartfelt discussion, Renee reflects on the organization's journey from those first Sunday afternoon meetings in 2017 to becoming a vital community hub—especially during the challenges of Hurricane Florence.



## **Episode #17: Karen Plaster**

In this episode, Mary Ann LeRay welcomes Karen Plaster, a creative force and community leader whose vision helped shape one of Jones County's most cherished traditions — A Perfect 10 Jones County. Karen shares how a simple idea, born in her garden, grew into a community-wide celebration that showcases the beauty, generosity, and resilience of rural North Carolina. From the event's early days along Ten Mile Fork Road to its new home on The Filling Station campus, "A Perfect 10" has become both a fundraiser and a homecoming — a place where neighbors gather, eat, laugh, dance, and give back.

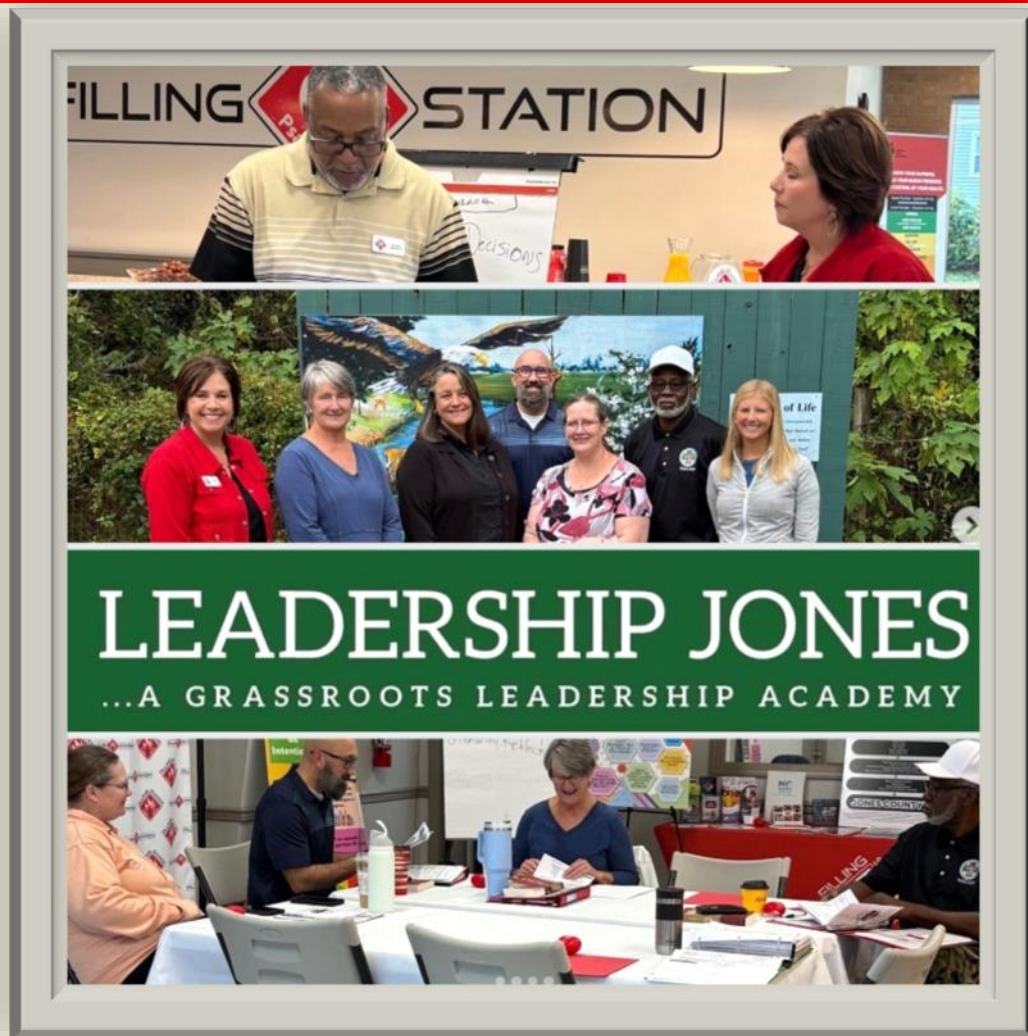


## **Episode #18: Schumata Brown**

In this episode, Mary Ann LeRay welcomes Schumata Brown, Town Manager of Maysville, NC – a lifelong resident and servant-leader who's helping shape the future of his hometown through faith, transparency, and collaboration.

Schumata reflects on how Maysville's 13 churches form the heartbeat of community life, offering strength, hope, and unity even when other resources are limited. He shares his journey from growing up in local congregations to serving as commissioner and town manager, and how faith and discipline continue to guide his leadership today.

# Leadership Jones



***Leadership Jones Cohort 6*** kicked off on September 22!

We have had over 44 graduates so far, 16 of which are Jones County NC employees. They are from all sectors of business and community, and are studying the most pressing challenges and bringing solutions.

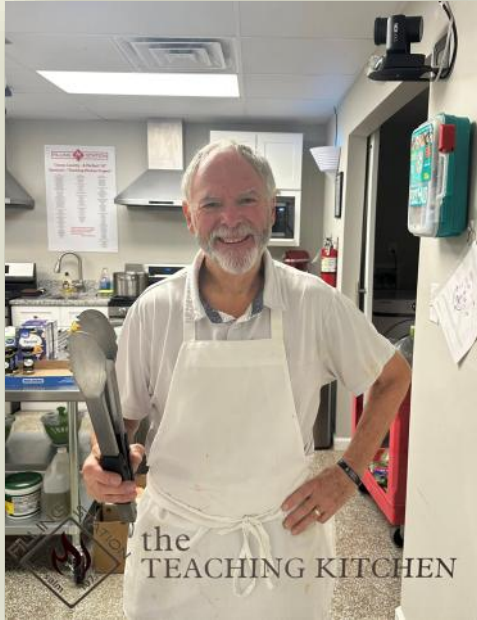
Thank you ***Theresa Lee, Intentional Excellence Consulting***, for directing the program in now year 3.

Want to be a part of ***Leadership Jones***?

Click [here](#) for details.



# Leadership Jones



## *Leadership Jones "A place at the Table" Cohort 6*

This session highlights the importance of connecting at the table, asking great questions, being prepared for opportunities and listening to one another. Huge thank you to **Ed Jekel**, on site chef extraordinaire, for preparing a fabulous lunch for this session.

Thank you **Kyle Smith**, Jones County NC manager, Mayor **Jay Bender** Town of Pollocksville and **Schumata Brown** Town of Maysville for supporting and recommending many to this program.

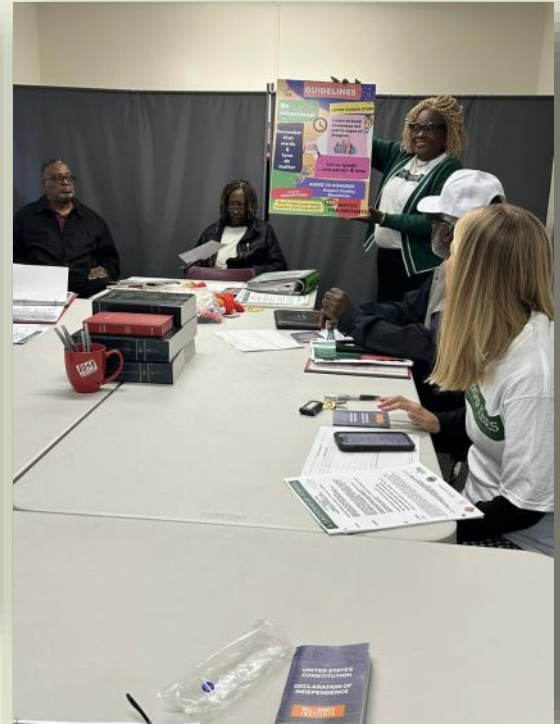
Thank you **Theresa Lee**, Intentional Excellence Consulting, for directing the program in now year 3...over 44 graduates and 6 more in November.



Building even a  
greater  
Jones County!



# Leadership Jones



## *Leadership Jones Cohort 6*

Visit to **Veterans Services** to learn more about the important support they offer to our veterans.

Visit to Board of Elections to learn more how our local elections process works.

Lunch at Aggie's Pizza and Subs to wrap up our day.





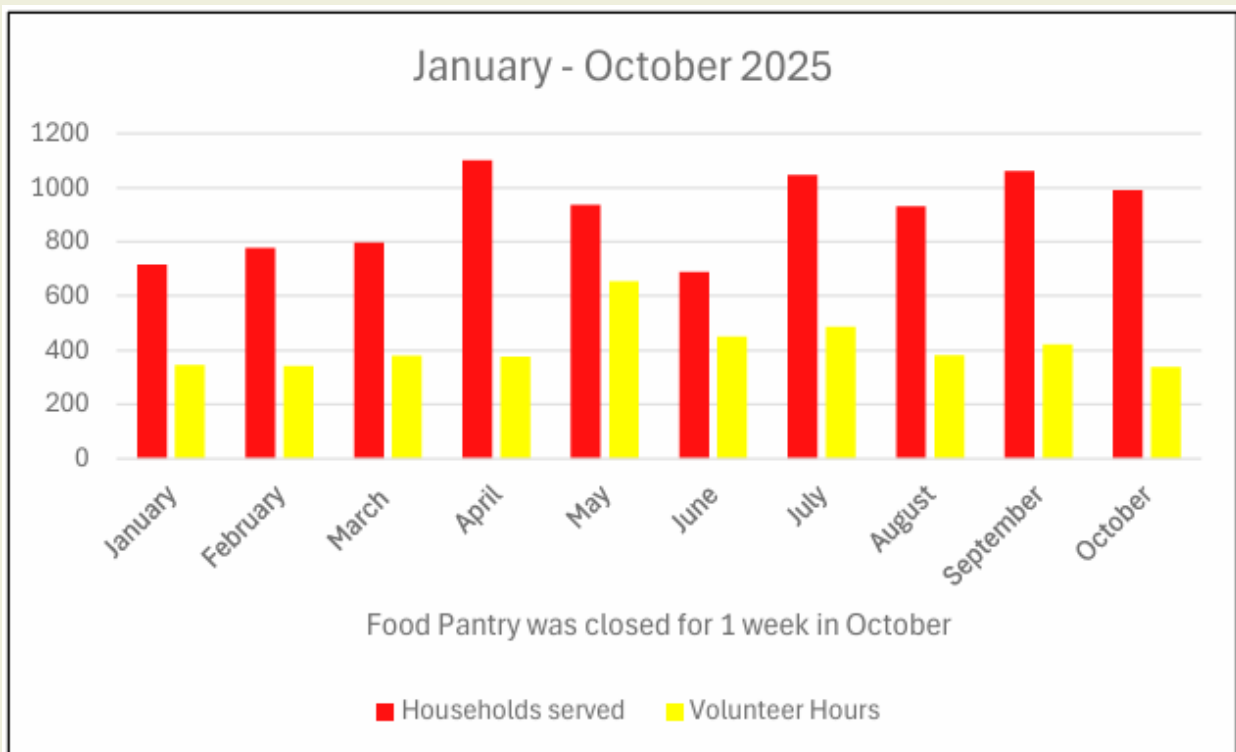
# Food Pantry



**Jimmy and Hilda Bender** have a passion to FEED, FUEL and FILL our neighbors with food.

AARP recognizes their service. Thank you Jimmy and Hilda Bender for all the love you share each week.

You make a difference!



# Radio Club

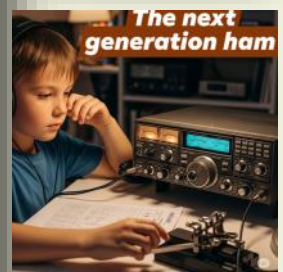
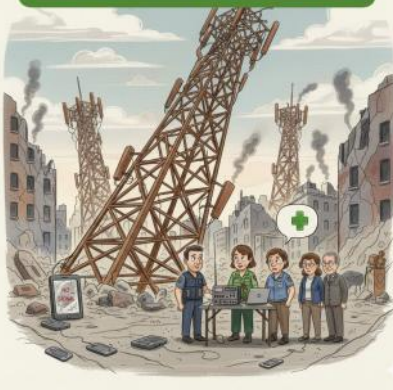


Thank you to  
**The Rotary Club of New Bern** for your sponsorships supporting the mission of The Filling Station. What an honor to host a "field trip" meeting for your group and tour the facility and "hear the story". One of the highlights ...seeing the NEW equipment in the **New Bern Amateur Radio Club office**.

Upgraded repeater and antennae made possible by **Duke Energy** grant.



**HAM RADIO SAYS LIVES**



Thank you **Pete Wene, retired Air Force, New Bern Amateur Radio Club** for volunteering to provide ham radio education 2 sessions a year. There are 10 in the class this session learning how to equip, prepare and support Jones County Emergency Services in times of disaster with important communication.



# Remembering 9/11

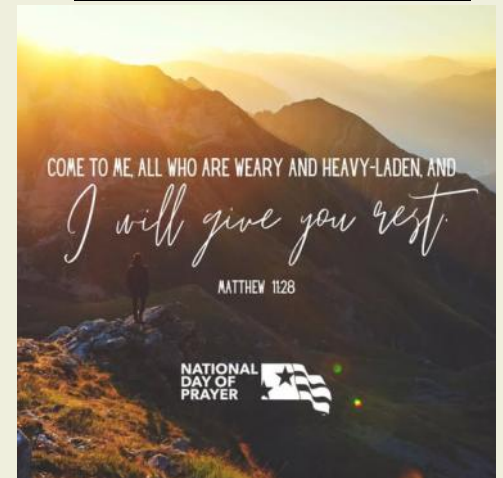


*How we respond in good times and in challenging times ...*

**PRAY** 🙏

*"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

*2 chronicles 7:14*



*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 -**

Chair: Bobby Darden

Vice-Chair: Sheron Bender

Treasurer: Estelle Surles

Secretary: Emily Andrews

Ellis Banks

Charley Jones

Colby Jordan

Ella McDaniel

Michael Pretty

Christopher Rogerson

Kenneth Spivey

John Taylor

Greg Thornburg

Sheila Meadows

Jeff Reynolds

Alicia Gouge

Carol Mattocks, Board Advisor

Theresa Lee, Consultant

Mary Ann LeRay, Executive Director

Holly Ladner, Editor

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://www.facebook.com/FS1075)

*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](https://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.