

GRANGE NEWS



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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 14-16	Winter Youth Conference Asheboro, NC
March 6-9	Family Conference Beaufort, NC
July 6-12	Grange Camp Columbia, NC
September 11-14	State Convention Charlotte, NC
November 8-15	National Convention Carnival Cruise

STATE OFFICERS

President	Jimmy Gentry
Vice President	David Allen
Program Director	Bobbie Dellinger
Steward	Mark Hood
Assistant Steward	Jason Davis
Lady Asst. Steward	Crystal Allen
Chaplain	LaRue Tart
Treasurer	Julia Stack
Secretary	Barden Culbreth
Greeter	Joseph Beaman
Ceres	Dianne Hudson
Pomona	Sharon Ritchie
Flora	Wanda Crawford

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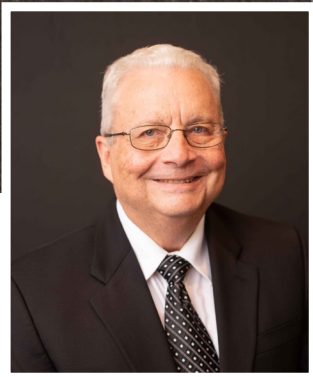
DEPARTMENT HEADS

Insurance Programs	Mark Davis
Coordinator	
Legislative Director	Laurie Barnhart
Youth/Young Adult Director	Jennie Gentry
Admin /Junior Director	Emily Hartsell
Community Service Director	Anna Liles
Events/Publications Director	Jessica Horton
Agriculture Programs	Dewitt Hardee
Coordinator	

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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WE APPRECIATE FARMERS

FROM JIMMY

Recently, the first annual Farmer Appreciation Day was held with a large event in Raleigh. In addition, some of our Granges conducted local events, for which I very much appreciate. NC Grange has advocated for farming for a long time, and we were pleased to be designated as the lead organization to put together the special day.

Farmers feed, clothe, and house us every day. Our very existence is dependent upon those who farm and the products they grow. Therefore, it is vitally important that farmers are able to remain in business and make a decent living. This is where the regulatory framework comes into play. Government actions can help agriculture or cause harm. As a result, it is necessary for organizations such as the Grange to keep an eye out and fight for common sense, science-based legislation that proves to be beneficial for farmers.

When I was teaching agriculture long ago, the first sentence of the FFA Creed was, "I believe in the future of farming." I believe the wording has been changed some over the years, but I always thought it was such a good statement. Many years

later, farming is much different now with improved efficiency, higher production, and also more advanced equipment. Even today, I remain optimistic about the future of farming. After all, we cannot live without it!

Agriculture remains the largest industry in North Carolina. It is also a very diverse industry with the wide variety of crops and livestock grown. Farming in eastern NC is different from the west, but the climate difference as well as soil differences allow for this diversity. It really gives farmers in the state more options when making production decisions. At the same time, researchers are looking for new crops that might do well here. NC Grange must continue to be supportive of farming and be a part of ensuring that farmers have the opportunity to be successful in their efforts.



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

Cape Fear Grange

Adrian Madsen

Wilkes CC Grange

Tegan Robinson

Tylie Chothom

Payton Smith

Lilly Springfield

Hailey Triplett

Grange Camp

Save

The

Date

July 6-12

CORRIHER GRANGE by : Carrie Brown

Corriher Grange celebrated the inaugural North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day on Thursday, November 14, at its Grange Hall in Rowan County. Our Grange invited local farmers to enjoy a catered meal as a thank you for their hard work in providing food, fiber, and fuel to our communities, our state, and our country.

Forty-five guests attended the luncheon and were able to enjoy Gary's Barbecue and fellowship with their colleagues and neighbors. Eighteen of the guests were Corriher Grange members and included a range from first generation farms to Century Farms. Our Grange would like to congratulate member Adam Barnhardt of Barnhardt Farms in Rowan County as he was awarded third place in the Young Farmer of the Year program at the NC Farmers Appreciation Day celebration in Raleigh. Corriher Grange looks forward to celebrating and thanking our local farmers annually on the second Thursday in November.

North Carolina agriculture is the largest economic driver in the state with an impact of over \$100 billion and ranks third nationally in agriculture diversity. Farmers Appreciation Day was designated to show appreciation to all North Carolina farmers by the North Carolina Grange in collaboration with the NC Department of Agriculture, NC Commodities, and NC Farm Bureau.



Carrie & Adam Barnhardt, Henry Goodnight, Lonnie Hoffner, Lee Goodnight



BROGDEN GRANGE by : Jane Beaman

On Saturday, October 26, members of Brogden Grange completed a community service project to clean up the grounds of the O'Berry / Wiggins Cemetery on O'Berry Road in Dudley, NC. We met at Dudley Christian Church for a quick breakfast before heading out. Our shovels hit the dirt around 9:00 AM. Upon our arrival at the cemetery, we noticed that much of the weed pulling had been finished, which was a lovely surprise. We learned later in the morning that some of the Wiggins family members had been on site and cleared most of the weeds, briars, and sticks from the area.

This cemetery, like so many in our area, is located in the middle of a farm with crops growing around it. Because of plowing year after year, much of the earth has gathered around the perimeter and banked up against the outside head stones. Our first task became digging around these stones so as to expose all the writings and information on the half-buried markers. The soil was soft and dry, so our shovels made good time.

As the morning progressed, we uncovered three completely buried headstones and four buried footstones. It felt like we were archeologists wondering what we would discover next. A most interesting find was that of an infant named Sarah Elizabeth O'Berry, date of birth January 1864, and date of death February 1865. This was so sad, yet her stone was in very good condition, having had the earth cradling her for so many years. We cleaned her stone with D2 and water along with those of the relatives around her. This should keep them looking great and readable for quite a long time to come.

Wiggins family members arrived, and they were very surprised at what we had unearthed. Some of them are heavy equipment operators who were eager to return to the cemetery to reset the fallen headstones and level out the ground. It was uplifting to know that this family was interested in preserving this place for future generations.

We want to thank the families of Rodney Wiggins and Brenda O'Berry Dexter for all the cooperation and financial donations they contributed to this project as well as Grange member, Karen Nethercutt, who headed up the project. She is quite knowledgeable about cemetery cleanup and is considered to be a history buff extraordinaire. We also thank Grangers Jimmy & Anita Martin, Joseph & Jane Beaman, Anita Lanier and John Crawford who helped with this project.



Be sure to check out The Grange Hall Podcast on Spotify, Apple Music, etc.

EDNEYVILLE GRANGE by : Wendy Henderson



Edneyville Grange has been overwhelmed with the outpouring of financial and clothing help that has come from not only North Carolina, but from across the United States after Hurricane Helene. We would never have dreamed of all the concern and desire to help people in our immediate community as well as across WNC. We have heard from Granges in Alaska, Washington, California, Maine, Ohio, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and many other states. We have distributed some of the Walmart gift cards and are working on a plan to distribute the clothing pictured in the boxes that came from Pennsylvania. We are also working on plans to work with families as they move back into their homes or relocate to new homes. We are sure there will be some financial needs and will be so pleased to help those folks because of the generous Grange support. We are continuing to heal and rebuild roads and driveways as well as get our internet back.

I knew the Grange had chapters across the US, but I guess that I never realized how “connected” we all are. Again, we truly appreciate everyone’s concern, help, support, and friendship. It makes me proud to be a Granger. Thank you SO MUCH!!!!

Pictured left are boxes full of sweat shirts, sweat pants, pjs, underwear, and leggings for children, they are 10 boxes shipped from PA. There was also a trailer load of clothes brought by the state Grange as well as many boxes delivered from Michigan delivered by Jennie and Emily.

GRANTHAM GRANGE by : Joyce Hood

Grange members from Grantham Grange attended the National Grange Convention in Bettendorf, Iowa. They enjoyed their trip, which was full of fun, food and fellowship along with workshops, business sessions and tours. During the convention, our Grange also made a \$300.00 donation to Wreaths Across America, which was the National Grange Community Service Project. We received a lot of good information and hope to have a program on this at one of our future meetings and help put out wreaths in 2025.

On November 14 in honor of NC Farmers Appreciation Day, a group of our members made 20 phone calls to Wayne County farmers letting them know how much we appreciate them and what they do for us. Although a group of us were at National Convention that day, we met and spoke about how this honor came to fruition by a resolution from our Grange as we made our appreciation calls to farmers. Grantham Grange also sent letters to our members that are farmers thanking them and inviting them to our Christmas Dinner on January 4 where they will be honored and presented a gift.

Pictured: Linda Crawford, Mark Hood, Joseph Beaman, Connie Johnston with Wreaths Across America, Joyce Hood, John Crawford, Wanda Crawford, Jane Beaman, Anita Martin and Jimmy Martin.





THANK YOU & LOOKING FORWARD TO 2025

As we near the end of a wonderful 2024, I want to take a moment and thank you for the amazing support that you have shown not only to Martha's Mission at our Family Conference last March and to the Ronald McDonald House of Durham at our State Convention in September, but also to our neighbors in the western part of the state. The community service projects that have been conducted at the local level across our state are astounding to see, and I can't wait to see what you all do in 2025.

As we quickly move into 2025, I wanted to inform you of the community service project for our upcoming Family Conference in March. We will be collecting items for the Carteret County Domestic Violence Program, which supports happy, healthy, safe, and strong families by helping women, men, and children rebuild their lives from domestic issues. Domestic Violence affects people from all walks of life, and you can help stop the cycle.

Please help us serve this amazing program by collecting the following items and bringing them to this year's conference:

- *Non-perishable food items
- *Toilet paper
- *Paper towels
- *Hand soap
- *Disposable gloves
- *Medium and tall kitchen trash bags
- *Large black trash bags
- *Bottled water

As always, thank you for everything you do and keep doing the great work you are doing!



TASTE AND SEE

"I don't like that. Do I have to eat that?" asked with a whine. Does that sound familiar to those of you who have young children or grandchildren when you present them with a new food? I sometimes have answered with, "How do you know that you don't like it if you've never tried it? Taste and see and you might like it."

The psalmist David wrote in Psalms 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him". Matthew Henry's commentary states, "The goodness of God includes both the beauty and amiableness of His being and the bounty and beneficence of His providence and grace." Unless we partake of these blessings of the Lord, we are missing out on the goodness of His word and promises. "God is good all the time, and all the time God is good."

At this writing the holidays are upon us and so many of us will gather around the table to taste and see the delicious recipes prepared by loving family members. I can already see the smiles, hear the laughter all around, the camaraderie between all, and the memories made. Then there are those of us who excitedly ask for the recipe of the delightful new dish we just tasted.

God's word is like a recipe for our life. But recipes are only successful if we read them and follow the directions. If you leave out any necessary ingredients, then the results are not tasteful. The same goes for our lives. Let's commit to reading the Bible daily. It is our recipe of our daily bread and for a good Christian example.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Don't forget the blessing first, "God is great, God is Good, let us thank Him for our food."

North Carolina's 2024 Inaugural North Carolina Farmer Appreciation Day

A Rainy Celebration

by : Laurie Barnhart



After more than a year of hard work and coordination, the North Carolina Grange is proud to say that the first-ever North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day was a tremendous success. The Grange, along with the support of the NC Department of Agriculture, the NC Farm Bureau and many of our North Carolina commodities, hosted this inaugural event. Special guest and keynote speaker was former United States Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue. The Farmer of the Year and Young Farmer of the Year were recognized, and all of the state's farmers were honored at a celebration dinner in the Tobacco Pavilion at the NC State Fairgrounds. The Pavilion was fitted with clear panels to be used if it was rainy and cold, and rainy and cold it was! It was a packed house; however, a roaring fire and beautiful flower arrangements made a very cozy venue proving once again that farmers are NOT "fair-weather friends!"

NC Farmers Appreciation Day would not be possible without the efforts of the NC Grange, who led the initiative to have a designated day to show appreciation for North Carolina Farmers. With support from the NC Dept. of Agriculture, NC Farm Bureau, and NC commodities, the initiative was presented to Rep. Jimmy Dixon of Duplin County who crafted a bill to recognize a North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day. Every second Thursday in November is set aside as a day of appreciation and recognition for all North Carolina farmers and farm families.

North Carolina agriculture is over a \$100 billion industry, driving much of the state's economic success. Behind this robust industry are the hard-working farmers who produce our food, fuel, and fiber. North Carolina is home to over 46,000 farms, many of which are more than 100 years old. The state has deep roots in agriculture, and a bright future.

This year's NC Farmer of the Year went to Curtis Smith of Seven Springs. TC Smith grows a variety of produce on his farm including strawberries, cantaloupe, sweet corn, collards and watermelon.

He is a fourth-generation farmer who is heavily involved in the agricultural community. He has been named the Strawberry Grower of the Year and inducted into the NC Vegetable Growers Hall of Fame. "Curtis Smith is an anchor of our local produce community. Young and beginning farmers look to Curtis for guidance and try to emulate him," said nominators Lisa Rayburn and Tammy Kelly of NC Cooperative Extension. "He serves as an unofficial mentor to many aspiring growers while also serving a role in supporting the entire local produce community."

"When man has not enough to eat, he has one problem. When he has plenty to eat, he has many problems. Folks, we have a lot of problems in this country today. Why? Because you fed everybody so well."

- Sonny Perdue, Former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture



Receiving Young Farmer of the Year (35 years or younger) was John Norwood of Ruffin. Norwood is a fifth-generation farmer producing beef, pork, hay, lamb, blueberries, and blackberries to individuals and restaurants. He volunteers as a leader in both

FFA, 4H and the NC Farm Bureau. “John Norwood exemplifies the qualities of a young farmer worth recognizing. His leadership, innovation, and a passion for agriculture extends beyond his own operation. He is a valuable asset to the agricultural community and an inspiration to other young farmers,” said Brandon Hartman, Rockingham County Livestock and Forage Crops Extension Agent. Norwood said he was shocked to be a finalist, let alone win Young Farmer of the Year. He said of the other finalists, “I’ve learned to respect them very much and what they do. I’m still in shock over here because I don’t feel like I do anything more than so many other people do every day.”

Other finalists in the Farmer of the Year category included runner-up, Marlowe Ivey of Goldsboro and third place, Reggie Strickland of Mt. Olive. Young Farmer of the Year finalists were Ethan Lineberger of Dallas in second place and Adam Barnhardt of Mooresville in third place. In addition to farmers and agriculturalists, special guests NC Representative Jimmy Dixon, NC Senator Brent Jackson, NC Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler, and Ray Starling with the NC Chamber were also in attendance at the celebration dinner.





2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION

BY: JENNIE GENTRY

Grange members from across the nation traveled to Bettendorf, Iowa, in mid-November for the 158th National Grange Convention. This is the last event of the year that Grange members travel to, and our NC delegation represented us well. State Delegates and National Officers and staff arrived by Sunday, November 10, to begin business sessions, orientation, and committee meetings on Monday. David Allen and Crystal Allen served as our state's delegates.

After officially opening the convention, National Grange President Chris Hamp gave her annual address on Tuesday afternoon. She touched on several legislative issues including the expired farm bill, encouraging legislators to take action to support our country's farmers. Hamp also challenged members by asking them to answer the question, "What am I doing to ensure the American dream remains alive?" She focused on change over time and how today's younger generations are struggling to gain their footing compared to previous generations, needing more help. After her inspirational address, the delegates continued their work on resolutions.

Most attendees arrived by Wednesday including youth. The evening session was full of excited members who stood and cheered in the annual Roll Call of States. Following, four past

Grange members were inducted into the National Grange Hall of Fame and fifteen veterans received their Quilts of Valor for their military service. After the session adjourned, youth activities began with games led by the National Youth Ambassador Team including NC's Ashley Holloman and Asheton Medlin.

Thursday morning featured a tour of John Deere's Davenport factory. Attendees wore headsets and rode on mini "trains" that took them around the factory to see the incredible technology and work that goes into building some of the company's finest farm equipment. The afternoon brought "Corn Council" activities for youth, a *Survivor* team competition that lasted throughout the week that our Ambassador Team created for young people to engage in teamwork.

That afternoon the annual Public Speaking Contest was held, for which Cade Howerton from NC brought home first place. His speech compared the characters from *The Wizard of Oz* to types of Grange members. Attendees were also able to attend several interesting workshops including meteorology, fundraising, and ag professions. After a great day with friends, the evening brought a Square Dance Hoe Down that included line dances and square dancing in "hoe down" attire.

Laci Liles attended the convention this year as our Junior Grange Ambassador. She participated in games and activities led by National Junior Ambassador Gayle Reyburn from Pennsylvania. These young Grangers participated in workshops, attended tours and enjoyed new experiences. It was wonderful watching Laci as she proudly represented NC in this leadership role.

The National Grange Youth Officers started their Friday morning early with practice and a meet-and-greet with the National Officers who offered words of wisdom and encouragement. The session room was full as convention goers watched the Youth Officers perform their drills and open the session. Serving on the team were six youth from NC including Caroline Barber, Lecturer; Jaiden McDougald, Steward; Peyton Musser, Secretary; Brayden Eudy, Treasurer; Cade Howerton, Gatekeeper; and Kayla Laws, Ceres. This is always a highlight of the convention and these youth did a fantastic job. During this session, Ashley Hollomon and Asheton Medlin, National Ambassador Team Members, gave their farewell speech. Instead of the usual speech, they created a "Thank You" video to thank people, places and items from their year's travels as a parody of Jimmy Fallon's *Thank You Notes*, making the crowd laugh. Jennie Gentry also gave this year's Youth Report as Chairman of the National Grange Youth Committee.

The GROW Club reception was held Friday evening where NC Youth Ambassadors Taylor Rogers and Carter Settle were inducted into this special club that includes a long list of past youth leaders. Afterwards, the National Grange Honors Night commenced. A variety of recognitions were made, and it was a big night for NC Grange. Laci Liles was named National Junior Ambassador. Two Granges from our state were named Distinguished Granges: Grantham Grange and St. John's Grange. NC also received the National Grange Connector Award, the Cultivator of the Year Award, and the Distinguished State Grange Youth Program Award. The Ritchie Family and Walker Family, both of St. John's Grange in NC were recognized for 5 generations of Grange membership. NC Grange also received recognition for largest membership growth.

The evening ended with the announcement of Taylor Rogers being selected as National Youth Ambassador to serve on the 2025 National Youth Leadership Team. She received her sash

from one of her best friends, Asheton Medlin, as she passed the torch to Taylor. Making it even more special, Jennie Gentry was the one who got to make the announcement. Needless to say, we were beaming with pride for NC Grange that night!

Saturday morning started with several workshops for all ages including a mental health workshop for youth with Rural Minds Executive Director, Chuck Strand. Asheton Medlin and Ashley Holloman have been selected by the National Grange to serve on a new Rural Minds Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Advisory Committee. This group is made up of college students and young professionals who will offer input into the creation of a new pilot program offering teen and young adult peer support for mental health care. They did a great job discussing the program and getting input from the youth who attended the workshop. Youth ended their morning with the final Corn

Council and the announcement that the blue team led by Asheton Medlin won for the week.

At Saturday night's Celebration Banquet to commemorate the week, the crowd was entertained as Cade Howerton delivered his winning speech. Before ending the night, David and Crystal Allen spoke on the 2025 Convention at Sea, expressing their excitement to host the convention next year. It was a wonderful trip for those who attended. Grange members enjoyed their time together celebrating accomplishments and visiting with friends. We are already looking forward to next year's convention, a cruise on the Carnival Horizon!





Laci Liles Named National Junior Ambassador



I am excited to introduce our newest National Grange Junior Ambassador, Laci Liles! Laci was selected to represent NC as the Junior Ambassador at the 158th National Grange Convention in Iowa. Laci is the daughter of Anna and Joshua Liles. She has an older brother, Levi, and is the granddaughter of Karen McKenzie. She is a Junior member of Juniper Grange.

While attending the convention, we visited some fun places with Laci including the Antique Archaeology, which some of you would recognize from the hit TV show, American Pickers. We also toured the John Deere plant in Davenport, a 2.2 million square foot facility. To put that into perspective, it is about the size of 37 football fields under one roof. We got to observe from start to finish how the equipment was made, from the first cut of the steel to the last test being performed. At this facility, they build articulated dump trucks, 4-wheel drive loaders, and motor graders. We also visited the John Deere Pavilion where we could climb into a combine and other tractors. And of course, we shopped for souvenirs from the on-site store.



On Friday evening, the National Grange held its annual Grange Honors Night. During the ceremonies, Ryleigh and Raegan Hartsell (Ritchie Family) were recognized as 5th generations Grangers along with Sloan and Silas Walker (Walker Family). All four of these young members are from St. John's Grange. During the award ceremony, Laci was selected as one of the National Junior Ambassadors. It was an exciting moment to watch as Gayle Reyburn, the outgoing Junior Ambassador and friend to Laci, placed the new sash on Laci. It was a wonderful moment for our Junior Program!

Saturday morning, Laci presented a workshop on Water and Agriculture in North Carolina. After her workshop, she led several rounds of BINGO and put together an amazing game of Kahoot. The juniors enjoyed her workshop and enjoyed the bag of goldfish even more. We are so proud of Laci for her accomplishment and look forward to watching her lead activities across the country this year.



TAYLOR ROGERS NAMED NATIONAL YOUTH AMBASSADOR

The Grange Honors Night at the National Grange Convention in Iowa brought much excitement for our state's youth program. After the announcement that Lacie Liles was selected as National Junior Ambassador, our very own Taylor Rogers was named National Youth Ambassador. Taylor was presented with her new sash from one of her closest Grange friends, Asheton Medlin, who ended her year-long term on the 2024 team. Words cannot describe the excitement that all of us from North Carolina felt when the announcement was made.

Serving as National Grange Youth Ambassador is the most prestigious leadership position youth can hold in the National Grange, which Taylor has worked very hard this year to achieve. In her new role, she will travel to Regional Conferences, give presentations, promote the youth program, engage in legislative work, assist the national youth committee, and lead youth activities. Joining Taylor on the team are sisters Ashlan and Shae Smith of Pennsylvania.

The selection process involves several requirements including an interview with a panel of judges while attending the National Convention. This year's panel was unanimous in their decision to select Taylor, crediting her outgoing personality, her strong leadership skills, her drive to succeed, and her enthusiastic devotion to the Grange. On being selected as National Youth Ambassador, Taylor stated, "I look forward to serving as an ambassador and am excited to connect with youth across the country. I hope to make a positive impact and especially hope to grow our youth program. I am truly honored to have been selected and promise to work hard and make my state proud!"

A member of Camp Grange, Taylor is a sophomore at Western Carolina University where she is studying Elementary Education to become a teacher. The daughter of Jeremy and Chasidy Rogers of New Bern, NC, she enjoys serving her community and working with children. She also serves as the Franklin High School's Color Guard Coach near her university and is passionate about mentoring the girls on the team. Taylor was also very active in her high school FFA chapter and enjoys assisting them anytime she is home from college.

NC Grange is very proud of Taylor for her many accomplishments this year. It has been a privilege to watch this impressive young lady grow into such an impactful leader over the past few years. We look forward to watching her lead in 2025 and are excited to see the many things she will achieve.

"I look forward to serving as an ambassador and am excited to connect with youth across the country. I hope to make a positive impact and especially hope to grow our youth program. I am truly honored to have been selected and promise to work hard and make my state proud!"



A photograph of a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket, speaking into a microphone at a podium. The background is a dark red curtain.

Medlin Speaks Out on Mental Health in a *USA Today* Film

by: Jennie Gentry

It all started with a speech contest. A speech contest that led to a three-year journey full of incredible opportunities in the Grange. A speech contest that gave one of our youth the platform and the safe space to speak out on mental health. A speech contest that led to the strengthening of a partnership between a rural youth from North Carolina, an organization called Rural Minds, and a film crew from *USA Today*.

In 2022, Asheton Medlin was a 19-year-old serving on our State Youth Leadership Team. She entered our State Grange's Youth Public Speaking Contest that year. She won. She received the opportunity to present her speech at the Regional Contest in Washington DC. She won again. So, she traveled to Reno, Nevada, for the National Grange Convention where she gave her speech a final time. Her moving delivery and her topic, mental health issues that young college students face, made a very powerful speech that impacted the large crowd who gave her a standing ovation. This one speech sparked a new journey for Asheton.

At that same convention, Jeff Winton, founder of Rural Minds, spoke to all in attendance on the partnership between his organization and the National Grange. Rural Minds is a nonprofit that serves as the informed voice for mental health in rural America and provides mental health information and resources. Jeff started the organization after the 2012 suicide of his beloved nephew.

The following year at the 2023 National Convention in Niagara Falls, NY, Jeff Winton attended again to offer more program information. He introduced more people from his team and organized a panel of experts to conduct an informative mental health workshop to answer questions from the crowd. Invited to serve on the panel to offer a student perspective was Asheton Medlin. Jeff was looking for someone to represent her age group, and due to Asheton's power 2022 speech, she was recommended. As a panelist, Asheton gave great insight into the minds of young people and how easily their mental health is affected by issues such as school stress,

social media, and worries about the future.

Asheton worked closely with Jeff for this event. After that workshop, he expressed to me how impressed he was with Asheton. He especially loved that she was using her voice to make an impact, even though her ultimate goal is to become a veterinarian, which made him smile. His comments made me soar with happiness for Asheton's successes, and I walked away feeling like this was not the last time Asheton would be asked to serve. I was right.

At that 2023 convention, twenty-year-old Asheton also served as State Youth Ambassador for NC. At the end of the week, she was named to the 2024 National Grange Ambassador Team, another huge accomplishment. In March of 2024, Asheton traveled to Washington DC where she and her teammates, Garrett and Ashley, attended Ag Day and other legislative events for the National Grange. While there, Asheton was approached by National Grange Legislative Director Burton Eller with a new opportunity. National Grange, Rural Minds, and Pfizer partnered together and wanted to interview her for a story for *USA Today*. Of course, Asheton accepted.

Asheton's journey broadened immensely at this point and things moved fast. She described, "Pfizer reached out first to schedule a series of interviews via Zoom. With each meeting, more and more people joined, and by the third one, they asked if I would be willing to be in a short film." After accepting the opportunity on the spot, all the meetings from that day forward were focused on planning the video. Before she knew it, a video crew traveled to Roxboro to film her in her small, rural hometown.

As Asheton spoke with me about the entire filming process, she expressed, "The experience was very cool, but also very intimidating. However, anytime I questioned myself, the crew encouraged me. They gave me great support when I was nervous about not saying everything I wanted to say." Asheton said that what stood out to her the most was how hard all three groups worked to make this happen. She continued, "I wasn't

sure what to expect, but everyone went out of their way to make it easy and comfortable and put in a lot of effort to make the film happen. They even asked me for my input and what I wanted as we were filming, which really impressed me and gave me reassurance.”

The goal of the film was to feature a small town like Roxboro and show how rural towns do not always have the same amount of resources that big cities do when it comes to assisting with mental health issues. They also do not always receive the same representation on the news as big cities. This film highlights a young adult, Asheton, passionate about mental health and wanting more people to recognize that rural citizens need more resources and assistance.

We showed the video during a luncheon at our State Grange Convention to demonstrate all the incredible work Asheton has done, but to also highlight the partnerships the Grange has with these organizations and the importance of offering better mental health assistance in rural areas. The film has been seen by people all over the country and can be found at this link: <https://www.ruralminds.org/rural-minds-in-the-news/closing-the-mental-health-gap-among-rural-youth-in-the-us>.

Asheton’s journey has continued beyond this powerful film. Now age twenty-one, she was selected by the National Grange to serve on the new Rural Minds Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Program Advisory Committee. This group, that was part of a workshop at the national convention in Iowa, is made up of college students and young professionals who will offer input into the creation of a new pilot program offering teen and young adult peer support for more mental health care. Asheton’s teammate, Ashley Hollomon from North Carolina, has also been selected to serve with this group. Ashley is an agriculture teacher and FFA Advisory in Johnston County and

recognizes the massive importance for a program like this for rural students.

It is pretty incredible how the Grange helped one youth to embark on a three-year journey to become a strong voice for young people suffering from mental health issues. It may have started with one speech contest, but it led to a workshop panel, a feature film, and an advisory board for a new peer program. As Asheton and Ashley’s journey continues, we will deliver future updates as this group continues their work and programs that are developed to assist young people in all communities around the state and nation.



Left: Asheton winning 1st place for her speech at Regional Conference in Washington DC in 2022.

Below: Asheton serving on the panel in 2023.

Bottom: From the *USA Today* film





CAPITOL NEWS

by : Laurie Barnhart

The end of the year is always a very busy time for most of us. This year with the devastation of Hurricane Helene, and then the General Election following closely behind, this fall has been a total blur. The General Assembly has convened three times since the storm to appropriate hurricane relief funds to areas in Western North Carolina. During these sessions, the General Assembly has also used the opportunity to override several bills that Governor Cooper vetoed while they still have a veto proof super majority. In January when the 2025 Long Session convenes with a new slate of members, the General Assembly will lose their supermajority. Although they will still be able to override the Governor's vetoes, it will become more of a challenge to garner the votes.

During the week of November 18, the General Assembly appropriated the following funds to the Helene Fund.

- \$227 million to the Helene Fund established in a previous relief bill.
 - \$2 million in nonrecurring funds from the Helene Fund to provide technical support to soil and water conservation districts in affected areas.
 - \$25 million in nonrecurring funds for the Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program to help provide debris removal services in the affected area.
 - \$50 million to the Office of Recovery and Resiliency for the Rebuild NC Program for homeowner recovery projects related to hurricanes Florence and Matthew.
 - Allows the Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Asheville to use any remaining tuition grant funds to help UNCA.
 - Temporarily allows a supplier of water to operate a transient non-community public water system in affected areas for up to 59 days without an operating permit.
 - Temporarily allows pump and haul wastewater permits to be issued to a temporary housing unit in an affected area to remain valid for 12 months.
 - Requires local health departments to allow a homeowner in an affected area to connect temporary housing to an existing wastewater treatment system.
 - Delays the effective date of the 2024 North Carolina State Building Code to July 1, 2025.
 - Authorizes the Office of the State Fire Marshal to promulgate rules for temporary manufactured and modular dwellings.
- Additional items that were taken up in SB 382 would carry out the following:
- Restructure the State Board of Elections from an agency under the Governor to a board operating under the Department of the State Auditor.
 - Change the deadline to request an absentee ballot from 5:00 P.M. on the Tuesday before the election to 5:00 P.M. on the second Tuesday before the election.
 - Require the governor to make all appointments to fill vacancies in the offices of judge of the Court of Appeals or justice of the Supreme Court from a list of three recommendations provided by the political party with which the vacating judge was affiliated.
 - Remove the authority from the Attorney General to intervene in matters that come before the Utilities Commissions and the Judicial Department.
 - Remove the requirement for Council of State agencies to receive permission from either the Attorney General or the Governor before retaining private counsel.
 - Makes the State Highway Patrol (SHP) an independent, cabinet-level department that includes all personnel and responsibilities currently under the SHP within the Department of Public Safety. The State Capitol Police (currently under DPS) and all law enforcement personnel within the License and Theft Bureau (currently under the Department of Transportation's Division of Motor Vehicles), would also be transferred to the SHP.
 - \$1.5 million in recurring funds to the North Carolina Collaboratory to establish and operate the Office of Learning Research.
 - \$33.75 million for the continuation of the compensation grants portion of the Child Care Stabilization Grants.
 - \$2.5 million recurring to the Administrative Office of the Courts to convert time-limited eCourts technology positions into permanent positions.
 - \$5 million to North Carolina State University to assess the costs associated with the rehabilitation or replacement of Poe Hall.
 - Delays the effective date of entertainment ticket price transparency legislation.
 - Abolishes the North Carolina Courts Commission and the Energy Policy Council.
 - Removes the Superintendent of Public Instruction's authority to appeal decisions made by the Charter Schools Review Board to the State Board of Education.

- Transfers the Center for Safer Schools from the Department of Public Instruction to the State Bureau of Investigation and repeals the Task Force for Safer Schools.

Courtesy of McGuireWoods Consulting

During this same week, the General Assembly overrode Governor Cooper's veto of House Bill 10. Enacted, this bill will effectively require North Carolina sheriffs to cooperate more with federal immigration authorities. Most sheriffs are already holding anyone who is in the country illegally, but there has been some pushback from sheriffs in Orange, Wake and Durham counties that are arguing that it is unconstitutional to hold someone once they have made bail.

The other portion of House Bill 10 was the Opportunity Scholarship Expansion that also created a lot of controversy. Overriding the veto will in effect grant \$463.5 million expansion of vouchers for private-school students. The expansion would eliminate the wait list to use a voucher to attend a private school. If they were already attending a private school without the benefit of the tuition voucher.

House Republicans selected the following in leadership positions:

- Rules Chairman Rep. Destin Hall (R-Caldwell) to serve as Speaker and current Majority Leader Rep. John Bell (R-Wayne) will fill the role of Rules Chairman.
- Current Deputy Majority Leader Rep. Brenden Jones (R-Columbus) will serve as Majority Leader.
- Rep. Mitchell Setzer (R-Catawba) was selected to serve as Speaker Pro Tempore.
- Rep. Steve Tyson (R-Craven) will serve as Deputy Majority Leader.
- Rep. Karl Gillespie (R-Macon) was reelected to his role of Majority Whip.
- Rep. Harry Warren (R-Rowan) will return to his role as Caucus Liaison.
- Rep. Matthew Winslow (R-Franklin) and Rep. Jeff Zenger (R-Forsyth) were elected to serve as Conference Committee Co-Chairs.

Senate Republicans selected the following for leadership positions:

- Sen. Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) was reelected to a 7th term as Senate President Pro Tempore.
- Sen. Paul Newton (R-Cabarrus) was reelected to his role as Majority Leader and Sen. Ralph Hise (R-Mitchell) was reelected to serve as Deputy President Pro Tempore.
- Sen. Carl Ford (R-Rowan) will also return to his role as Caucus Liaison.

- Sen. Todd Johnson (R-Union) and Sen. Amy Galey (R-Alamance) will serve as Majority Whips.

At this time, the General Assembly plans to reconvene on Monday, December 3 and then adjourn Sine Die on December 15.

There will be changes in the North Carolina Assembly and in Congress as a result of the November 5 general elections. The North Carolina elected officials in all races can be found at this link: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/results-data>.

View From the Hill

National Grange

Now that the elections are behind us, we can certainly expect some big changes in DC. With President-elect Trump poised to once again take the helm of the Presidency we can rest assured that there will be tremendous changes in political leadership and in and big changes are in the wind politically and policy-wise for Washington. Republicans are now in control of the House, the Senate and the White House. President-elect Trump is rapidly rounding out his White House staff and announcing his choices for his cabinet positions. There are supposedly fifteen names on the "short list" for Secretary of Agriculture. The Senate beginning in January will need to confirm all cabinet nominees, and confirmation may be a tough vote for one or two nominees. The lame duck session of Congress began the week of November 18 and will run to mid-December or later if need be. Any legislation moving in lame duck will have to be negotiated between the Democratic controlled Senate and the Republican controlled House. Most legislation will likely be rolled into either a short-term spending bill to take us into 2025 or a massive year-end FY 25 budget package to cover the fiscal year. Both strategies would likely include an extension of the current farm bill. In addition, lawmakers are stepping up their work this week on a package of disaster aid and relief for commodity price declines as they head toward another extension of the 2018 farm bill in lame duck. Republicans will be in no hurry to debate new or controversial legislation in lame duck, opting

In Memoriam

John Everhart

Arcadia Grange

Betsy Toler

Beaufort Co. Grange

David Fowler

Cape Fear Grange

Hassell "Pete" Rudder

Bushy Fork Grange

You light a lamp for me. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

Psalm 118:28

** 50 Year Member*



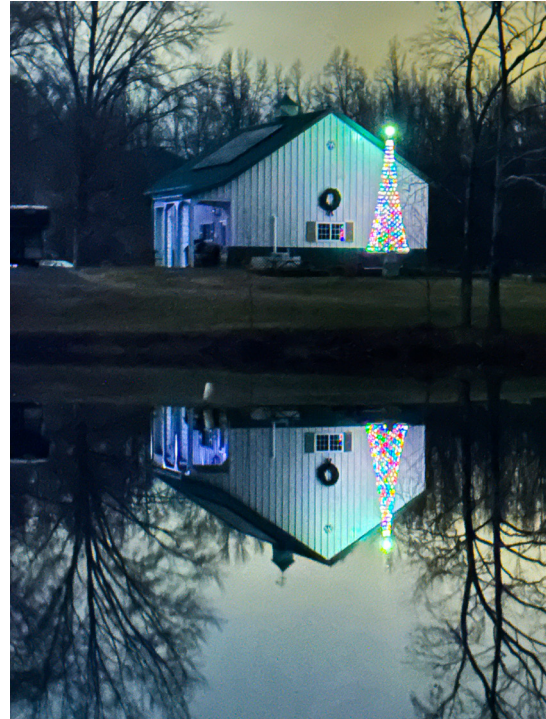
REFLECTIONS TO RENEWED

We recently strung the lights on the Douglas Fir Tree just outside of our house for Christmas. Due to the size of the tree, I use a 24-foot extension pole to reach as high as possible, then when I can reach no higher from the ground, Kathryn uses the tractor to lift me up in the work basket to finish the rest of the job.

Once I have reached the top and the light placement touchup is completed, everyone piles in the truck to drive across the pond dam up the road to the hay field where we are able to see how the lights look from all angles. One of the most favorite and significant sights is the reflection of the lit tree and pond deck Christmas lights bouncing off the pond. The reflections magnify all the lights. If there is a little breeze blowing, we have dancing lights, both in the tree and on the water. It is magical!

The reflecting lights bring me to the thought of reflecting about everything that has occurred in 2024. It was only yesterday, or so it seems, that we were celebrating the beginning of 2024. How quickly the year has passed for our family. This year has seen both some difficult, hard times as well as joyous celebrations. We, as many of you, mourned the passing of dear friends, the deployment of our military son to an undisclosed combat zone location, as well as some unmet expectations in general which caused stress in our lives.

We also have those joyful events of family gatherings full of laughter. We celebrated our son returning unharmed from his military assignment, grandchildren's birthdays, plays at church and school, along with the satisfaction and joy of helping others in their times of need. These are refreshing times in our lives.



As we look forward to 2025, I will encourage you to “hang your lights out” so that when we, or others, come down the road of life, not only can they see your lights, but also the reflection of them in your family, friends, neighbors and others that may encounter you. Our insurance programs can help you reach those new heights as well as keeping you and your family safe, just like the tractor basket kept me safe while reaching heights I could not reach on my own when standing on the ground. Vow to yourself to reflect on your life goals and the road you are currently on, then renew your efforts to soar to new heights to let your lights shine brightly. As you reflect, give us a call and we will be delighted to assist you with your insurance needs!

2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION ITEMS



Contact David Allen for sales at 704-640-4893, or dallen2401@gmail.com.





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Merry Christmas!