



Nutrition · Education · Connection

General Newsletter

“Food for Thought”

July 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!

Why stay curious about the present? It leaves space for you to learn more about the people, circumstances and possible solutions. This is also a time 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.

Every day since opening our doors in August 2017, we see things coming 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 stay creative in how to best assist.

Our first program at The Filling Station was to create a food pantry to serve Jones County. We launched this program after 1 year of planning and renovating the space. After a recent conversation with Jimmy Bender, Food Pantry Director, we made a list of all the ways this food pantry has impacted the continued growth of The Filling Station mission. Food pantries represent a sign of hope, support and resilience.

The past two months have been packed full of stories, answers to prayers, creative solutions and resourceful partnerships.

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’s 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
252-224-1127



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

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(Continued from page 1)

Here's what we are hearing from clients & the community about the food pantry:

- Bridges the Gap - reduces stress and anxiety associated with food and nutrition insecurity.
- Promotes Health and Well-being - comprehensive support system including nutrition education and cooking classes helping to make healthier choices and feel reassured about well-being.
- Strengthens Community Ties - connection hub fostering a sense of belonging and bringing together people from all walks of life. These shared experiences of giving and receiving create a care network beyond the pantry's walls.
- Provides a Safety Net during crises - during natural disasters and economic downturns, food pantries are even more critical.
- Empowers Individuals and Families - provides necessary resources such as financial wellness, leadership, nutrition education and summer arts camp for kids which allows families to allocate limited financial resources to other essential needs such as housing.
- Community Involvement - volunteers are the backbone of The Filling Station food pantry. Donors, individuals and businesses, provide the necessary resources to keep the pantry stocked and operational. This shared responsibility and participation fosters a culture of giving and generosity within the community.
- Reduces Food Waste - the food pantry partners with farmers and grocery stores to rescue food that would otherwise go to waste. This environmentally responsible practice not only benefits the community but also the planet, making everyone feel part of the sustainable solution.





Bridge Run



Podcast with
Stephen
Wargo
Listen Here!



Podcast Episode #33: There's Always Another Side: Faith, Endurance, and Joy.

In Episode 33 of the Filling Station Podcast, Mary Ann LeRay sits down with Stephen Wargo, a solo marathon swimmer from Cleveland, Ohio, who found his way to The Filling Station studio through a visit to his daughter Lauren and a spot in the Neuse River Bridge Run. What started as a conversation about an endurance sport turned into something much bigger, touching on faith, perseverance, and what it really means to live for others.



The Power of Partnerships



Great to partner with
The Epiphany School of Global Studies
Love in Action each May as students invest in our
community of Jones County NC
You make a difference! Thank you!



5th year of Epiphany high school seniors serving at the Filling Station.



Ed Jekel, Facilities Manager, thanking the Epiphany High School Seniors for all their volunteer labor during Love in Action. They served over 190 hours by working on projects throughout the campus.



The Power of Partnerships



Savannah Lambert named United Way Executive Director



The United Way of Coastal Carolina has named Savannah Lambert as its new executive director as the nonprofit works to usher in a new era.

Lambert comes from the United Way of Wayne County, where she most recently worked as a resource development director, bringing with her extensive experience in nonprofit leadership, fundraising, relationship-building and community engagement.

Lambert’s background in strengthening donor relationships and developing impactful initiatives positions her to help lead the United Way of Coastal Carolina into its next chapter of service, said Tony Norwood, United Way of Coastal Carolina board chair.

Welcome Savannah!

The Filling Station is a proud partner with United Way in providing Nutrition Education to Jones County NC.



Thank you ***Duke Energy*** for great work in replacing a transformer to support the new warehouse on our campus.



The Power of Partnerships

Professional Development is the KEY to sustainability, growth and collaboration adding value to the communities we serve.



Thank you **New Bern Area Chamber of Commerce** for your continued support of the New Bern Non-Profit Council.

Thank you **Craven Community College** for hosting such a great day and **Duke Energy, Blue Cross NC, & Tharesa Lee** for sponsoring this amazing opportunity for leaders in the non profit sector.



Thank you **Armstrong McGuire & Associates**
New Bern Web Design, LLC
Ed McDonough

and all the non profit leaders for sharing your tips, advice and trade secrets for making your organizations serve with excellence.



The Power of Support



Thank you

CarolinaEast Health System

We appreciate the love and support. Especially the JOY your team brought as they delivered much needed supplies.



Upcoming Programming



New Program Launch

“Bridging Food and Meds”

First class is July 28...register today!

Take your Good Energy Checklist by clicking [here](#)

FILLING STATION
Nutrition · Education · Connection

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

BRIDGING

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

CAROLINA EAST FOUNDATION

FILLING STATION
Nutrition · Education · Connection

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 • Pollocksville, NC 28573 • (252) 224-1127

CAROLINA EAST FOUNDATION

[Listen to our Podcasts about Bridging Food & Meds by clicking below](#)



[Episode #28: Bridging Food and Medicine: A New Health Initiative at The Filling Station](#)

[Episode #30: When health comes first, everything else follows](#)

[Episode #34: Your Gut Is Talking. Are You Listening? A Practical Guide to Gut Health](#)

[Episode #37: Bridging Food & Meds – Finding Balance From the Inside Out](#)

[Episode #38 Bridging Food & Meds – Finding Balance Part 2](#)



What's Happening



Jones County 4-H Cooking Club

in full swing in The Filling Station teaching kitchen -
All things STRAWBERRIES...Yummy.

Thank you Sheila Meadows, FS Board Member, for your support on this programming.



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



For more info: Samantha Bennett Jones Co 4H (252-448-9621)



What's Happening



Jones County 4-H STEM camp



Campers snacking on blueberries in the garden.



Sarah Ware shows us how it's done.



Learning in the teaching kitchen



What's Happening

N.C. Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service



Want to activate good? Are you a business leader?

Do you want to connect with others doing good in Raleigh?

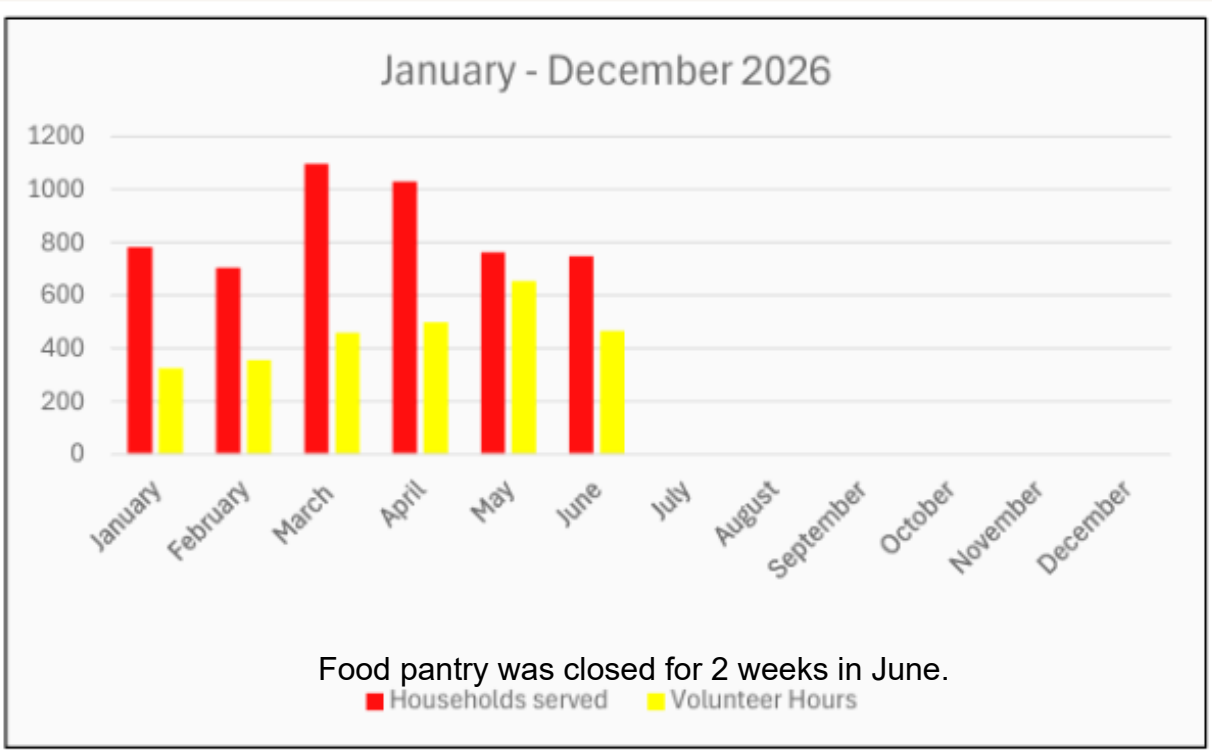
**Love all the good work my friend Rose Thompson is doing for N.C. Commission on
Volunteerism and Community Service**



Food Pantry



Thank you
Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina for the
partnership with the retail donation program
Harris Teeter Mlk Jr Blvd New Bern N.C. & Food Lion



Why We Volunteer

Podcast Episode #36: Sheron Bender – Feeding People First

Sheron Bender has been part of The Filling Station's story almost from the very beginning, and in this episode she sits down with Mary Ann LeRay to trace that journey from startup committee member to vice chair of the board, sharing the moments that shaped her deepest convictions about community, hunger, and service. Sheron reflects on how Hurricane Florence marked a turning point in her involvement. Her home was spared flooding, so she spent long hours at The Filling Station distributing supplies that poured in from New Bern, Raleigh, and across the country. What started as showing up to help became a calling she hasn't stepped away from since. She also revisits the early days of The Filling Station, when a small group of church members wrestled with the risk of using donated mission funds, and how the question "But what if it doesn't fail?" became the quiet conviction that carried the ministry into its ninth year.



Thank You!

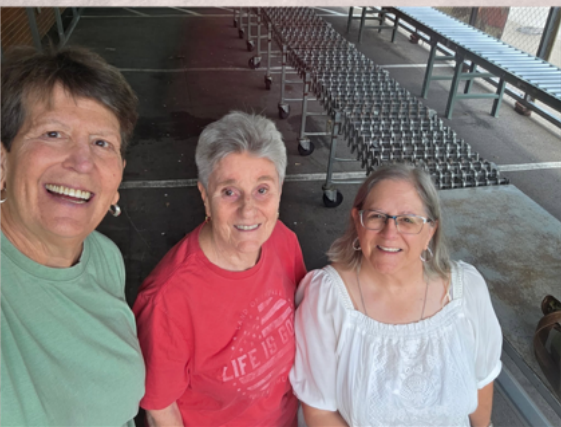


Thank you

Coastal Carolina Church for your
volunteer support this summer.



Thank you to all the
volunteers who make
this mission possible.



Thank you

St Paul's Catholic Church New Bern,
a great church partner,
for the donation of snacks.
You make a difference!



Recipes to Try



[Crunchy Hawaiian Chicken Wrap](#)
[Black Bean Salsa](#)

↑
Click for recipes!



Pictured left to right:
Sarah Ware, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent
Marcy Hoffman, Camp Director
Laila Sermon, Camp Counselor



[Cucumber Avocado Salad](#)
[Strawberry Shortcake](#)

↑
Click for recipes!



[American Flag Cake](#) ←

Click for recipe!



[Upcoming Cooking Classes - Click below & Sign Up Today!](#)

Sarah Ware, M.S.
Extension Agent
Family & Consumer Sciences
NC State University
NC Cooperative Extension
PhD Student
Sarah_Ware@ncsu.edu

Plan Smarter. Cook Faster. Spend Less.

- Simple Meal Planning - Aug 13
- Prep Once, Eat All Week - Aug 27
- 30-Minute Family Meals - Sept 10
- One Pot/Pan Dinners - Sept 24





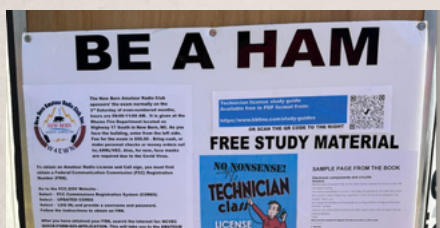
Upcoming Events



Leave a Legacy Campaign 2026

"Leave a Legacy" by purchasing a brick along the sidewalk leading to the front doors of The Filling Station. During this special campaign, you have the opportunity to honor those who have made this mission possible.

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, August 20, 2026
5:30 - 7pm
Filling Station Campus, Pollocksville
RSVP [here](#) by August 18 for dinner



Jones County Heritage Festival

Friday - Saturday, Sept 25-26, 2026
Jones County Civic Center
Filling Station Campus, Pollocksville
Click [here](#) for more information



"Jones County - A Perfect 10" Event

Saturday, November 7, 2026
11am - 2 pm
Filling Station Campus, Pollocksville
Click [here](#) for more details



Leave a Legacy Campaign

Would you like to be part of Leaving a Legacy?
[Click here for more information](#)

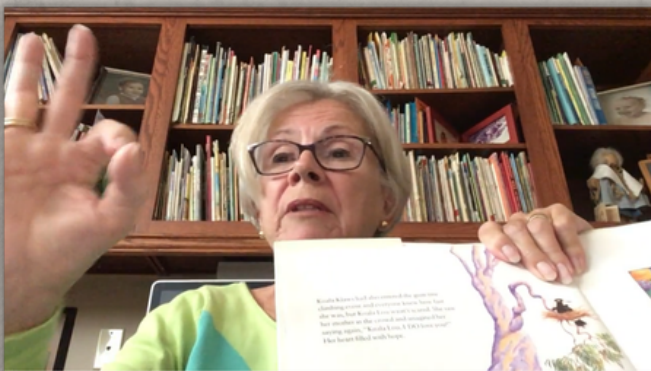


<https://www.bricksrus.com/donorsite/fillingstation1075>

“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.bricksrus.com/donorsite/fillingstation1075>
For more information: please call 252-224-1127 or email: fsdirector@fillingstation1075.com



Great to show the brick ordered to one of our supporters.



Phil and Joan Knight have been a critical piece of building the foundation of The Filling Station. We are grateful for Joan's love for reading and tutoring children from Pollocksville Elementary School.



Education



Podcast Episode #35: Mandy Gillis – A Principal Led by Purpose

Mandy Gillis didn't just find her way to Maysville Elementary. By her own account, she was led there. After 26 years in education, including a difficult final year in Onslow County during Hurricane Florence that took a real toll on her health, Mandy stepped back and trusted that the right path would open. It did, in the most unexpected way, during a conversation at Vacation Bible School. She updated her application materials on the spot, and the rest, as they say, is history. Seven years later, she is the current Jones County Principal of the Year and describes every day at Maysville as something she absolutely loves.



Podcast Episode #39 – Donna Higgins: From Student to Principal

From Student to Principal: Donna Higgins's Full-Circle Journey at Trenton Elementary
Some stories come full circle in the most beautiful ways. Donna Higgins, principal of Trenton Elementary School, sat down with Mary Ann LeRay on The Filling Station to share a journey that began in a kindergarten classroom — at Trenton Elementary itself — where a teacher named Peggy Kring noticed something special in a little girl who already knew how to read. Rather than holding her back, Ms. Kring let young Donna tutor her classmates. "She's the reason that I decided right then... I'm going to be a teacher," Donna recalls. Decades later, she walks those same hallways — this time as the one setting the tone for every child who comes through the door.

This year's Back to School Bash for Jones County School kids will be on Sat, Aug. 8, 10 am-1 pm at the Jones County Civic Center.

**The Filling Station will provide backpacks and healthy food donations.
Jones County Public Schools will greet the students and hand out school supplies.**

**Additional vendors like
The Girl Scouts
Jones County DSS Community Closet**

Community Partners are welcome to complete the Vendor App to attend (all vendors must be approved by our event committee, please read the attendance agreement to provide school supplies, due by July 24th)



Education

Financial Wellness Classes



*Thank you Southern Bank and Trust
for the Financial Wellness Seminar and dinner for
those who attended.*


*Thank you Tommy Stanfield with Southern Bank
for the great tools.*

3 more seminars planned for 2026.

Click [here](#) for more information

August class

September class


 


BRINGING IDENTITY THEFT AWARENESS TO THE FILLING STATION


Come join us for dinner and some great tips to protect your identity.


LEARN HOW TO



- Identify the signs of Identity theft and fraud.
- Examine different types of identity theft and fraud.
- Identify strategies to protect yourself from Identity theft and fraud.
- Review the laws and regulations that protect consumers from identity theft and fraud.

 **Thursday, August 20th 5:30 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.**

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

 **RSVP by August 18th for a Free Dinner (252-224-1127)**


 


BRINGING CREDIT SCORES AND REPORT AWARENESS TO THE FILLING STATION


Come join us for dinner and some great tips to protect your identity.



LEARN HOW TO

- Explore the importance of credit scores and reports.
- Learn how to access information about your credit score and credit report.
- Discuss strategies to build and improve your credit.
- Identify how to protect you credit from incorrect claims and fraud.

 **Thursday, September 10th 5:30 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.**

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

 **RSVP by September 8th for a Free Dinner (252-224-1127)**





Save the Date

TITLE SPONSORS



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026 | 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 Communication Trailer on site and more!*

*Visit fillingstation1075.com or call
Greg Thornburg at 252-259-2060
for more information*

SCAN!



A County Wide Mission: Nutrition, Education & Connection



Save the Date



FREE ENTRY

JONES COUNTY HERITAGE FESTIVAL
unearthing our past, cultivating the future

JONES COUNTY HERITAGE FESTIVAL
unearthing our past, cultivating the future

JONES COUNTY HERITAGE FESTIVAL

FRIDAY
SEPT. 25, 2026
6PM-10PM

&

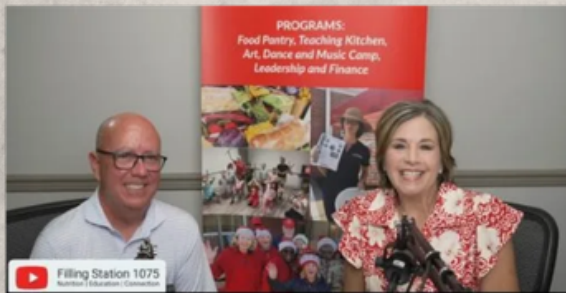
SATURDAY
SEPT. 26, 2026
9AM-3PM

JONES COUNTY CIVIC CENTER | 832 NC HWY 58 S, TRENTON, NC

FREE MOVIE · PARADE · FARMERS MARKET · HAY RIDE · VENDORS · FOOD TRUCKS ·
HERITAGE SKILL EXHIBITORS · GAMES · ANIMAL DISPLAYS · KAYAKING · CAR SHOW & MORE!

@JonesCountyHeritageFestival | jcheritagefestival.com | 252-448-9621 | jcheritagefestival@jonescountync.gov

Podcast Episode #40: Charlie Jones – Where Jones County Came From



Jones County has a story most of its own residents have never fully heard, and Charlie Jones, president of the Jones County Historical Society and Filling Station board member, is on a mission to change that. In this episode, Charlie sits down with Mary Ann LeRay to trace the county's origins from the ground up, starting with the difficult coastline that slowed European settlement, the Tuscarora people who called this land home long before colonizers arrived, and the wave of German and Swiss Protestant immigrants who sailed for the New World in 1710 and ended up, after extraordinary hardship, becoming the foundation of what is now Jones County.

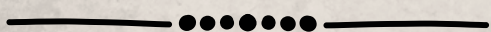




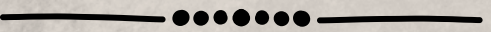
Our mission is to assist with filling the unmet needs in the areas of nutrition, education and connection serving the residents of Jones County.

- Board Members -

- Chair: Ellis Banks
- Vice-Chair: Sheron Bender
- Treasurer: Estelle Surles
- Secretary: Emily Andrews
- Charley Jones
- Colby Jordan
- Michael Pretty
- Christopher Rogerson
- Kenneth Spivey
- Willie Smith
- Greg Thornburg
- Sheila Meadows
- Jeff Reynolds
- Alicia Gouge
- Bobby Darden - past Chair



- 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

PO Box 222 221 Main Street
Pollocksville, NC 28573
252-224-1127

Email: info@fillingstation1075.com
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

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



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.

