



**Nutrition · Education · Connection**

General Newsletter

# “Food for Thought”

May 2026



## Message from the Executive Director's Desk



**Our THEME for 2026:**

**Adventure, Curious, Present**

**Stay curious about the present and you will find yourself on an ADVENTURE!**

**Every single day since opening August 2017, we see things come together as we work to assist in filling unmet needs here in Jones County. We remain curious about the present circumstances our neighbors are facing, and we stay creative in how to best assist. Unique opportunities to scale mountains of impossibility creates unforgettable adventures.**

**The past two months have been packed full of stories, answers to prayers, creative solutions and resourceful partnerships. One of those partnerships, Triune Holiness Church, hosts a women's conference each year. As I prepared a message to share, I came across this beautiful reminder of staying curious about the present.**

**“The weight of our value is not just found in our winning, but in our willingness,**

**Not just in our beauty, but in our bravery,  
Not just in our fashion but our compassion,**

**Not just in our perfection, but our purpose,  
Not just in our status but in our souls.”**

**Why stay curious about the present? Staying curious leaves space for you to learn more about people, circumstances and possible solutions. It also gives you an opportunity to remember how answers to your prayers have always been right on time. Life is full of adventures and you don't have to travel far to experience the goodness of God.**

**In this newsletter, you will see all the great connections, events, programs made possible due to the generosity of many donors, volunteers and partners.**

**Here are to many more adventures this year!**

**Mary Ann LeRay**  
Executive Director  
Since 2021

**Mary Ann LeRay**

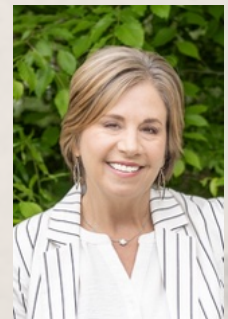
Executive Director  
The Filling Station, Inc.

"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)

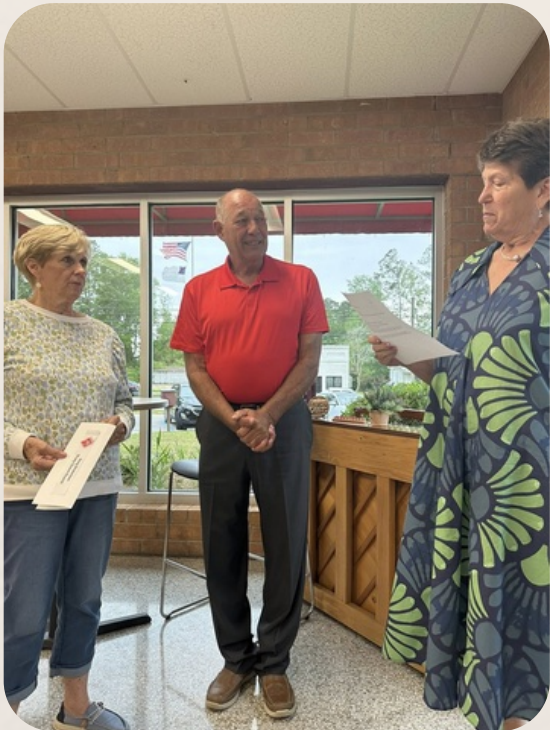


Continued on p.2

# Annual Board Meeting



We have the greatest Board of Directors in the world. We are so blessed to have rich partnerships to fuel the mission as we continue to assist in filling unmet needs in the areas of Nutrition, Education, Connection serving the residents of Jones County.



Welcome to Pastor Greg Dickerson from Shady Grove Church as a NEW board member.

Thank you Ella McDaniel for serving a 3-year term & for all the many gifts and talents you have brought to enhance the mission.



Thank you Sheron Bender, Nomination Committee Chair and Bobby Darden, Board Chair, for your leadership.



# Leadership Conference

*Spring Grassroots Leadership Conference Connects Leaders at the Jones County Civic Center*



**LEADERSHIP JONES**  
 ...A GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY  
**Spring Grassroots Leadership Academy Conference**  
 Jones County Civic Center  
 Thanks to our sponsors, partners and supporters!



**A day-and-a-half conference brings nonprofit, government, Cooperative Extension/N.C. A&T, and community leaders together for practical training and regional collaboration**

**TRENTON, N.C.** – Community leaders, nonprofit representatives, government personnel, and Cooperative Extension staff gathered March 19-20 at the Jones County Civic Center for the 2026 Spring Grassroots Leadership Academy Conference, a day-and-a-half event designed to strengthen local leadership capacity and build stronger connections across eastern North Carolina. The conference was hosted by The Filling Station, Intentional Excellence, Jones County Government, and Cooperative Extension/ N.C. A&T.

“We are honored to partner with Jones County Government, Intentional Excellence, and Cooperative Extension/N.C. A&T in connecting public, nonprofit, faith, and community-based leaders in one setting. The event reinforced the value of cross-sector collaboration in addressing local challenges and expanding opportunity in rural communities,” said Mary Ann LeRay, Executive Director of The Filling Station



# The Power of Partnerships



Thank you Coastal Carolina Church  
for your partnership!



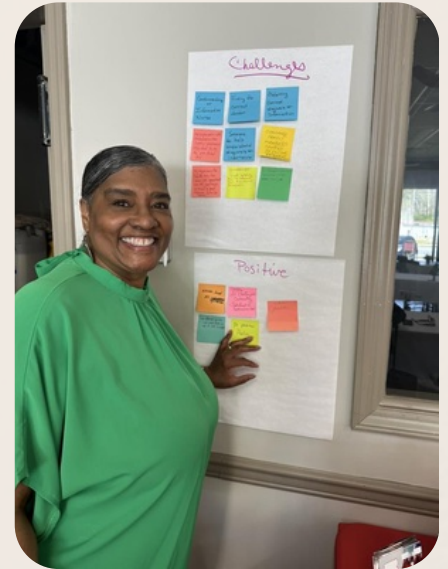
# The Power of Partnerships



Thank you Amber and Marsha for leading an amazing discussion.



Great day with **Patient Advocate Foundation.**



Conducted a Focus Group with 20 willing participants offering valuable feedback on healthcare access.

**How often do you access financial assistance with copays, insurance premiums, transportation costs and medications?**

Visit [www.panfoundation.org](http://www.panfoundation.org) today to see if you qualify for assistance. You would be amazed at how many qualify in Jones County NC.



*Thank you Triune Holiness Church for Inviting Mary Ann LeRay, Executive Director, to share a message on remembering the goodness of God at the Annual Womens Conference.*



*We appreciate Triune Holiness Church, Maysville, NC, for being a charter church partner to The Filling Station.*



# The Power of Support



***Thank you***

***CarolinaEast Foundation***

***for the support of Nutrition Education programming "Bridging Foods and Meds".***

***Together we are assisting in filling unmet needs here in Jones County NC.***

***Thank you***

***CarolinaEast Health System***

***employees who give back to this fund to make these grants possible for the***

***work in Eastern NC.***



# Upcoming Programing



**TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH.  
YOUR LIFE. YOUR FUTURE.**



**FOOD & MEDS**

*Nourish - Strengthen - Thrive*

A program designed to educate, empower, and connect you to a community committed to healthy living.

## 6 POWER-PACKED SESSIONS

IN-PERSON • ONLINE ACCESS AVAILABLE



MINDSET & HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



HEART HEALTH



GUT HEALTH



JOINT HEALTH




IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE



STRENGTHENING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM



# Upcoming Programing



**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:**


- 1** How often do you think about your health?
- 2** Is your health limiting you in any way?
- 3** Would you like to be connected to a community for accountability to sustain a healthier life?

**IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS, THIS PROGRAM IS FOR YOU!**

Join us for 6 transformative sessions.  
Space is limited —  
don't miss this opportunity to invest in yourself.

**FILLINGSTATION1075.COM**

221 Main Street • Pollockville, NC 28573 • (252) 224-1127




Click the links below to listen to 2 podcast episodes where Mary Ann & Marcy dive into the Filling Station's new community health program made possible through the support of the Carolina East Foundation

**[Bridging Food and Medicine \(Podcast Episode #28\)](#)**

**[When health comes first, everything else follows \(Podcast Episode #30\)](#)**

Take the **[Good Energy Self-Checklist](#)** to determine where you need to bridge the gap.



# Upcoming Programing

## Where Does Your Money Go? A Financial Wellness Conversation for Jones County (Podcast Episode #32)



Money stress is something most people carry quietly, and in Jones County, the weight of that stress lands on families already navigating food insecurity, hurricane recovery, and rising costs. In Episode 32, Mary Ann LeRay sits down with Tommy Stanfield of Southern Bank to talk about a new partnership that is bringing structured financial wellness education to The Filling Station, and why Tommy believes the lack of financial education could be our next public health crisis.



## BRINGING FINANCIAL WELLNESS TO THE FILLING STATION

**Come join us for dinner and some great tips on living a financially fit lifestyle!**

**LEARN HOW TO**

- Live Within Your Means
- Spend Wisely
- Reduce Expenses
- Build An Emergency Savings
- Manage And Avoid Debt
- Automate
- Look Ahead
- Utilize Tools And Resources

 **Thursday May 21st 5:30 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.**

 **Filling Station: 221 Main Street, Pollocksville, NC 28573**

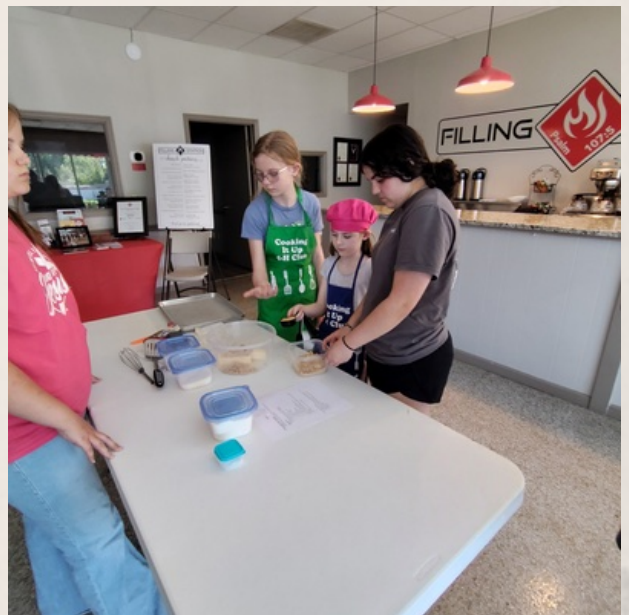
 **RSVP by May 19th for a Free Dinner (252-224-1127)**



# What's Happening



Thank you Sheila Meadows, Board member, for hosting the 4-H Cooking it Up Club in the Filling Station Teaching Kitchen.



***Equipping, Empowering, Encouraging the next generation of great chefs and bakers.***

Save the Date: 4-H Day Camp June 9-11, 2026  
For more info: Samantha Bennett Jones Co 4H (252-448-9621)



# What's Happening



Thank you *Jones County Veterans Services* for asking us to host their monthly “Coffee and Conversations” here The Filling Station.



Did you know 10% of the county population is Veterans?

Thank a veteran today for their service.



Perfect season to serve yummy strawberries 🍓 from Parker Farm



If you would like to be a HOST for this event, call Chad Day at Jones County Veterans Services to book your date.



# What’s Happening

## The Salt Problem: How Rural Heart Failure Patients in Eastern NC Are Being Heard (Podcast Episode #31)



Brendan Lake has spent eight years as a heart failure nurse, watching patients from Jones County make the long trip to Greenville for care more often than anyone should have to. Now, as a PhD candidate in nursing research at East Carolina University, he is doing something about it. In Episode 31, Mary Ann LeRay sits down with Brendan at The Filling Station to talk about his ongoing study on how people with heart failure in rural communities manage a low-salt diet, and why asking patients directly is the only way to get it right.

UMCIRB# 25-000527

### Low Salt Diet Heart Failure Study

If you are 18 or older, have been diagnosed with Heart Failure, speak English, live in a rural community of Eastern North Carolina, and have been told to follow a low sodium diet (1500mg-2300mg or less) you may be eligible to participate in a research study to learn about how people view low salt diets as part of their heart failure treatment.

#### **Are You Eligible?**

- 18 years or older
- Diagnosis of Heart Failure
- Told to eat 1500-2300 mg or less of salt per day
- Able to Speak and understand English
- Live in a Rural Community of Eastern North Carolina

#### **Participant Benefits**

- Share information that may help researchers treat Heart Failure
- You may help others struggling to manage a low sodium diet

#### **Study Requirements**

- Participate in a 45-60 minute recorded interview about your experience with low sodium diets in heart failure

#### **Contact**

Brendan Lake, RN, BSN  
Principal Investigator  
[Heartstudy@ecu.edu](mailto:Heartstudy@ecu.edu)  
(216) 904-5257

College of Nursing  
East Carolina University  
Health Sciences  
Building  
Greenville, NC 27858



# Ham Radio



Members of the New Bern Amateur Radio Club gathered at The Filling Station on two Saturdays in April to build Pixie QRP transceivers, a small kit radio that transmits and receives Morse code on the 40-meter band.



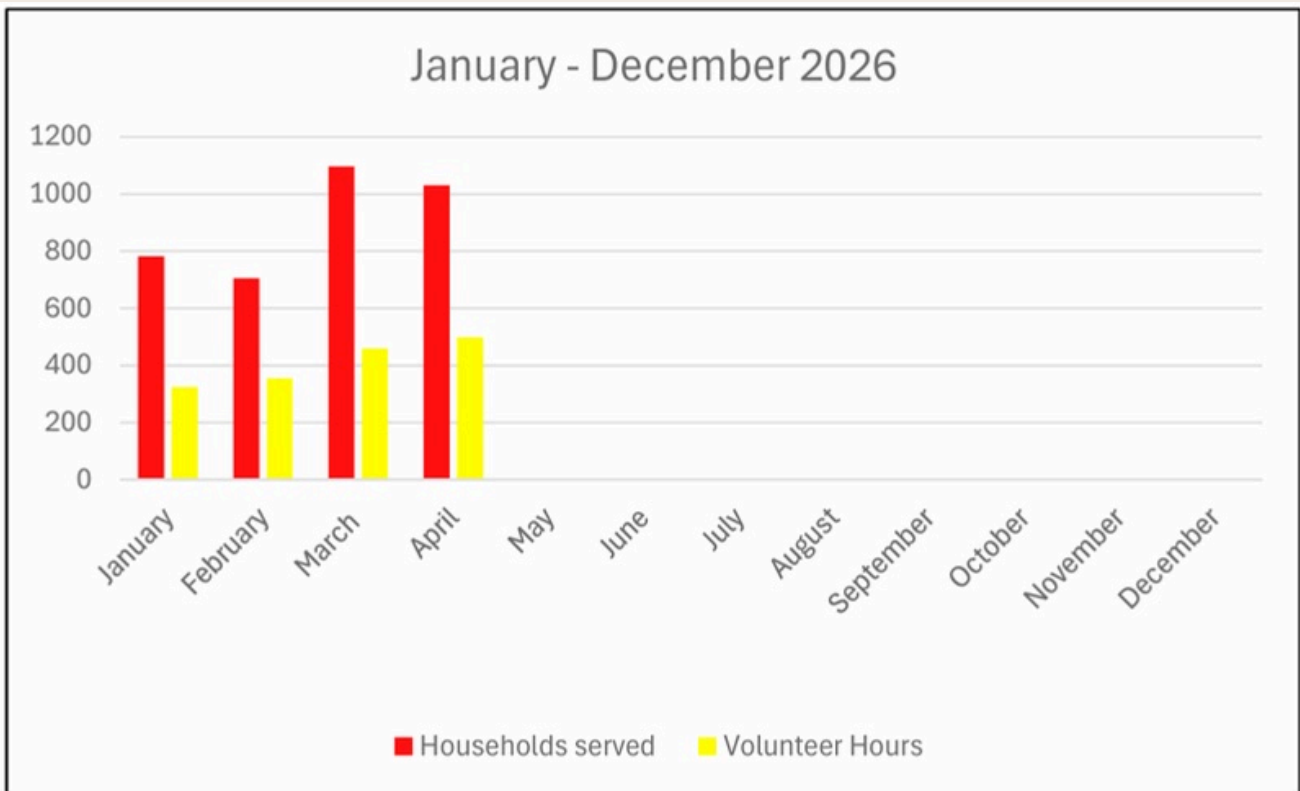
Four participants soldered and assembled their kits under the guidance of Gene Jenkins, N4JEE, continuing ham radio's proud tradition of homebrewing. On the second Saturday, Pete Wene gave a special presentation breaking down how the electronics inside the Pixie actually work.



# Food Pantry



**Thank you to many farmers in eastern NC who donated EGGS to the Food Bank for distribution for Easter.**



# Recipe to Try

THE MODERN PROPER

Simple Recipes for Every Day

## Kale Salad with Apples and Pumpkin Seed Clusters



Serves: 6  
 Prep Time: 30 min  
 Cook Time: 15 min

### Ingredients

#### Salad

- 2 bunches** Tuscan kale, stemmed and finely chopped
- 2** Stemilt sweetango or honeycrisp apples, cut into matchsticks
- 4 ounces** goat cheese, crumbled

#### Pumpkin Seed Clusters

- 3/4 cup** pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup** sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon** ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon** cayenne pepper

#### Creamy Apple Cider Dressing

- 1/2 cup** extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons** apple cider or apple juice
- 2 tablespoons** unfiltered apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons** mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 teaspoons** honey
- 1/4 teaspoon** ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon** sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon** freshly cracked black pepper

### Method

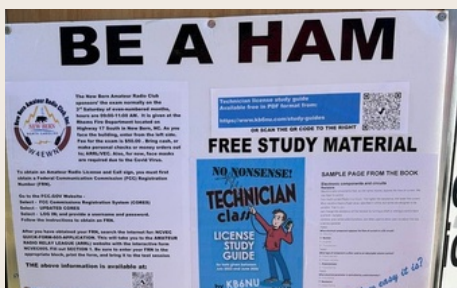
- 1.** Line a large plate with parchment paper.
- 2.** In a dry pan over medium high heat add the pumpkin seeds and cook, stirring constantly, until toasted and fragrant, about 5 minutes. Remove the pumpkin seeds from the skillet.
- 3.** Add the sugar to the same skillet over medium-high heat. Using a wooden spoon or heatproof spatula, stir the sugar constantly, cooking until it is evenly melted and light brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Return the toasted pumpkin seeds to the pan and add the cinnamon and pepper and stir to coat well. Pour the mixture onto the prepared plate. Once the mixture is cool enough to handle, break apart into clusters.
- 4.** Meanwhile, make the dressing. In a small bowl, combine the olive oil, apple cider, apple cider vinegar, mayonnaise, honey, cinnamon, salt, and pepper. Whisk until combined and smooth.
- 5.** Assemble the salad. In a large bowl, combine the kale with 1/2 cup of the dressing. Using clean hands, squeeze or “massage” the kale while also distributing the dressing evenly until it is well coated and tender. Massaging the kale will also make the kale more tender. Add more dressing as needed.
- 6.** Top the finished kale salad with the apple matchsticks, goat cheese, and pumpkin seed clusters.

**\*Note:** Kale will keep its crunch for a couple of days, even when dressed. This salad is great to make-ahead recipe for weekday lunches.





# Upcoming Events



## Leave a Legacy Campaign 2026

During this campaign, you have an opportunity to honor those who have made this mission possible.

**SIGN UP →** Click [here](#) for more info.



## Ham Radio Connection

Every Tuesday evening at 7 pm  
All Ham Radio operators are invited to connect by using their radio on frequency 146.610 PL 100.0  
New Bern Amateur Radio Club Repeater: W4EWN



## Financial Wellness Seminar

Thursday, May 21, 2026  
5:30 - 7pm

[Filling Station Campus, Pollocksville](#)

**SIGN UP →** [RSVP here by May 19 for dinner](#)

## Dance, Art & Music Camp

June 22-26, 2026  
8:45 am - 1pm Daily

[Filling Station Campus, Pollocksville](#)

**SIGN UP →** Click [here](#) to register

## A Perfect 10 Event

November 7, 2026

[Filling Station Campus, Pollocksville](#)

More detail to come!



## Leave a Legacy Campaign



<https://www.brickrus.com/donorsite/fillingstation1075>

**"Leave a Legacy"** by purchasing a brick along the sidewalk leading to the front doors of The Filling Station  
This sidewalk represents the many footsteps of volunteers, donors, clients, partners, pastors and elected officials.  
During this special campaign, you have the opportunity to honor those who have made this mission possible.

**4x8 Brick is \$100 & 8x8 Brick is \$225.00**

<https://www.brickrus.com/donorsite/fillingstation1075>

For more information: please call 252-224-1127 or  
email: [fsdirector@fillingstation1075.com](mailto:fsdirector@fillingstation1075.com)



# Save The Date



## Episode #29: Eileen Dove – Jones County National Day of Prayer

In this episode of The Filling Station Podcast, Mary Ann LeRay sits down with her dear friend and longtime collaborator Eileen Dove to talk about one of Jones County's most meaningful annual traditions — the Jones County National Day of Prayer Observance. Recorded during Holy Week, the conversation carries the warmth of the season as both women reflect on what it means to come together in prayer across generations, denominations, and neighborhoods.

**GLORIFY GOD**  
AMONG THE NATIONS

**SEEKING HIM**  
IN ALL GENERATIONS  
I CHRONICLES 16:24 NASB  
**THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026**

NATIONALDAYOFPRAYER.ORG

**75<sup>TH</sup>**  
NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

**JONES COUNTY NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER EVENT**  
**THURSDAY, MAY 7<sup>TH</sup>**  
**11:30 AM–12:30 PM**  
**JONES COUNTY CIVIC CENTER**  
832 NC HWY 58 | TRENTON, NC 28585

**Join us for prayer with pastors  
from our local churches!**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
EILEEN DOVE (252) 617-1346 — MARY ANN LERAY 252-671-7815  
JONES COUNTY NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER CO-COORDINATORS



# Save The Date



## Filling Young Hearts with the Arts

DANCE, ART & MUSIC DAY CAMP  
FOR JONES COUNTY RESIDENTS

**JUNE 22-26 » 8:45 AM-1 PM DAILY**

FOR AGES 7-12  
LUNCH INCLUDED

*America 250: Celebrating the 250th Birthday of our Country*



**FILLING STATION  
CAMPUS**

221 Main St Pollocksville, NC



**THURSDAY  
JUNE 25 AT 10 AM**

NC Symphony's  
Music Discovery Program  
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

*Register Today!*



Register Online at  
[Fillingstation1075.com](http://Fillingstation1075.com)

**COST \$25**



# Why We Volunteer

Rachel Fisher and Jane Hobbs call Thursdays their favorite day of the week. Every Thursday morning they spend 3-4 hours volunteering at The Filling Station. They enjoy doing administrative tasks, creating cards for the families who visit the food pantry and spending time with their friends at The Filling Station. They share their love of God through prayers and financial donations.



*Thank You!*

**Thank you Kaitlyn Calvin for sharing your beautiful gift of ART with The Filling Station  
You make a difference!**





***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
- Willie Smith
- Greg Thornburg
- Sheila Meadows
- Jeff Reynolds
- Alicia Gouge

- 
- Mary Ann LeRay, Executive Director
  - Marcy Hoffman, Administrative Coordinator
  - Ed Jekel, Facilities Manager
  - Jimmy Bender, Food Pantry Director
  - Geraldine Eubanks, Volunteer Coordinator

- 
- Carol Mattocks, Board Advisor
  - Theresa Lee, Consultant
  - Holly Ladner, Editor

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Website: <https://fillingstation1075.com>  
Facebook: [Facebook.com/FS1075](https://www.facebook.com/FS1075)



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



**FILLING STATION**

*church partners*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 902 Church                                | Pollocksville Presbyterian Church      |
| Christ Episcopal Church                   | Remnant Believers Church               |
| Christian Faith Assembly                  | Shady Grove Methodist Church           |
| Clinton Memorial Chapel AME Zion          | Solid Rock Global Methodist Church     |
| Coastal Carolina Church                   | St. James AME Zion                     |
| Cypress Creek Methodist Church            | St. Matthews Church AME Zion           |
| Friendship Church                         | St. Pauls Catholic Church              |
| Garber Methodist Church                   | St. Phillips Missionary Baptist Church |
| Kinston First Pentecostal Holiness Church | The Living Word Worship Center         |
| Lee's Chapel United Methodist Church      | Triune Holiness Church                 |
| Pollocksville Baptist Church              | Jacob's Well Christian Church          |
| Pollocksville Methodist Church            |  |

*Thank you for partnering!*

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.**

