

The official publication of the NC Grange

November / December 2025

# GRANGE NEWS



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

January 30 - February 1	Winter Youth Conference   Asheboro, NC
March 12-15	Family Conference   Asheville, NC
July 5-11	Grange Camp

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 DAVID'S DESK

After twenty months of anticipation for many and some trepidation for a few, the 159th National Grange Convention, the Convention at Sea, finally arrived. On the second Saturday of November, the Carnival Horizon cruise ship departed Miami, Florida for an eight day cruise with over 350 members and guests among the more than 4000 passengers aboard. During the days that the cruise ship was at sea, the National Delegates tended to the business of the National Grange, considering resolutions for the welfare of the order, and electing a full slate of officers.

The time on the cruise on this floating city allowed for Grange members to establish new relationships and strengthen existing ones, as there seemed to be more time for interacting, as the session time was limited to the availability of the space that the ship's officers had made available to us. This was evidenced by the fact that when the ship made its ports of call in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, many Grangers were spending time with other members whom they had not known well, or at all, as they were venturing out on excursions or just walking around and patronizing local souvenir shops on the islands.

During the return trip to Miami, the passengers were notified that the ship had developed mechanical problems which resulted in a loss of propulsion, meaning that the ship was traveling well below normal speed. The result was that the ship was going to reach the port in Miami about eight hours late. This was problematic for a large number of passengers

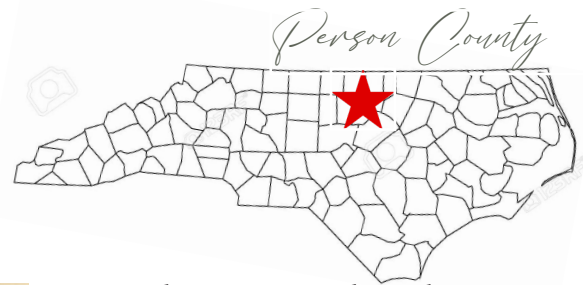
who had pending airflights with a tight schedule, allowing them little time to get from the port to the airport. There was a large scramble with many people having to reschedule flights and make hotel reservations. When the ship finally arrived at the port, the debarkation procedure completely broke down. There were over four thousand passengers who had to leave the ship and a vast majority of them thought that they had to be first. The ship's staff lost control of the situation, and the atmosphere was nearly riotous.

We were fortunate in that we had already planned to spend the night in Miami and fly home on Monday, so we found a comfortable place to wait until the chaos had cleared. I had the opportunity to observe the passengers' behavior for quite some time. I was pleased to see that the Grangers that I saw were patiently waiting to be notified that it was their time to leave. It was a stressful, trying time for most everyone, but I do believe that the quiet, peaceful people fared far better than most. It came to mind one of commonly heard directives 'as we leave to mingle with the world... let us be quiet, peaceful citizens.'



## BUSHY FORK GRANGE

by : Beverly Moore and Charles Howerton



On November 8, 2025, Bushy Fork Grange #1073 proudly hosted a community benefit in support of the Person County Cancer Crusaders. The highlight of the event was a chili cook-off featuring 15 unique pots of chili donated by Grange members and local residents. Varieties included buffalo, hamburger, vegan, chicken, and smoked sausage. Accompaniments such as crackers, cornbread, sour cream, shredded cheese, and chopped onions were also generously provided by the community.



Desserts were lovingly homemade by dedicated Grange members and included a wide assortment: coconut cake, traditional pound cake, blackberry wine pound cake, Neiman Marcus pound cake, chocolate cake, buttermilk pie, chocolate chip cookies, Rice Krispies treats, two types of fudge, individual servings of dirt cake, sugar cookies, no-bake cheesecake, haystacks, no-bake oatmeal cookies, and pecan pie.



Patrick and Lindsay Ross contributed all paper goods for the event, including plates, bowls, spoons, and sample cups. Kelly Small of IGA donated 20 pounds of ground beef for the chili preparations. Robert Rimmer of Rand Coca-Cola assisted in securing beverages at a significantly reduced cost.

Entertainment was provided by the Roxboro Community School Jazz Band, under the direction of Valerie Smith, and the Cuttin' Grass Bluegrass Band. Both groups graciously donated their time and talent to support the cause. Local radio personality David Bradsher of WKRX 96.7 FM promoted the event on air.

Games and activities were available for attendees of all ages, including cornhole, 9-square, and bucket toss. The Grange members had a promotional table with information and Grange branded items to promote the Grange.

The chili cookoff winners were as follows: 1st: Nicki Horner, 2nd: August Howerton, and 3rd: Jeffrey Whitfield.

Bushy Fork Grange continues to serve the community. Our November service project filled 20 Samaritan's Purse Boxes for boys and girls. A packing day was held November 10, 2025. The Grange has collected items throughout the year to obtain items. WOW items such as balls and dolls were placed as requested.



## RESISTING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

Everyone enjoys the festivities like Thanksgiving and Christmas. We all get pumped up and celebrating with family and friends; but sometimes afterwards, the balloon pops and down we go. We try to make New Year resolutions that we only end up breaking. All the excitement of the previous weeks seems like distant memories, and we find ourselves becoming depressed with limited desire to get up and go. We feel out of balance and many times find our lifestyles draining us further.

The Holy Bible records the Israelites having a similar experiences in their fellowship and worship with God. One day they are one with God, and before long they have journeyed away from His commandments and His love designed especially for them. Their life went from being blessed and protected by God to cursed by the Heavenly Father as proclaimed by the prophet in Ezekiel 16:27, 36: "Behold now, I have stretched out My hand against you and diminished your rations. And I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct.....Thus says the Lord God, Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons which you gave to idols." Does any of Israel's history sound familiar to the recent up ticking of evil ongoing today?

So what can we do to prevent being sidetracked by the world's distractions and stay on track? As a member of God's family you have a God connection that others do not have. In Philippians 4: 4-7, Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." We do not journey through our earthly life alone or helpless. God is always with us and is there for us at all times. So rejoice in praise to the Lord and shake off those the stumbling block "blues." In Psalm 37:4, King David claims, "Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart." If you are troubled or burdened the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5: 6-10 encourages us to "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same

experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

As Americans, God has blessed us individually and collectively many times over. Take a moment and just begin counting your blessings. All these blessings are from God with the highest-ranking being God's love through His Son Jesus. Take a moment and reflect upon the recent Christmas Season that highlighted God's love by sharing His Son Jesus with us through the virgin birth in Luke 2:7-14: "She gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn... And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'" This same baby boy would grow up and shoulder all the sins and burdens of mankind as a blood sacrifice on a wood cross so each of us would not have to endure such a burden due to our sin.

So seek God's fellowship daily to avoid the dark path of the "blues." The apostle John clearly proclaims the path of light which is provided to all Christian believers in 1 John 1:5-5-7: "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

If you are having the "blues" or just need a "pick me up" after the holiday season, seek fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not alone nor do you have to share burdens alone. Turn over those items that are dragging you down and give them to our Lord Jesus. He will help you carry the load as promised in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Praying for you to the have the best year yet in 2026! We serve an awesome God!

## FERGUSON GRANGE

by : Sharon Underwood

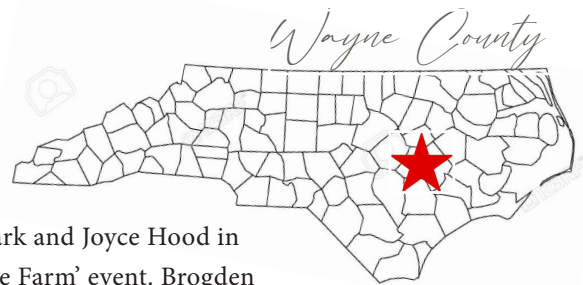


The Ferguson Grange presented Matthew Clay, Wilkes County Horticulture Extension agent, with a check for the Master Gardener scholarship training program.

From left to right Sharon Underwood, Matthew Clay, Pam McCarrick, Cyndee VanSweden, and Zandra Laws

## GRANTHAM & BROGDEN

by : David Allen & Jimmy Martin



On a cool, windy day in October at the Rocking H Farm, home of Mark and Joyce Hood in Wayne County, the Wayne County Extension Office hosted a 'Save the Farm' event. Brogden and Grantham Granges supported the event, including manning a vendor booth where they held drawings for a trip to the upcoming Family Conference and a beautiful wreath from Sanderson Farms, members Kenneth and Vickie. By interacting with a targeted audience of like-minded people, they were able to sign up ten new members between the two Granges.



## COMMUNITY

by : Anna Liles



Hey, Grangers! I hope your 2025 was absolutely fabulous. We rocked some fantastic community service projects, and I'm thrilled to see what 2026 has in store. At the State Convention, we collected a whopping 650 pounds of food for Nourish Up, helping families who could use a little boost. Thank you for making it a success.

I am extremely excited to announce our first 2026 community service project which will occur at the Grange's annual Family Conference in Asheville this March. We will be gathering goodies for Sunshine Day Camp in Burnsville, NC, a place that is very special to me. I have been volunteering there with my family since it kicked off in 2000. It's a magical camp conducted every June for people of all ages with special needs

Below is what we will be collecting for this amazing organization. Please collect what you can and bring all items to the Family Conference, or send them with someone you know who will be attending the conference. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Can't wait to see you in March, Grangers!

- \*Puzzle books
- \*Warm socks
- \*Easy puzzles (100 pieces or fewer)
- \*Uno cards
- \*Crayons
- \*Markers
- \*Colored pencils
- \*Gloves
- \*Scarves
- \*Chapstick
- \*Warm/stretchy headbands
- \*Light throws
- \*Small flashlights with batteries
- \*Keychains
- \*Rubber or stretchy bracelets
- \*Paint stirring sticks (need 1,100 total)
- \*Red, white, and blue washable paints
- \*Small sponge paint brushes

Let's join forces again to make a big splash in this NC community!

## PATTERSON GRANGE

by : Vanessa Bradley



November 8th was a special day for Patterson Grange. We hosted our first Farmer's Appreciation Dinner. A delicious spaghetti, salad and dessert meal was enjoyed by 45 farmers and their families. After the dinner, our President, Madalyn Hodge, read a tribute to the farmers and their families. A number of door prizes were also given out. Thanks to all our volunteers who helped prepare food, decorate and host the dinner. We were glad so many farmers in our area could join us.

# National Convention Goes Tropical

by : Vinnie Duncan



Grangers from across the country came together November 8-16 for the National Grange Convention, a cruise aboard the Carnival Horizon to the ABC Islands, Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao. The cruise had 4 days at sea during which the convention was held and business was conducted. These days also offered time to enjoy shows and the ship's many amenities. In the middle of the week, we stopped at each of the islands to enjoy tours and excursions.

When this cruise was first announced at our NC Grange Board meeting in late 2023, I recall saying "I don't do boats!" However, Philip, my late husband who served in the US Navy, loved boats and the sea. At his request, in early 2024, we registered for the cruise. Our cabin was on the 8th deck with a balcony – Philip said he wanted to "just watch the sea!" Following Philip's passing, cancelling my reservation was a thought. At my brother-in-law's suggestion, my sister Katrina would accompany me on the cruise. Our Corriher Grange group, 8 of us, arrived in Miami on Friday afternoon and had great food at the hotel restaurant. Saturday morning, we loaded into the van heading to the Port of Miami. Boarding the Horizon on Saturday was delayed due to an emergency on the ship's prior cruise, but we made it to our room to settle in. Dennis, our stateroom attendant, was THE best. He always guided us the right way down the halls and was so attentive to our rooming needs, even bringing my sister extra pillows for feet elevation during sleep.

Grangers began attending the sessions on Sunday morning. President Christine Hamp delivered her annual addresses. Youth and



juniors participated in leadership academy and workshops. Resolutions and committee reports continued Monday and our group of eight from NC grew larger. Each morning, we navigated the breakfast buffet where bacon was rationed to every other day. We ate at local eateries on the ship during our days at sea, and we took walks around the track, some walking 3 miles every morning. Most evenings we met in the Meridian Dining Room for a scrumptious dinner where we talked about the day's activities.

Three days of the cruise were spent on the ABC Islands offering shopping, beaches and excursions. The docking ports on each island were very different. Some had enclosed shopping booths, and some had tents that you

walked through before entering the streets of the capital city. Grangers booked



excursions, caught tour buses, or just walked the islands sampling the food and visiting shops. Some in our group went snorkeling, visited beaches, took buggy rides around the islands and did a submarine dive. On each island, English is widely spoken in all tourist areas. However, the official languages are usually Dutch and Papiamentu. The latter is a traditional language derived from African and Portuguese dialects also influenced by Spanish, Dutch and English. Papiamentu is very different from the Creole and Patois spoken in other Caribbean Islands.

On Tuesday, we docked at our first port of Oranjestad, Aruba. Oranjestad is the capital city with a population of 35,000. The terminal was enclosed with shops including the popular aloe shop. Aruba is known for its beaches, but Trina and I walked the downtown area visiting a jewelry store for Christmas gifts and an outdoor eatery for lunch.

We then loaded into a van for a tour of the countryside. The landscape included cactus and huge rock formations for Trina to climb and for me to trip over! Roads changed to one lane with roundabouts, no traffic lights, and only a few stop signs. Catholic churches dotted the landscape as did unique cactus planters.





We docked on Wednesday on Kralendijk, Bonaire, the smallest of the islands with a total population of 19,000 people. The beaches are not lengthy coastlines but are dotted with rocks and cliffs. We boarded a van for our tour of the island that was often lined with cactus fences. Goats and donkeys roamed the rural roads, and the driver informed us that their main crime on the island is goat stealing, even though most goats are tagged with owner names. Noord, Bonaire, had salt mines with a Cargill “No Trespassing” sign. The machinery used to load the salt for shipping was unusual containing a conveyor belt with a big spout at the end. The most exciting highlights on our tour were petting the donkeys and seeing the exquisite display of the pink flamingos that are home to both the north and south ends of the island.

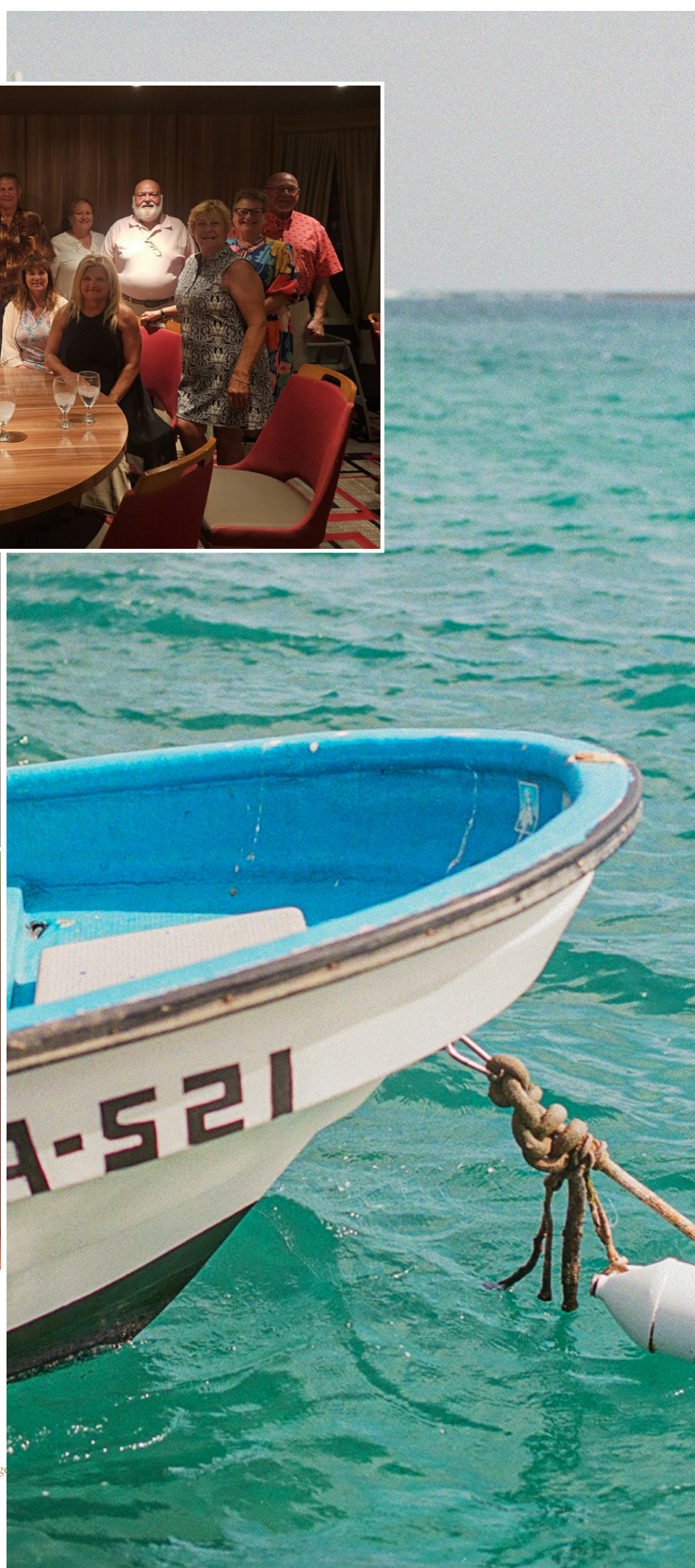
On Thursday, we docked at Willemstad, the capitol city of Curacao with an easy walk to main street after departing the ship. Immediately you see the floating Queen Emma Bridge, known as the “Swinging Old Lady,” that leads you to the city buildings lined with adorable shops and brightly painted buildings. Colorful cow statues also sat on street corners. As we walked back towards the ship, Christmas decorations were being placed around the city.

As we sailed back towards Miami, Friday included the election of National Grange Officers. Our own David Allen was re-elected to the Gatekeeper position, and Christine Hamp was elected National President for another term. That day, I made it to Deck 15, the top of the ship, where view was spectacular as long as I didn’t look down! On Saturday morning, the National Grange Youth Officer Team opened the session with several NC youth serving on the team. A memorial service was held, and National Officers were installed before the 159th Annual Session ended.

This was truly an unusual convention and an adventure for everyone. We experienced engine trouble on our way back to Miami, delaying our arrival in port which led to changes in return trips. However, we made it home safely, and I came away with three important nuggets from this cruise. First, it was wonderful to see Grange friends from across the country, which is always the highlight of any convention. Second, I was never seasick

because I wore my motions sickness patches! And most of all, I spent time on the balcony just looking out at the sea, enjoying the peaceful breeze, taking time to just “watch the sea.”







## 2025 Farmer Appreciation Day by : Laurie Barnhart

On November 6, communities across North Carolina came together to celebrate the 2nd Annual North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day. The North Carolina Grange was appointed in 2023 to take the lead on this endeavor to recognize the invaluable contributions of farmers to North Carolina's economy, culture, and daily life. With agriculture being a cornerstone of the state, Farmers Appreciation Day offers an opportunity for citizens, organizations, and local governments to express gratitude for the hard work and dedication of those who cultivate our land. North Carolina is proud to boast a rich agricultural tradition, with over 42,000 farms totaling approximately 8.1 million acres according to the last census in 2022. North Carolina produces a tremendous array of crops and livestock, from tobacco, sweet potatoes, to soybeans, poultry, swine, dairy, strawberries, blueberries and Christmas trees just to name a few. Our farming industry not only feeds millions, it supports many industries especially in rural North Carolina. Their efforts not only provide food but also create jobs, support rural communities, and maintain the state's natural beauty with an economic impact of \$111.1 billion, supporting about 16% of the state's workforce. There is a tremendous reason to hold a special day dedicated to the farmers that make all of this possible.

The North Carolina Grange continued as they did last year to beef up the NC Farmer Appreciation Day social media channels beginning in mid-summer and continuing through November. This day is also commemorated by recognizing a North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day "Farmer of the Year" as well as a

"Young Farmer of the Year."

Below are the following that were chosen for this honor:

### 2025 Farmer of the Year

- 1st Place: Brandon Britten Triple B Farms, Smithfield, NC
- 2nd Place: Mark & Jessica Wilburn, Uwharrie Ridge Farms, Asheboro, NC
- 3rd Place: Johnny Shields Notla Farms, Murphy, NC

### 2025 Young Farmer of the Year

- 1st Place: Harrison Jenkins Westward Farms, Statesville, NC
- 2nd Place: Frank Scott, Scott Bros., Inc., Kenly, NC
- 3rd Place: Leah Howard, Williams Produce, Autryville, NC

The award winners were recognized during the finale of NC Farmers Appreciation Day on November 6 at the Raleigh Country Club. Many North Carolina farmers attended, along with sponsors House of Raeford, Prestage Farms, AgSouth Farm Credit and AgCarolina Farm Credit and other agricultural representatives who joined in the celebration. NC



Representative Jimmy Dixon, who crafted and introduced the bill to recognize a North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day, welcomed everyone. Kevin Howell, the new Chancellor of NCSU, delivered the keynote address offering heartfelt gratitude to North Carolina's farmers. He was introduced by Garey Fox, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at NCSU. North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler also shared a few words of welcome and congratulations.

The highlight of the November 6 event was a video produced by Jason Arthurs of Well Raised Videography. This exceptional film, *Freedom Grows Here ~ The North Carolina Livestock Story*, was created to both celebrate and educate the public about livestock production in North Carolina, including beef, poultry, and hogs. Livestock represents the largest share of the state's farmgate receipts, accounting for more than 70% of all agricultural commodities.

Farmers Appreciation Day 2025 was marked by a variety of events and activities throughout the state, including celebrations hosted by Grantham Grange, Westbrook Grange, Little Mountain Grange, Patterson Grange and UNC Rural Health. Hopefully these efforts will continue in the future across North Carolina.

There are many ways for residents to join in the celebration:

- Shop at local farmers' markets and purchase North Carolina-grown products.
- Help plan and attend a Farmers Appreciation Day event in your community.
- Share your gratitude and follow North Carolina Farmers Appreciation Day on Facebook, Instagram and X.

Farmers Appreciation Day is more than just a day of celebration—it is a reminder of the vital role that farmers play in North Carolina's heritage and future. Next year, be sure to mark your calendar for the 1st Thursday of November, November 5, 2026 and join your fellow North Carolinians in giving thanks and showing support for the men and women who work tirelessly to keep our state thriving.

The social media links and video can be found on the NC Farmers Appreciation Day website at [www.ncfarmerappreciation.com](http://www.ncfarmerappreciation.com). Be sure to follow us!





The North Carolina General Assembly convened for brief “gavel-in, gavel-out” sessions during the week of November 17, but did not take up any legislative business. This occurred despite Governor Stein’s attempt to call lawmakers into a special session, arguing that legislators had “failed North Carolina and the people of North Carolina” by not fully funding the Medicaid rebase during the September legislative session. His request followed the House and Senate’s inability to reach agreement on competing proposals. Currently, North Carolina Medicaid is being supported with \$190 million in recurring funds from the Medicaid Contingency Reserve to temporarily cover the funding shortfall.

Rejecting Governor Stein’s efforts, Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger and House Speaker Destin Hall rejected the Governor’s request, stating that the General Assembly was already in session and that the proclamation constituted an unconstitutional attempt to override the General Assembly’s authority to determine its own calendar, calling the Governor’s special-session request “constitutionally invalid and politically motivated.” The General Assembly intends to hold Oversight Committee meetings through the holidays, but no formal business is calendared to be taken up.

A ruling on whether North Carolina’s new congressional district map will be blocked from use in the 2026 elections could come at any time, following a federal court hearing held Wednesday.

The controversy around the Congressional map drawings continues to be a point of contention as it has been for years. Arguments were heard by a three-judge panel that convened in Winston-Salem to hear arguments from attorneys representing multiple challengers to the maps. Challengers to maps included individual voters, the North Carolina NAACP, and the anti-gerrymandering organization Common Cause. Attorneys representing the Republican legislative leaders who drafted the map, maintain that the districts comply with all legal requirements. (NC Capitol)

Fueled largely by net migration from other states and countries, North Carolina is growing at a very rapid pace adding more than 164,800 residents between July 2023 and July 2024. North Carolina is now the ninth most populous state in the U.S. Fortunately North Carolina continues to attract advanced manufacturing companies that drive job creation, expand local tax bases, and supports long-term economic vitality across the state—particularly in rural communities where such investment is greatly needed. Governor Stein has recently announced several major projects, including a concrete manufacturer in Gaston County that will create 125 jobs through a \$102 million investment, a magnet factory in Johnston County expected to create 1,000 jobs with nearly a \$1 billion investment, and MST Rebar Inc., which will generate 83 new jobs in Bladen County. In addition, GE Aerospace has invested in a new aircraft and powerplant maintenance technician certificate program near Fort Bragg to train service members,

veterans, and their spouses. The Rural Infrastructure Authority also approved 21 grant requests totaling more than \$9.8 million to support rural communities. (OSBM)

### **National Grange “View from the Hill” Washington Overview**

The government shutdown ended November 12 with a continuing resolution to fund the government until January 21, 2026. The Senate 60-40 in favor of the stopgap funding bill with eight Democrats voting in favor and one Republican opposing the measure. The House then voted 222-209 to pass the legislation with six Democrats voting yes and two Republicans voting no. This was the eleventh government shutdown and the longest in U.S. history. The measure contained appropriations bills to fund USDA, FDA, Veterans Affairs, military construction, and the legislative branch for the full fiscal year which ends September 30, 2026. For all other government entities, a new funding vehicle will need to be adopted by January 21, 2026. The House-Senate compromise bill provides back pay for government employees, reinstates furloughed employees, and prohibits further reductions in force until January 21. SNAP recipients will receive full benefits for October and November. In a major shift of jurisdiction, USDA was instructed to work with the State Department to prepare a process to transfer the Food for Peace foreign food aid program from State to USDA. The remaining sections of the farm bill which were not included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (signed July 4,

2025) were extended for one year and retained the longstanding prohibition of the closure of Farm Service field offices. A side agreement to the legislation promises Congress will address health care issues in December including enhanced premium tax credits and Medicare cuts.

**Agriculture and Food**

Farm economy compared to 1980’s crisis Crop growers are facing a third straight year of financial struggles. Producers who lived through the generation-defining farm crisis four decades ago point to market price slumps, soaring input costs, and global trade disruptions as indicators the ag economy could tip into the worst shape in 45 years. Ninety-one percent of agricultural economists recently surveyed by the Farm Journal believe the crop sector in a recession. This is up from 53% in July. In addition, farm sector debt has risen alarmingly in 2024 and 2025. Congress continues to discuss various forms of relief payments to crop producers with possible action in December.

**Fertilizer Supply Concerns**

The United States does not have enough fertilizer production capacity to meet producer demand and relies heavily upon volatile global supply chains. Recent tariffs have exacerbated the situation that led to surprise price hikes and scarcity shocks. There is growing concern that fertilizer supplies will be insufficient to grow the country’s 2026 crops. As a result, the administration added potash and phosphate to its critical minerals list which are defined as commodities essential to the economic or national security interests of the U.S. As critical

minerals, potash and phosphate are now eligible for tariff carveouts.

**China controls critical livestock supplements**

China is deepening its stranglehold on key amino acids and vitamins used in livestock feeds. According to an American Feed Industry Association report, China accounts for 80% of five key supplements and another five rely on China for more than 50% of imports. These supplement ingredients, relied upon heavily by the broiler and pork industries, are lysine, vitamins A, B1, B2, B12, D3, E, threonine, methionine, and tryptophan. Efforts are underway in Congress to strengthen U.S. resiliency with the bipartisan, bicameral Securing American Ag Act that directs USDA to analyze America/s dependency on China across a wide array of ag inputs.

**Antitrust investigation of major meat processors**

President Trump, who frustrated cattle producers with his push to lower beef prices, is directing the Justice Department to investigate major meatpackers for possible price-fixing and manipulation. The President is reportedly frustrated that futures prices for cattle have declined significantly, while boxed beef prices have gone up. Four companies, Tyson Foods, JBS, Cargill and National Beef, dominate beef processing.



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

Associate Members:

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Jay Sullivan        | Jeremy Rhodes   |
| Dan Murray          | Suzanne Rhodes  |
| Ninevah Murray      | Brandon Batten  |
| Barbara Murray      | Kim Lequire     |
| William Murray      | Matt Johnson    |
| Reginald Strickland | John Weaver     |
| William McLamb      | Waylon Barefoot |
| Paul Jones II       | Charles Wiggs   |
| William Johnson     |                 |
| Eileen Coite        |                 |
| Keith Butler        |                 |
| Bruce Butler        |                 |
| Shannon Naylor      |                 |

Matrimony:

- Leesa Baker
- Summerfield:
- Jane Hutson

Brogden:

- Marshall Outlaw
- Gray Outlaw

Little Mountain:

- Israel Garcia
- Oliver Garcia
- Brandon Black
- Cherese Black

Grantham:

- Tristan Beard
- Todd Grantham
- Daniel Hood
- Grover Hood
- Teresa Hood

JoCo:

- David Barnes
- Chad Holloman
- Larry Pierce
- Ryan Roberson

## Christmas Tree Facts

- North Carolina has approximately 1,300 growers producing Fraser fir Christmas trees on an estimated 40,000 acres.
- Fraser fir represents over 99% of all species grown in North Carolina.
- Fraser fir is grown in the far western North Carolina counties, including Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey.
- The North Carolina Christmas Tree Industry is ranked No. 2 in the nation in number of trees harvested and cash receipts.
- North Carolina produces more than 20% of the Christmas trees in the U.S.



## JUNIORS

by : Emily Hartsell



The NC Junior Grange is proud to announce that Raegan Hartsell has been selected as the 2026 National Junior Grange Ambassador, a distinguished honor awarded through the National Junior Grange.

Raegan is a member of St. John's Grange. She is the daughter of Emily and John Hartsell and the sister of Ryleigh Hartsell. She has been a member of the Grange since the age of five and has participated in activities at the local, state, and national levels.

During the National Grange Convention, Raegan presented a workshop to fellow juniors about agriculture in Aruba. She highlighted the fruits the island is known for and explained how local residents grow gardens in small spaces using tower gardens. At the end of her presentation, she quizzed participants and handed out candy to those who answered correctly, making the workshop both educational and fun.

Raegan's selection brings well-deserved recognition not only to her years of dedication, but also to the strength and vitality of Junior Grange programs throughout North Carolina. Representing our state at the national level, she stood out for her leadership, community service, and commitment to living the values upheld by the Grange. Throughout her Junior Grange involvement, Raegan has demonstrated a passion for service and junior engagement. From local projects to statewide initiatives, she has earned a reputation for stepping forward to help others, encouraging younger members, and embracing opportunities to lead with kindness and purpose.

The National Junior Grange Ambassador Program, overseen by the National Grange, selects ambassadors who exemplify strong character, public-minded service, and leadership potential. As the 2026 Ambassador, Raegan will represent both the National Junior Grange and the NC Grange at events across the country. Her responsibilities will include supporting national Junior Grange programming, engaging with Junior members nationwide, and serving as a role model for the next generation of leaders.

Her achievement highlights the dedication of North Carolina Junior Grange families, leaders, and volunteers who work tirelessly to build meaningful programs for youth across the state. It also reflects the legacy of service and community involvement that continues to thrive within North Carolina Granges. The NC Grange congratulates Raegan Hartsell on this outstanding honor. We look forward to cheering her on as she represents our state with pride, leadership, and the true spirit of



# Hands that bind the season

by : Laurie Barnhart

“Every product is handmade in our shop—local and fresh. Each member of the family chips in to work long, hard hours, ensuring we deliver products and joy to your front door. We take pride in being a small, family-owned operation.”

As many times as I’ve taken Interstate 40 East toward the coast, I had never once taken Exit 334 to Meadow—until my recent visit to Sanderson Wreaths in Four Oaks to interview Kari Sanderson, co-owner of the family business. As I drove through the picturesque landscape of farmland dotted with wildflowers, sturdy red barns, and freshly harvested cornfields, I had no idea what a wonderful experience awaited me on that beautiful fall day.

I found Kari in the warehouse where holiday wreaths are crafted from natural materials that change with the season. When I visited, corn husk wreaths were being assembled to adorn front doors, mantels, and dinner tables—perfect for fall and the Thanksgiving season. It wasn’t long before Kari’s precious children came trooping in, curious about the visitor in their workspace. Amazingly, Kari homeschools her children while also helping run Sanderson Wreaths.

I soon had the pleasure of meeting Kari’s parents, Kenneth and Vickie Sanderson—both Grantham Grange members—who founded Sanderson Wreaths. It didn’t take long to see just how deeply the whole family is involved in the business. Watching Kari’s four children running around outside in the sunshine while their mother and grandparents worked nearby was a heartwarming sight—something you rarely see today.

The Sandersons' business began as a "Choose & Cut" Christmas tree farm, and they even won the NC Christmas Tree Competition with one of their cedar trees. In true all-American fashion, they packed all four of their children—each under the age of five—into the car and drove across the country to compete in the National Christmas Tree Competition. From the very beginning, the Sanderson family has always gone the extra mile to deliver quality.

After many years of growing Christmas trees, Kenneth and Vickie shifted from selling trees to trimming and shearing them to create the beautiful handmade wreaths and garlands they offer today. Unlike many farmers, the fall and winter months are their busiest. They harvest and craft thousands of wreaths and garlands. Sanderson Wreaths also maintains a strong presence at the NC Farmers Market during the holiday season.



After ten years of teaching, Kari made the decision to join her parents full-time in the family business. It truly takes every member of the family working together to make Sanderson Wreaths a success. As quoted on their website, "Every product is handmade in our shop—local and fresh. Each member of the family chips in to work long, hard hours, ensuring we deliver products and joy to your front door. We take pride in being a small, family-owned operation."

If you haven't visited Sanderson Wreaths during the holiday season, you're missing out! My front door has been proudly adorned with a gorgeous corn husk wreath since my visit, and next up is a trip to the Farmers Market to pick out my Christmas wreath and garland.

Cheers, and Happy Holidays!





## GOTCHA COVERED

by : Mark Davis

### ARE WE THERE YET ?

Where are we going? Are we there yet? Boy, how these two questions are so appropriate for health insurance today!

David Allen recently asked me to prepare a report for our NC Grange Board of Directors outlining our NC Grange Health Insurance Program with BlueCross BlueShield NC. I have about 25 years of history between my time with the local insurance agency in Rockingham County and my current role with the Grange, but there is a lot of history that I was not sure of. So, I was able to interview our former President, Robert Caldwell, as well as a couple of retired BCBSNC Executives and former insurance agents that had more historical knowledge to fill in some of the gaps. These interviewed individuals were able to reach way back along with Mr. Caldwell who provided me a copy of "Hold High the Torch - The Grange in North Carolina 1929-1980," which placed the very beginning of our NC Grange Health Insurance Program.

Why and how did our Health Insurance Program start? Just after WWII, the NC Grange adopted "The Good Health" movement to improve the health of our state's citizens. From this adoption, a committee, headed by Dr Clarence Poe (NC Grange President from 1929 - 1930), was formed to study and recommend actions related to the health of NC citizens. The committee found that NC ranked near the bottom among the states with available medical providers per capita of residents. The study also revealed that NC had one of the worst records for individuals rejected for military service during WWII due to being "physically unfit." Rural people and rural areas seemed to have a disproportional majority of these issues of health care providers and rejections. To help rectify this situation, the Legislature of 1945 established a Medical Care Commission, whose slogan was "More Doctors, More Hospitals, More Health and Hospital Insurance." One very interesting aspect of this Commission and capstone project is the establishment of a four-year medical school and teaching hospital, which the NC Grange assisted in every phase of this endeavor. We now know that school as (hold tight Wolfpack fans) UNC-Chapel Hill!

During this period, the NC Grange also developed the Hospital Savings Association of Chapel Hill, which later became BCBSNC, our own "group health plan" for our NC Grange Members. Local chapters had to enroll 75% of their members for hospital coverage under this plan. The original plan offered either individual or family coverage with a one million coverage limit. The family plan also included maternity coverage initially which later became an optional rider. BCBSNC assisted the NC Grange with underwriting criteria, pricing, loss reserve calculations, and claims processing. During the Grange Presidency of James R Oliver (1982 - 1985), Grange membership rose from 8,000 to 18,000. President Oliver attributed a significant amount of this growth as a result of "the best possible hospitalization coverage for an organization of the Grange's type." Records indicated that the first "Grange Health Insurance" employee, Mr. Woody Wyrick, was hired on a part-time basis to recruit and work with existing insurance agents across the state in 1985, promoting our NC Grange Group Health Insurance product.

With the introduction of "co-payment" health insurance products versus the traditional deductible and co-insurance products, our group plan became unsustainable around 2002-2003 and then BCBSNC allowed existing Grange Health Plan members to migrate into the BCBSNC BlueAdvantage products without the member subject to underwriting guidelines. This migration represented the close of the oldest continual group plan administered by BCBSNC at that time. Since then, we have seen many challenges and changes in our NC Grange Health Insurance Program such as:

- An offered "buyout" from BCBSNC in 2005
- Retirement of various Insurance Program Regional Representatives
- Grange Agent payments to bring them in par with direct BCBSNC agents
- Grange Agent Sales Incentive Rewards
- NC Grange compensation from BCBSNC moving from an "override system" to a "Marketing Allowance

That is a history lesson of our Grange Health Insurance Program. The disturbing question of this historical look-back is: What progress have we really made in improving the health of our NC citizens? It appears that we are ask-



## BARBER NAMED NATIONAL YOUTH AMBASSADOR!

Caroline Barber of Durham, NC, has been selected to serve as a National Grange Youth Ambassador for 2026. The announcement was made by members of the National Youth Advisory Council during the Grange Honors Night following the National Grange Convention in November. Caroline, pictured far right, will be joining Sadie Johnson, youth from PA, and Jomni Tarbell, young adult from NY, for this leadership experience. The three will serve as the National Grange AMbassador Team to help plan and lead activities throughout the year for the national youth program. A member of Bushy Fork Grange, Caroline currently serves as State Youth Vice President, State Youth Ambassador, and member of the State Youth Leadership Team. We congratulate her on this wonderful opportunity and thank her for being a great representative of the NC Grange Youth Program.



ing the same question asked back at the end of WWII. We continue to have provider and facility shortages across rural NC. We continue to see larger health care systems gobbling up local medical practices. Due to rising health care cost, many “local” hospitals and clinics now stand empty. Actual medical care costs are rising like a space rocket. Individual health insurance premiums are soaring through the roof.

What is the answer? Just as the NC Grange tackled this issue back in the mid 40’s, it is time to rise again. Where do we start? We start at home! We need to look at ourselves and what we can do to maintain a “healthy lifestyle” and maybe prevent future medical issues. Unfortunately, we often bring issues upon ourselves because of the choices we make. Thankfully, at a recent conference I attended, there is a movement to change health care from “sick care” to “well care.” The goal of this shift is to catch issues at the earliest possible state or prevent the issue all together verses trying to arrest, stabilize, and possibly recover from that illness or disease. This focus shift is already seeing some good results in the MedicareAdvantage plans.

Secondly, in tandem with early diagnosis, we will see expanded technology. This new technology could easily supplement the provider shortages in rural NC by expanding the resource capacities of existing rural providers. At the recent conference, a speaker mentioned that “Dr Tom,” a robotic device, could be the first step in diagnosis when someone comes into a clinic or health care facility. Statistically, Dr Tom’s accuracy rate is approaching 80% and increasing compared to the actual live provider’s accuracy which is maybe 50% and somewhat declining. To bring this into perspective, do you remember Dr. McCoy of Star Trek? One of the first things he did for his patients was bring out that medical TriCorder. We will bring down medical costs if we choose to live a healthier lifestyle and do the things we know to do to prevent accidents and sickness. Well care is definitely less expensive and not nearly as painful as sick care. Once we have taken care of ourselves, and our families, then we as Grangers can reach out into our communities as living examples and can make a difference! We are not there yet, but let’s get going in a right direction with our health care. As we close out 2025, let this be your challenge for 2026!

## In Memoriam

*Reuben Bowes  
Nancy Kerr  
Jane Eudy  
Shirley Ring  
Ronald Hurllocker  
Marilyn Guy*

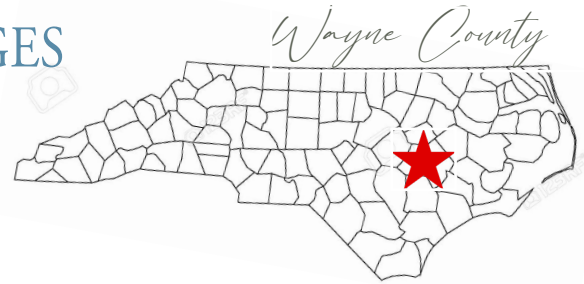
*Bushy Fork Grange  
Corriher Grange  
Old Richmond Grange  
Gold Richmond Grange  
St. John's Grange  
Grantham Grange*

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

*Psalm 118:28  
\* 50 Year Member*

# GRANTHAM & BROGDEN GRANGES COMMUNITY SERVICE

by : Wanda Crawford & Joyce Hood



*“One of life’s most desirable things to do is to communicate. Whether you are young or old, communication is essential when you are trying to give or receive instruction. Just being able to tell others how you feel or what makes you uncomfortable is essential in two-way communication. These banners not only aid the young in expressing their needs or desires but also assist the instructor in meeting those needs and desires.”*

*- Jimmy Martin, Brogden Grange*

Grantham Grange honored Mrs. Crystal Weeks at their Community Service Awards in April as their Educator of the Year, who was then a nominee for the State Grange award. In the interview process there were several questions that the NC State Grange required, one of them being describe special initiatives or projects in which the educator has participated.

Mrs. Weeks has worked alongside other Wayne County Speech Language Pathologists to raise money to purchase Communication Banners to place on playgrounds at Wayne County Elementary Schools to allow non-verbal students to communicate on the playground during recess. The group raised enough fund to purchase 8 of the 13 banners needed at a cost of \$250 each. A random drawing was conducted to see which of the schools received banners.

At the Grantham Grange Board of Directors meeting in July, they voted to purchase one of the banners for Grantham Elementary. In August at the Teachers/Staff Appreciation Breakfast that the Grange provides for, Grantham Elementary and Grantham Middle Schools, they presented the banner. The Grange installed it a few days later on the playground fence.

In August at the Grantham Grange regular monthly meeting, they voted to purchase (2) banners and Brogden Grange agreed to purchase the other 2 banners for the 4 remaining schools that did not get one, and they were installed on October 15, 2025.

Joining for the presentations were Dr. Marc Whichard, Wayne County Public Schools Superintendent; Mr. Ken Derksen, Executive Director Community Engagement and Student & Family Support of Wayne County Public Schools; and Mrs. Crystal Weeks, Speech Language Pathologist for Grantham Elementary School.

It was very rewarding to see students at several of the schools go up to the banners and point at something that interested them. One student approached the banner and pointed to a picture of stairs that said “climb,” and he went over and started to climb the fence.

We hope that this community service project might encourage other Granges in North Carolina and other states to get involved with helping non-verbal students in their area.



# 2025 1st Place Pound Cake Winner

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Shelby Furr | St. John's Grange

## *Shel's Cherry Lemon Pound Cake*

*3 C. sugar*

*1/2 C. Crisco*

*2 butter sticks*

*5 eggs*

*3 C. all purpose flour*

*1 tsp vanilla flavoring*

*1 tsp lemon flavoring*

*6 oz Cherry Lemon  
Sundrop*

*Cream sugar, butter sticks  
and Crisco*

*Add flour and eggs be until  
blended. Add flavoring and  
add cherry lemon Sundrop  
last.*

*Bake and a two pan at  
350° for one hour and 15  
minutes.*





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Statesville, NC 28625  
704-878-0000  
ncgrange.com

PERIODICAL  
POSTAGE  
PAID



*Merry Christmas!*