The official publication of the NC Grange

May | June 2025

GRANGE NEWS

Granger of the Year

Kathy Irvin

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UPCOMING EVENTS

July 6-12	Grange Camp | Columbia, NC
September 11-14	State Convention | Charlotte, NC
November 8-15	National Convention | Carnival Cruise

The Grange is a grassroots, community service, family organization with a special interest in agriculture and designed to help meet the needs of people, young and old, through a cooperative effort with government and other organizations that also seek the greatest good for the greatest number.

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FROM JIMMY

In this issue of Grange News you will see an article about the National Grange President, Chris Hamp, and her husband Dwayne visiting eastern North Carolina. The members of Grantham and Brogden Grange served as hosts, and they did a great job. It was well-planned and organized. I want to share with you what I observed during the times that I was able to be with them. I saw an eagerness from many Grange members to make this a very memorable time for the Hamps. Everything was planned from day one until they left to return home. These members worked together incredibly well to make the visit a success. Ed and Denise Luttrell opened their home to a wonderful cookout the evening before the Hamps left. Congratulations to all of the members who pitched in to accommodate the Hamps.

I saw with much gratification, members working together for a common good, with a helpful attitude and a desire to do things in a top-notch fashion. After all, isn't that what we are about in this organization? We have a desire to do good things and to build better communities. When company comes, we make every effort to provide a good experience.

I am very proud of our membership in North Carolina. There is a spirit among our NC Grangers that leads us into great accomplishments as well as good fellowship. In the closing ceremony for Grange meetings, we are urged to do well. "Let us be quiet peaceful citizens, feeding the hungry, helping the fatherless and the widows…" We do not always achieve the "quiet" part, but the rest of the statement is a good fit for us.

We are continuing the traditions that we have inherited from those who served before us. We might do things differently, but the same always holds true – faith, family, country, community, and service to others. This is important to us as Grange members, and it is our duty to leave what we inherited better and stronger for those who follow us.

ST. JOHN'S GRANGE

by : Jason Walker

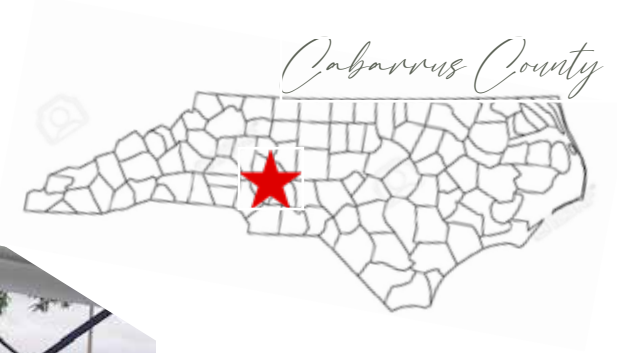
The St. John's Youth and Junior Grange commenced the year by engaging in a brainstorming session aimed at identifying opportunities to enhance participation among younger members, paralleling the activities of the local Grange. A critical aspect of these initiatives is that they are led by the junior and youth Grangers, with support from select members of the local Grange.

Several meetings were convened at the local "she shed" to deliberate on the proposed ideas and to finalize the most suitable option. Ultimately, it was determined that a monthly hot dog sale would serve as an appropriate activity for the junior and youth Grangers of St. John's. The inaugural sale was scheduled for April 5, 2025. As the event approached, the youth had experienced some apprehension due to the novelty of this undertaking; however, by the day of the event, most of their nerves had subsided, and they felt prepared to serve the community.

The youth were tasked with delineating responsibilities for various aspects of the sale. They recognized the importance of each individual's contribution; any failure to fulfill responsibilities could hinder the entire operation. The areas designated for staffing included the order-taking and payment desk, the assembly of hot dogs and buns, the condiment station, the chips and drinks area, and the cleanup. To ensure familiarity with the process for future sales, the youth members rotated roles during the event.

The event attracted numerous community members, both from within the Grange and outside, resulting in a commendable success for the junior and youth grangers. The community's support had a profound effect on the youth, reinforcing their recognition of the vital role they play in the current and future endeavors of the Grange. More than 100 hot dogs were sold during the inaugural sale, with many patrons contributing additional donations to support the Junior Grange at St. John's. The second sale took place on May 3, 2025; however, final reports regarding sales from that event have not yet been completed.

The Junior Grange members are currently deliberating on ideas for a community project that a portion of their proceeds could be used towards. The next sale is scheduled for June 7, 2025, at the St. John's Grange, located at 6200 Mt. Olive Rd, Concord, NC. Come out and see the great job that our Junior and Youth Grangers are doing.



LITTLE MOUNTAIN GRANGE

by : Tammy Morris

On Saturday, April 5, Little Mountain Grange held their Spring Fun Supper. This community event is a fundraiser for our Grange in which we serve a meal consisting of spaghetti, salad, and garlic toast. We had live music provided by Sassafras.

Nina Hayes made the spaghetti along with the delicious desserts. There was a lot of food, fun, fellowship and dancing. Several members of the Ferguson Grange came! We were glad to see old and new friends from there.

The crowd of all ages had a wonderful time, as you can see in the pictures!

by : LaRue Tart

PRESERVED

"You have granted me life and steadfast love and your care has preserved my spirit." Job 10:12

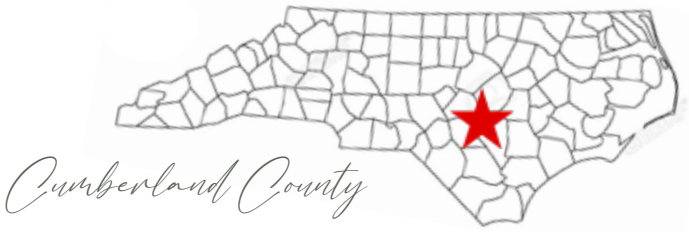
This past summer was the first time I had ever preserved fresh pears. My one small pear tree finally gave me fruit. It was a labor of love, lots of work and time consuming, but I got about 12 pints preserved to enjoy for a long time. It's been nice to go to my pantry, pull out a jar, and enjoy my sweet pears. It lifted my spirits.

Sometimes when there is adversity in our lives we often feel down and often lose hope. But according to this scripture, God actually takes the time to preserve our spirit. If something is preserved, it means it is kept so it won't spoil; the goodness of it is preserved. In the care of Jesus, every ounce of suffering in our lives is used for His glory. In addition, His unfailing love strengthens us so that our own spirits are preserved. If God gave this promise to Job with all the suffering and grief he had endured, then how much more can our Savior preserve us for His glory and receive sweeter blessings.

God produces the good fruit of our labor to provide hope and love to others. Let's thanks our heavenly Father, our caring nurturer, that takes the time to preserve our very spirit.

CAPE FEAR GRANGE

by : Ken Plummer



On April 3, 2025, The Veteran's Farm of North Carolina hosted a visit from members of the Cape Fear Grange. Led by Robert Elliott, a proud member of the Cape Fear Grange, the VFNC provides training for military veterans so that they can become self-sufficient farmers. The training is typically done in groups of 12-20 and provides exposure to a number of different skills that would be useful to a prospective farmer.

A tour of the VFNC site included the following capabilities:

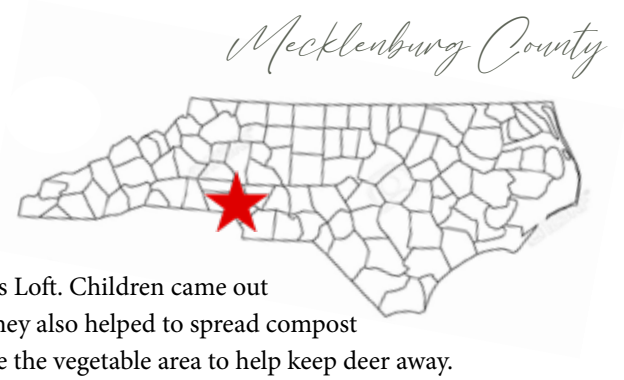
- A butchery center where poultry can be butchered and prepared for sale. Equipment includes a scalder and plucker.
- A mushroom spawning center where hardwood logs (sweet gum, oak, and maple etc.) are prepared for mushrooms. Focus is on Lion's Mane and Shitake varieties of mushrooms.
- A primary greenhouse, which is used for hosting the initial growth stages for a variety of plants to be grown on the grounds.
- A recently completed greenhouse focused on hydroponic production of Bib lettuce. A third greenhouse is under construction that will increase hydroponic capacity for lettuce.
- An area where fruit trees are grafted.
- An olive grove.
- A vineyard where a number of varieties of grapes will be produced.
- Bee hives to help with pollination of trees and crops
- Pastures for beef cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, and meat chickens.
- The crop production fields.

The farm follows organic production processes and uses no pesticides on the crops grown. This is achieved through a combination of insect traps, crop rotation, and trap crops to limit damage from pests. Another example of the sound practices used is the daily relocation of meat chicken houses to help fertilize the fields to be used for future crops.

The tour of the farm was quite interesting, and it was refreshing to see the committed staff focused on helping veterans develop the skills needed for successful careers in agriculture.

VILLEWORTH GRANGE

by : Jessica Horton



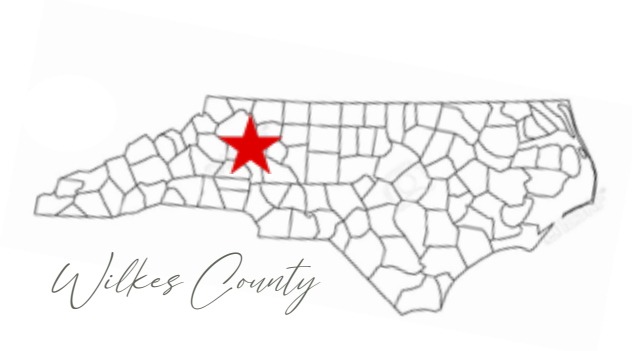
VilleWorth Grange partnered with First Baptist Church of Huntersville for a missions day. The evening of April 27, instead of their usual activities, children were invited to learn about the VilleWorth Grange garden and neighboring Lydia's Loft. Children came out in two groups to help plant cosmos, sunflowers and zinnias around the garden. They also helped to spread compost in the area as well. The same afternoon, members worked to clear weeds and fence the vegetable area to help keep deer away.

FERGUSON GRANGE

by : Sharon Underwood

In April, Ferguson Grange members worked to fill Easter Eggs with candy for a community service activity for Whippoorwill Village's annual Community Easter Egg Hunt. Several members even helped hide eggs for the event.

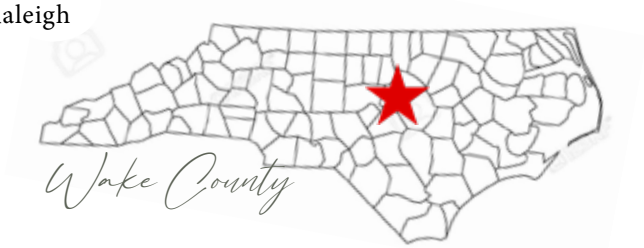
In May, Ferguson Grange held its Free Plant and Seed Day. Pam McCarrick spearheaded the event. A raffle was held for which one of our members, artist Brian DeCann, presented a painting to winner Joshua Holmes. Hot sausage biscuits and coffee were served, and our members helped make the event a big success.



CAPITOL GRANGE

by : Barden Culbreth & Laurie Barnhart

In recognition of April as National Grange Month, Capitol Grangers worked with Governor Stein's office to declare April as Grange Month in North Carolina. During her visit to North Carolina, National Grange President Chris Hamp visited Raleigh City Farm where she joined Lt. Governor Rachel Hunt, who shared the Governor's proclamation. Capitol Grangers was thrilled that their fellow Grangers could tour the garden. Rooted in Raleigh, City Garden is a nonprofit urban farm connecting and nourishing the Raleigh community through regenerative agriculture. Their major program focus is growing healthy food and making sure that 95% of what they grow and harvest is affordable and accessible. They also have a share program with local nonprofits that addresses insecurity and access through a Farmshare program. They also host a seasonal Farm stand where members of the Raleigh community can purchase produce, herbs and flowers. Capitol Grangers also presented a sponsorship grant to Raleigh City Farm to support their 14th "Bearthday" (Birthday + Earth Day) on April 26. What an amazing fit for the Capitol Grange. (www.raleighcityfarm.org/)



Kathy Irvin

by : Laurie Barnhart

Granger of the Year

Kathy Irvin, North Carolina Granger of the Year, is one of those people that I always look forward to seeing. She has a smile and a twinkle in her eye; and she always has something positive to say. Kathy has that rare gift of somehow making you feel important. She has been a Corriher Grange member since she was five years old, beginning as a Junior, and then moving through the ranks as a Youth through a subordinate Grange. For many summers, Kathy, along with her brother Tony, attended Grange Camp. She was shepherded through the Grange by her parents, Virginia and Philip Sloop, who were active Grange members; her Father serving as Chaplain for over sixty years and her Mother serving as the Women's Activity Chairman for over sixty years. Much of their life revolved around Corriher Grange. Kathy recalls missing only one or two Grange meetings over the years.

For Kathy, the Grange Youth program played a very important role in her formative years. Both she and her brother, attended Grange Camp for many summers. Through the years, Kathy has enjoyed one the benefits of camp—making friendships and memories that often last a lifetime. Like so many Grange campers, past and present, Kathy learned the history and values of the Grange. As a reminder, the Grange Core values are below:

Faith: The Grange encourages a belief in the principles of the organization and in the potential of individuals and communities.

Hope: The organization fosters optimism and a belief in a better future for farmers and rural communities.

Charity: The Grange promotes acts of kindness, generosity, and compassion, both within the organization and towards the broader community.

Fidelity: This value emphasizes loyalty, integrity, and a commitment to upholding the principles of the Grange.

In addition to attending Grange Camp, Kathy attended Youth Conferences across North Carolina, staying in the homes of members of the host Grange. On one particular occasion, she stayed in the home of former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt's mother, making a lasting friendship with her, exchanging letters until her death. In addition, Kathy also learned public speaking and parliamentary procedures in Junior and Youth Grange where she served as President, Secretary, Treasurer and Lady Assistant Steward.

There is a long list of the activities Kathy participates in at Corriher Grange. To say she is an invaluable member is an understatement. Currently she serves as Secretary. She has been an integral part of the Spaghetti Supper project that has been a tradition for Corriher for years. She assists in setting standard operating procedures and best practices so the event runs smoothly. Kathy does a lot of the necessary prep work and cooking insuring the event is successful. Kathy was always on hand to help Corriher Grange host the traditional Chicken Noodle, Oyster Stew and Rabbit/Chicken/Squirrel BBQ. This was quite a tradition at Corriher for years. She is always the first to volunteer for service projects, fundraisers and donation drives. Her energy seems to be limitless.

Church life has always played a tremendous role in Kathy's life. She is a member of Concordia Lutheran Church where she serves on the Bereavement Team and provides a "comfort meal" for families after a funeral. Kathy is also a member of the History Team at her church. This organization works on special projects, one of those being the Stained Glass Window Project. Members of the team research the history of the stained glass windows of the church, the artwork of each window and the families that sponsored each window going back to the mid 1940's. Prior to coming back to Concordia Lutheran where she grew up, Kathy was a member of Gilwood Presbyterian. At Gilwood, she served as Deacon and Elder. She chaired Christian Education, Personnel and Finance and the Circle group, as well as serving as President of Presbyterian Women. I can't leave out Kathy's love of playing left field, 2nd base, 3rd base and short stop of the church softball league at Gilwood and Concordia.

Kathy's career spanned 27 seven years working for Watkins Motor Lines/FedEx. In their absence, Kathy adores looking after her neighbors' mules, goats and horses at their farm. In retirement, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Mike, as well as their children, Kabin and Ryan Derry Brown, and their twin granddaughters. She also enjoys taking care of her chickens, flower beds and garden, cooking, baking, and working on her centennial farm where she tends the orchard, riding her father's tractor. She also relaxes while taking rides on her golf cart. She graciously takes friends to doctors appointments and delivers meals to sick members of her community.

Kathy is one of those rare individuals that seems to be able to balance perfectly her life between her faith, her family and her work. She seems to have the rare ability to do what is truly important in her life and not "sweat the small stuff." These attributes go along with someone who deserves the honor of receiving the North Carolina Granger of the Year award. Congratulations Kathy—an honor well deserved!

(information & excerpts taken from Corriher Grange's "2024 Granger of the Year" contest application)

2025 JUNIOR TEAM

This year, we are excited to announce the selection of 10 outstanding juniors who will serve on the Junior Leadership Team at Grange Camp. These young ladies have already shown exceptional promise, and we look forward to watching them grow and shine as leaders throughout the year.

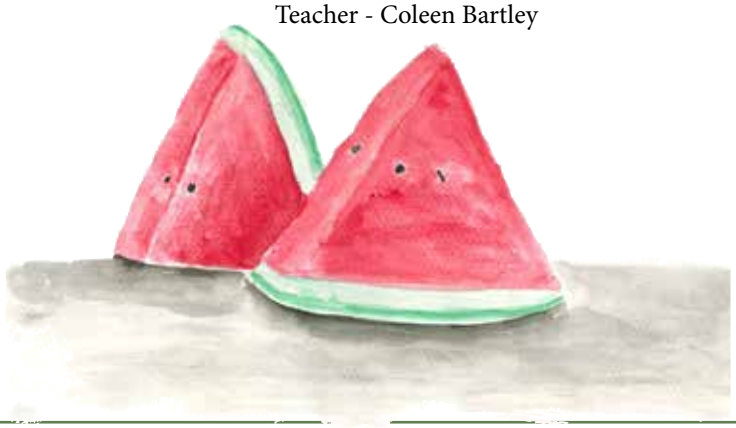
Each of these girls brings unique strengths, enthusiasm, and a heart for service. We are confident they will make a positive impact at Grange Camp and set an inspiring example for others. Congratulations to the 2025 Junior Leadership Team!

Congratulations

REAGAN HARTSELL
SLOAN WALKER
MADDI HAGLER
KINSLEY EUDY
LACI LILES
PAISLEY WALKERS
NEVAEH COMER
SAWYER RANDALL
ANYA WILLIS
VIVIAN NAPPIER

The NC Grange is proud to again sponsor the Farm To School Calendar, a program of the NC Department of Agriculture. Congratulations to the winners who's artwork was selected for the calendar this year.

August - Lucy Freeman, Huntersville Elementary
Teacher: Elizabeth Nicastro
September - Adweth Chipilla, Odell Elementary
Teacher - Arianna Sondrini
October - Georgiana Occhiato, Elkin Elementary
Teacher - Savanna Snow Wilkins
November - Olivia Vester, Rock Ridge Elementary
Teacher - LaNicha Richardson
December - Everly Swift, Richlands Elementary
Teacher - Victoria Lee Good
January - Abigail Van Order, Long Mill Elementary
Teacher - Emily Yando
February - Cole Downs, Bethel Elementary
Teacher - MaeAnna Norris
March - Aleaha Pearson, Robbins Elementary
Teacher - Kylie Edwards
April - Mackenzie Hernandez, Scurlock Elementary
Teacher - Gail Bowen
May - Jose Siquina Ixpertay, Spring Creek Middle
Teacher - Jacqueline DeMatteo
June - Faith Stewart, Kitty Hawk Elementary
Teacher - Brandy Stewart
July - Kelani Herrera, Lillington-Shawtown Elementary (pictured below)
Teacher - Coleen Bartley



GRANTHAM GRANGE

by : Joyce Hood

April 28 through May 1, Grantham and Brogden Granges had the privilege of hosting National Grange President Christine Hamp and her husband Duane. Grantham Grange held their 13th Annual Community Service Awards Dinner on April 28 at Selah Christian Church. With 168 in attendance, this included a meal catered by Parkside Restaurant. The following awards were presented:

- Educator of the Year-Crystal Weeks
- Church of the Year-Manley Grove Pentecostal Holiness Church
- Veteran of the Year-Leonard Luttrell
- Military Person of the Year-Paul Parker
- Fire Department of the Year-Bentonville Volunteer Fire Department
- Fire Fighter of the Year-Garrett Hood
- Law Enforcement Officer of the Year-Danny Edwards
- Farm of the Year-Joey Hood Farm
- Volunteer of the Year-Barbara Blackman
- Youth of the Year-Jayda Harrell
- Grange Family of the Year-John Tart II and LaRue Tart
- Granger of the Year-Sally Waddell
- Dedicated Service Award-Chris Smith

On April 29, Brogden Grange held their quarterly meeting with a catered meal. The program was presented by Robert Elliott with the NC Veterans Farm. Encore sang a medley of James Bond 007 movie themes along with a trivia quiz. It was a fun evening for the community.

During the four days that the Hamps were in town, they attended these Grange events. The days were also full of tours of various interesting places in our area including Waynesborough Park which houses a historical Pomona Grange building, "The Rock" at Dudley Christian Church, the Maxwell Center where we had presentations from Wayne Community College, Lamm Animal Science Ag Facility, NC Cooperative Extension Wayne Center, and Wayne Soil and Water. The group also visited the Tommy and Annie Grantham Farm, Sanderson Farms, Holly Grove Goat Farm, the Nahunta Pork Center, Kornegay Farm at the University of Mt. Olive, and Mt. Olive Pickle Company. We also toured Raleigh City Farm where Rachel Hunt, NC Lieutenant Governor, paid us a visit. On May 1, we traveled to the Ronald McDonald House in Greenville, NC, and delivered supplies from their wish list to stock their pantry. This was our April Community Service Project, which we have been conducting for a number of years. Several of our community members have benefited from staying at the house.

That same evening, we held a hamburger and hot dog cookout at Ed and Denise Luttrell's Farm in Benson, NC. This was quite a beautiful place to hold the event. There were 54 people in attendance from Grantham, Brogden, JoCo, Villeworth, St. John's, Capitol, Westbrook, and Corriher Granges to welcome and visit with our National President who resides in Washington State. We all enjoyed having the Hamps visit our community and hope that they will come back soon. We had four days full of good food, fun, and great fellowship.

Welcome to our newest Grange members!
We are delighted to have you join us.

Associate Members:

Stephen Brown

George Garcia

Susan Jones

Susan Brown

Caroline Arthur

Jessica Kiser

Michelle Perry

Matrimony:

Karrie Dillon

Deana Mabe

Bushy Fork:

Charlane Gross

Brian Ludwig

Faith Fagala

Hailie Mondono

Ferguson:

Robert Anderson

HAMP VISITS NC

by : Jimmy Gentry

National Grange President Chris Hamp and her husband, Dwayne, visited eastern NC, April 27 to May 1, a special treat for NC Grange. They were invited to attend the annual awards banquet at Grantham Grange, but also attended a meeting of Brogden Grange and did some touring of the area. The couple was taken great care of by designated tour drivers Joe Beaman and Macon Massey. During their time in NC, they visited several sites including the Waynesborough Historical Park, "The Rock" at Dudley Christian Church, Wayne Community College Animal Science facility, Wayne County Extension, several farms, the University of Mount Olive farm, and the Mount Olive Pickle Company. A tour of the Raleigh City Farm was taken where the Grange Month Proclamation signed by the Governor was read. Also visiting the farm was Rachel Hunt, Lieutenant Governor of the state.

On their final day in the state, they visited the Ronald McDonald House in Greenville, and was welcomed at a cookout hosted at the home of Ed and Denise Luttrell where a nice contingent of Grange members attended. Members of six different Granges attended where great food and fellowship was experienced. It was a pleasure to have the Hamps visit the state.

CAPITOL NEWS
by : Laurie Barnhart

April and May were extremely busy months at the North Carolina General Assembly. A tally of almost 350 bills crossed over to the opposite chamber making the crossover deadline of May 8. As a reminder, any bill that has an appropriation did not have to make the deadline. To date, the only bill that has been signed into law this session is the Hurricane Relief package, which is so badly needed in Western North Carolina.

The latest focus of the General Assembly has been the rollout of the House's version of the 2025-26 budget. The Senate's version of the budget bill was passed on April 17 and was sent over to the House on the 28th following the Easter break. The House of Representatives began rolling out their version of the budget in subcommittees the week of May 12, and rolled the full version out on May 19. It was passed by the House on Thursday, May 22 with a bipartisan vote of 86-20, with every Republican's vote and 20 Democrats. The budget process seems to be moving on track with the schedule that was set at the beginning of session by Speaker Hall. We are hopeful that the forward moving process will continue. Below are highlights and budget items of significance in the House budget version. (Courtesy of McGuireWoods)

- $11 million over two years to establish new DMV offices in growing areas across the state
- $3 million each year for the DMV to hire new driving examiners and increase license plate production
- $4 million for body cameras and data storage support for Alcohol Law Enforcement and State Highway Patrol
- $400,000 for the Department of Commerce to study the economic impact of motorsports in the state. Includes a provision passed earlier this session that would limit student cell phone use in public schools
- $500,000 to help the Wake County Public School system address widespread HVAC issues
- Increased class size allowance for kindergarten through third grade classrooms in some fast-growing school districts
- An increase of up to 3% in tuition costs for students entering the UNC system with the goal of generating around $30 million in additional revenue
- A $10 million increase in funding for students with special needs
- Removes Medicaid coverage for GLP-1 and other weight management drugs
- Includes a provision to allow the Department of Health and Human Services to seek approval for Medicaid work requirements if the federal government indicates a willingness to approve them
- An additional HHS provision would allow the addition of psychiatric hospitals to the Medicaid healthcare access and stabilization program, better known as HASP
- $60 million in FY 2025-26 and $80 million in FY 2026-27 for the Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement Rates Budget Fund
- Several childcare regulatory reforms including class sizes and teacher qualifications
- The elimination of multiple vacant positions in various departments
- Provides a direct grant to North Carolina Grange to promote the annual North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day

Senate Bill 639, the North Carolina Farm Act of 2025, now sits in the Senate Rules committee where it awaits being calendared for a floor vote. There were several provisions in the bill that created confrontation from the public.

- The raw milk provision which prohibits the sale of raw milk for nonhuman consumption has caused quite a stir. The provision regarding the sale of raw milk for nonhuman consumption reads as follows: *"Only milk that is Grade "A" pasteurized milk may be sold or dispensed directly to consumers for human consumption. Raw milk and raw milk products shall be sold or dispensed only to a permitted milk hauler or to a processing facility at which the processing of milk is permitted, graded, or regulated by a local, State, or federal agency. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the dispensing of raw milk or raw milk products for personal use or consumption to, or the acquisition of raw milk or raw milk products for personal use or consumption by, an independent or partial owner of a cow, goat, or other lactating animal."* This provision placing restrictions on the sale of raw milk has been added in the 2025 Farm Act due to positive testing for the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in pet cats that resulted in death.

The second proviion that has proved to be very contentious is Provision 19 which limits liability for FIFRA-compliant labeling. The targeted herbicide, Roundup, whose active ingredient is glyphosate, has been deemed to be cancerous. Because there is no evidence of Glyphosate causing cancer, the EPA, which dictates the required wording on product labeling, does not demand that the product be labeled as such. Bayer CropScience has paid approximately $10 billion to settle these disputed claims to date, with 67,000 further cases still pending. Bayer has had to put aside $5.9 billion in legal provisions because of these pending cases. Farmers have been depending on Roundup to help control weeds for over 50 years. It is used throughout the country and has been found to be a highly effective herbicide. (info from Reuters) The 2025 North Carolina Farm Act, Senate Bill 639, supports the legislation to clarify package labeling in Section 19 of the bill. It reads as follows:
Establishes that the duty of a manufacturer or seller of a pesticide to warn a consumer or the public about the risks associated with the pesticide under GS 99B-5 (failure to warn claims) is presumed to be satisfied if the pesticide bears the label approved by the US EPA under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act and the pesticide is registered with the Pesticide Board. Provides for rebuttal of the presumption.

In the last two weeks, the Senate has held confirmation meetings on three appointed state officials. Don van der Vaart was confirmed for one of the positions on the Utility Commission. Van der Vaart currently serves as Chief Administrative Law Judge and Director of the Office of Administrative Hearings. Chris Ayers, who currently serves on the Utility Commission will serve another term. Regina Smith was nominated to the Employment Security Board of Review representing State Employees. She currently is vice-chair of the board. Both Smith and Ayers were nominated by Governor Stein and Van Der Vaart by State Treasurer Brad Briner.

After the Budget Bill was passed in the House, both chambers adjourned for Memorial Day week.

On the Hill

National Grange Legislative Update

Farm Bill Charts New Territory

The House Agriculture Committee finished a marathon committee markup session to include parts of the farm bill funding in the fiscal 2025 budget reconciliation process. That's a break from tradition whereby the farm bill is normally adopted as a stand-alone bill. The strategy here is to rearrange funding priorities and budget cuts and include these in a massive must-pass legislative package that only requires a simple majority vote. The 2025 budget resolution passed by the House and Senate in April requires the Ag Committee to come up with $230 billion in net spending cuts over 10 years. The Ag Committee voted to cut $290 billion from nutrition assistance (SNAP) and use $60 billion of those savings to increase spending on commodity programs, crop insurance, trade promotion and several other farm bill programs. The legislation would require states to cover some of the costs associated with the SNAP program going forward. Democrats on the committee opposed the bill. Funding farm programs by cutting SNAP benefits risks rupturing a urban-rural coalition that long has been seen as crucial to enacting farm bills. Committee leadership says that by tightening SNAP provisions, adding additional work requirements, and eliminating waste, fraud and abuse, those truly in need will continue to receive assistance. The legislation could face changes when it is considered by the Senate Agriculture Committee.

GOTCHA COVERED
by : Mark Davis

DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS?

I start this article by referring to the NC Cattlemen's Convention I attended in Hickory at the end of February. One of the folks I spent time with at the conference trade show was Preston Cave from Stokes County. We had met earlier in the month at the Ag Commissioners breakfast during the Southern Farm Show in Raleigh where he received the 2024 Innovative Young Farmer of the Year Award. You may have seen Preston in various news broadcasts after Hurricane Helene hit the western part of our state when he used his drone fleet to deliver critical supplies to individuals that were inaccessible except by air. While he was in Raleigh, he didn't have much time to talk as he was meeting and greeting many folks to receive their congratulations and appreciation for thinking outside of the box on how to reach the those stranded by the hurricane.

Preston and his family raise cattle for beef. Managing a forage crop led to his introduction into the drone world. They had a summer forage crop, and the fields need overseeding for their fall and winter grazing. However, the summer annuals had grown too tall for any conventional methods of overseeding without severely damaging their existing crop. Preston developed a connection with an agricultural specialty drone operator in Georgia that would come to Surry County. That operator came, overseeded the acreage needed, and once the cows started grazing that area, they also incorporated the seeding into the soil by walking over the ground. The venture was quite successful, and Preston's father said they should get one of those drones. Thus, PAC Aerial Applications was conceived and lifted off the ground after a long period of becoming properly licensed and insured!

Preston has since flown all over North Carolina spraying, fertilizing, and seeding crops and pastures, as well as assisting in recovery efforts for lands devastated by Hurricane Helene. He recently sent me a video of one of his flights in the mountains where they were fertilizing some mountain land that had never received any fertilizer due to the extreme terrain.

His efforts here will help in the reestablishment of ground cover which reduces soil erosion and improves water quality in the area.

Preston recently demonstrated his drone spraying at our local Cattlemen's meeting with great success where I got to use my drone to film his drone. Prior to the meeting, he sprayed about 25 acres of the host farm's pastures and hay fields. One of the hosts told me later that what the drone accomplished in about two and half hours would have taken him at least a couple of days by the time they calibrated their sprayer and traveled between areas folding and unfolding the spray booms.

The one huge advantage I am seeing of using a drone in farm applications in my area is the ability to fly over wet ground where a tractor or sprayer will have to wait until the ground is dry enough to traverse. The other major advantage, which is under study now, revolves around the down draft of the drone propellers. The down draft forces the application downward for better leaf or ground contact depending upon whether the mission is spraying, fertilizing, or seeding, while reducing the risk of chemical drift. This factor could lead to farmers having to use less chemical(s) and having the same or better results due to this "forced" contact with the targeted area verses gravity alone.

So, bringing it back to our NC Grange Insurance Program, how does this "drone" experience apply to us? Quite simply, just as Preston had to think outside of the box when he found himself in need of the crop overseeding as well as when helping our fellow NC residents in the mountains with hurricane relief efforts, we need to look at what tools, insurance products that is, and how we can use them to maximize our ability to reach our financial goals. For example, let's consider Long-Term Care Insurance. This is a product that no one wants to use, but unfortunately many will need some form of care sometime in their future. One of the common arguments to obtaining Long-Term Care is, "If I do not ever need it, look at the money we have wasted on insurance that I didn't need." For that concern, I would suggest a hybrid policy. This policy provides a life insurance benefit if the individual never or partially uses the Long-Term Care benefits. Another insurance tool commonly overlooked is Long Term Disability Insurance. Your ability to work is typically the most valuable asset you have. Consider what your family finances would look like if you were not able to work. A major accident or illness is often the percussor to medical bankruptcy. Speaking of medical bankruptcy, a solid health insurance plan will stem off any astronomical medical bills with their insured Maximum Out of Pocket Limits (MOP). Thankfully, our BCBSNC plans has this built into all their plans that we can offer.

Looking back to the title of this article, do you have the tools that you need? Remember that we travel through life, needs do change, so be sure that you contact one of our NC Grange agents to make sure that you have the right tools for this stage of your life!

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Drawing by Cole Downs, Farm To School Calendar Winner