

The official publication of the NC Grange

2026 VOLUME TWO

# GRANGE NEWS



2026 Family  
Conference

# contents

3	<b>From David's Desk</b> NC Grange President
4	<b>Local Grange News</b>
5	<b>Award Winning Recipe</b>
6	<b>Winter Youth Conference</b>
8	<b>New Youth Officers &amp; Local</b> <b>Grange News</b>
9	<b>Community Service</b>
10	<b>Chaplain's Corner</b>
12	<b>Supporting Wilkes County</b>
14	<b>Local Grange News</b>
15	<b>Craig Named Top Producer &amp; Local</b> <b>Grange News</b>
16	<b>Capitol News</b>
18	<b>Gotcha Covered</b>

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

March 12-15

July 5-11

September 17-20

Family Conference | Asheville, NC

Grange Camp | Eastern 4-H Center

State Convention | Durham, NC



On the cover:  
Vanessa Bradley sews a  
quilt square at Family  
Conference

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

July 4, 1776, is widely recognized as the day fifty-six representatives of the original thirteen colonies signed the Declaration of Independence. We now find ourselves approaching the 250th anniversary of that historic moment. This Semiquincentennial offers a remarkable opportunity for individuals and Granges to demonstrate their patriotism and celebrate this milestone in meaningful ways.

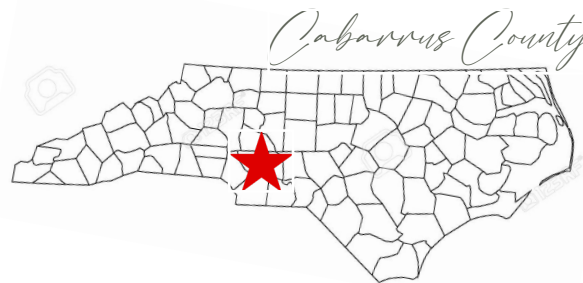
During our recent Family Conference in Asheville, we spent time brainstorming ideas that Granges can use to host community celebrations. Some of the creative suggestions from our members included:

- “Looking Back” Exhibits – Showcasing “then and now” displays of military life and equipment or comparing historical and modern farming tools.
- Grange-Sponsored Community Events – Activities might include educational sessions about the Grange, cookouts, patriotic desserts, trivia contests, fireworks, or even drone light shows.
- Local Revolutionary History Projects – Researching and highlighting significant Revolutionary War battles or events connected to your area.
- Red, White, and Blue Tractor Parade – A festive and visually striking way to bring the community together.
- Creating a Time Capsule for 2076 – A forward-looking project that engages all ages.
- Entering a Grange Float in Local Fourth of July Parades – A classic and effective way to show community spirit.

Donating \$250 to Local Organizations or Causes – A symbolic and impactful gesture in honor of the 250th anniversary.

Several excellent resources are available to help you develop additional ideas tailored to your Grange. The America 250 national website (<https://america250.org>) offers information, initiatives, and contests. North Carolina also has a dedicated site ([www.america250.nc.gov](http://www.america250.nc.gov)) featuring statewide events, programs, and contact information for county-level America 250 committees, which can provide valuable local insight. Finally, the National Grange publication America250 Guide for Granges is available to all members on the National Grange website. Printed copies were distributed at Family Conference and mailed to the president of each Grange that was not represented.

I encourage you to take the opportunity to celebrate this once in a lifetime event. There will be other celebrations, as many remember the Bicentennial in 1976, but there will never be another Semiquincentennial. Take the time to visit one, or some, of the many historical landmarks where there were significant happenings during the time of America’s quest for independence. Don’t miss the opportunity to walk where history was made.



## ST JOHNS GRANGE

by : Emily Hartsell & Rylee Grissom

St. Johns Grange held its annual Awards Banquet on Tuesday, April 14. North Carolina House of Representatives District 82 Representative Brian Echevarria served as the guest speaker and spoke about the impact the Grange has made across North Carolina. We are thankful for the impact our award winners have made in our community.

Award winners:

- Church of the Year: MillGrove Church of Midland
- Law Enforcement Officer of the Year: Jason Gilmore, Cabarrus County Sheriff's Department
- Educator of the Year: Ashleigh Miller, FFA teacher at Mt. Pleasant Middle School
- Firefighter of the Year: Steven Blackwelder, Charlotte Fire Department and Cold Water Volunteer Fire Department
- Community Service Award: Kima Kluttz
- Military Person of the Year: Nicholas Falleni, Lieutenant, U.S. Navy (Pilot)
- EMS Individual of the Year: James Hoover, Cabarrus County EMS
- Granger of the Year: Rylee Grissom
- Grange Family of the Year: Jason and Angie Hahn
- Youth Granger of the Year: Anna Hahn
- Junior Granger of the Year: Sloan Walker
- Farm of the Year: Pleasant Pines



## SPEAK LIKE A "CHAMP"

Speak like a "CHAMP" is a monthly message designed to get everyone speaking the same language to encourage positive teamwork as we Grange.

### LEADERSHIP MULTIPLIER

A **Leadership Multiplier** is someone whose influence expands the leadership capacity of others. They coach, mentor, and equip emerging leaders, ensuring the organization grows stronger over time. **Leadership multipliers** empower others to step into roles, develop skills, and take on responsibility. They help build a deep and sustainable bench of future leaders – ensuring continuity and momentum.

Callie Iversen, President of Wilkes Community College Grange was the raffle winner at Family Conference. She received BCBSNC suite tickets to see comedian, Jeff Dunham at the Lenovo Center in Raleigh, NC. Raffle tickets were sold during Family Conference to benefit the disaster relief fund.



# 2025 1st Place Apple Pie

Denise Luttrell | Grantham Grange

## Mom's Apple Pie

### CRUST:

3 Cups Flour  
1 Tablespoon Sugar  
2 Teaspoon Salt  
3/4 Cup Butter  
3/4 Cup Shortening  
1 Tablespoon Vinegar  
1/2 Cup Water  
1 Egg

- 1) Blend Flour, Sugar and Salt.
- 2) Cut in Butter and Crisco
- 3) In small bowl, beat Vinegar, Water and Egg.
- 4) Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients. Blend just until mixed.

5) Divide dough into 2 balls and refrigerate up to 1 week.

### FILLING:

6 Cups Apples, peeled, cored and sliced 1/4" thick.  
1 Tablespoon Lemon Juice  
3/4 Cup Sugar  
2 Tablespoons Flour  
3/4 Teaspoon Cinnamon  
1/4 Teaspoon Nutmeg  
1/4 Teaspoon Salt  
2 - 3 Tablespoons Butter  
1 Egg

- 1) Add Lemon Juice to Apples.
- 2) Blend Sugar, Flour, Spices and Salt together.
- 3) Add dry ingredients to Apples and mix well.
- 4) Put Filling into 9" uncooked Pie Crust.
- 5) Dot Filling with Butter.
- 6) Add top Crust, crimp Crust, brush with Egg wash and vent.
- 7) Bake at 400° for 25 minutes with crust shield, then reduce temperature to 375° for an additional 30 - 35 minutes, until golden brown.



# CREATING POSITIVITY AT WINTER YOUTH CONFERENCE



Youth from across the state gathered March 6-8 for the NC Grange's annual Winter Youth Conference. Held at Camp Caraway near Asheboro, the original retreat date was cancelled due to the massive snow storm our state experienced, but the new date gave us a very warm, sunny weekend full of fun.

This retreat offers students, grades 9th and up, an educational experience to grow as leaders, to gain confidence through public speaking, to serve the community, and to engage in team building activities. This event has always been a favorite for our young members, especially since they get to build meaningful friendships which is a huge part of their Grange experience.

This year, youth participated in workshops and activities that focused on leadership and positivity, which were led by Taylor Rogers, Jennie Gentry and Missy Muller. Students also put positivity into action by creating vision boards to display their goals for the year and keep a positive outlook for the future. Youth also took time to create affirmation posters that they took pictures with around the camp as a reminder to others to stay positive, especially during tough times.



YOUTH  
by : Jennie Gentry

State Contests were held on Saturday afternoon. In our Public Speaking Contest, Cade Howerton won first place in the youth age group, and Isaiah Bell won the young adult category. Many youth also competed in our Impromptu Speech Contest, which is always a fun event. We love how this contest boosts confidence by encouraging young people to speak in front of a group. No matter how they place in the contest, simply participating is a win. Nick Cameron won first place this year with Cade Howerton placing second and Brayden Eudy placing third. Missy Mueller placed first for young adults. All participants did an incredible job.

Elections for State Youth Officers were also held during the afternoon's contests. Caroline Barber of Bushy Fork Grange was elected the 2026 State Grange Youth President, and Kayla Laws, also from Bushy Fork Grange, was elected the State Vice President. A full list of officers can be found in this edition of Grange News.

Each year at this conference, a special committee interviews youth who have applied to serve on the State Youth Leadership Team. This committee selects the team, which is always a dif-

difficult decision due to the amazing candidates that try out. In a special ceremony on Saturday evening, the new Youth Leadership Team was announced. As their names were called, these young leaders accepted their positions with much enthusiasm, ready to serve the Grange. Those members are Caroline Barber, Bushy Fork Grange; Nick Cameron, Juniper Grange; Brayden Eudy, St. Johns Grange; Anna Hahn, St. Johns Grange; Ryleigh Hartsell, St. Johns Grange; Cade Howerton, Bushy Fork Grange; and Kayla Laws, Bushy Fork Grange. Cade and Kayla will serve this year as our State Youth Ambassadors.

Saturday evening's festivities included a Plaid and Rad Party in which everyone dressed in plaid clothing and participated in a fun Mystery Game. They acted out hilarious characters while receiving clues and hints to try to solve a mystery. Youth then participated in an inspiring activity to wrap up the weekend's topic of positivity. Every person had a sheet of paper with their picture on it, all of which were set out in a circle. Everyone signed personal messages and positive affirmations on each person's sheet as a reminder of how amazing they are. Youth have often stated that on a rough day, they will look at their sheets and smile, remembering how loved they are by their Grange friends.



Taylor Rogers gave a special presentation at the end of the evening and spoke about her time in the Grange as she ages out of the youth program. She shared uplifting messages and presented special gifts of love and encouragement to several of her younger peers. This has become a very moving tradition at the conference, and we are grateful for this amazing leader and the time she has spent growing up in our youth program.



Youth departed Sunday morning after our traditional friendship circle and a devotion led by Ryleigh Hartsell. It was a wonderful, uplifting weekend, and much appreciation is given to the adult chaperones that helped make the conference possible. They volunteer their time to not only assist with the event, but to encourage and mentor our youth, which is greatly appreciated. It was a wonderful weekend, and our organization is proud to have such a positive, unique program for young people.

# 2026 YOUTH OFFICERS

President: Caroline Barber  
Durham, NC | Bushy Fork Grange

Vice President: Kayla Laws  
Roxboro, NC | Bushy Fork Grange

Program Director: Cade Howerton  
Timberlake, NC | Bushy Fork Grange

Steward: Nick Cameron  
Carthage, NC | Juniper Grange

Assistant Steward: Brayden Eudy  
Mt. Pleasant, NC | St. Johns Grange

Lady Assistant Steward: Ryleigh Hartsell  
Mt. Pleasant, NC | St. Johns Grange

Chaplain: Isabelle Welborn  
Advance, NC | Camp Grange

Treasurer: Cole Sandy  
Apex, NC | Camp Grange

Secretary: Anna Hahn  
Mt. Pleasant, NC | St. Johns Grange

Gatekeeper: Noah Mackie  
Wake Forest, NC | Capitol Grange

Ceres: Mollie Ingles  
Sanford, NC | Camp Grange

Pomona: Lucy Anderson  
Ft. Mill, SC | Villeworth Grange

Flora: Chloe Laws  
Roxboro, NC | Bushy Fork Grange

Executive Committee: Ian Perry  
Chapel Hill, NC | Camp Grange

## LOCAL GRANGE NEWS



## FERGUSON GRANGE

by : Sharon Underwood

In February, Ferguson Grange hosted a “Beat the Winter Blues” Bingo Night for the community. Helping people warm up with fun, the event included free bingo, snacks and music, all of which was greatly enjoyed by a crowd of sixty-six community members. The event was a great way to bring people together during a very cold winter.

During Ferguson Grange’s February meeting, member David Baker shared the background and history of the beloved old local Hermit, Hamp Kendall. Hamp was wrongly accused of murder and tragically spent years of hard labor in prison. He was eventually exonerated and spent his final years in a mountain shack in Ferguson. You can read the entire story soon in a book that Grange member Margaret Martine is writing about his life.



## COMMUNITY

by : Anna Liles



Funshine Camp was established with a sincere purpose: to provide meaningful recreational and educational experiences to individuals of all ages with developmental disabilities—completely free for them and their families. This remarkable initiative thrives thanks to the unwavering support of generous sponsors, dedicated volunteers, and a community that wholeheartedly believes in inclusion and unconditional love.

The vision for Funshine Camp emerged from a profoundly touching moment. In the same week, a young boy and a young girl with developmental disabilities each inquired about a party held in Yancey County—one they were not invited to. Their innocent questions and evident disappointment highlighted a simple truth: they longed for inclusion, a sense of belonging, and the chance to celebrate like everyone else.

A group of volunteers united in prayer, seeking guidance on how to address this need. What followed can only be described as a blessing. Through divine inspiration, the concept of a camp was born—one that would embrace every camper with open arms and hearts.

In 1999, twelve campers gathered for the inaugural Funshine Camp, sponsored by Friends Across North Carolina Foundation. That week was filled with joy, laughter, friendship, and unforgettable moments.

Fast forward more than two decades, Funshine Camp has flourished beyond our wildest dreams, welcoming between 350 and 400 amazing campers each year.

For many years, the Toe River Campground served as our cherished home, generously provided by the Yancey County Government. This natural environment was the ideal backdrop for connection, growth, and healing. Unfortunately, after Hurricane Helene's devastating impact, we lost our original campground. Last year, camp was relocated to a local school, with fishing opportunities offsite and shuttles operating throughout the day.

Despite the change in location, the community came together to ensure camp could still happen. With the support of volunteers and donations from communities and individuals across the state, we were able to host a fantastic

camp experience.

While the campground is still unavailable, the community has rallied around Funshine, granting us the opportunity to use a fire training facility for both camp and year-round parties for campers. Operation Helo, along with a grant from Samaritan's Purse, has been instrumental in transforming the fire department into a fully ADA-compliant space that meets the needs of our campers.

Camp Funshine holds a special place in my heart and in the hearts of every family member. This journey began when I was eleven, and I am incredibly grateful that it continues to thrive, allowing my children to contribute. Our first year of camp was unforgettable. We sang and danced as if no one was watching. We were the entertainment, and being silly—perhaps even a bit embarrassing—was worth every smile we received in return. Last year, with the future of camp uncertain due to Hurricane Helene's destruction, we recognized how vital it was for campers who had faced much adversity. The excitement on their faces when they arrived at camp was truly remarkable. We are so grateful to a local elementary school for hosting our campers, and thanks to donations and volunteers, we were able to create a wonderful camp experience!

The items we gather at the Family Conference will be utilized for crafts, games, and various enjoyable activities during our 2026 Funshine Camp. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed items, and we deeply appreciate your prayers throughout the year for the camp, the campers, and the volunteers.



## A NEW BEGINNING

The daylight is getting longer and nights become shorter during this time of year. We see new life in the world around us as spring days provide the warmth and sunlight to change our surroundings from sleepiness to full activity. The birds are chirping, the insects are making their nighttime chatter, the trees are making their leaves, the gardens are producing new plants and flowers, the fields are growing new crops, etc. What a wonderful time of the year!

All of these events are not just by accident or chance. They are all part of a Master Plan. The plan is explained in detail as God's creation in Genesis Chapter 1 in the Holy Bible. The first verse of Genesis reads, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis records the actual creation of all things on the earth including mankind. Genesis 1:26-27 describes man's creation – "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.' So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female."

When you reflect, you begin to understand that God is in control and master of all things around us. In Daniel 2:21, His word says – "He changes the times and seasons; he removes kings and establishes kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding." We as His people can always call upon Him for His blessings and love in our lives. God will restore his people when needed. An illustration of this restoration is given as a fresh spring rain in Zechariah 10:1 – "Ask the Lord for rain in the season of spring rain. The Lord makes the rain clouds, and he will give them showers of rain and crops in the field for everyone." As believers in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we can be refreshed through Him as noted in Act 3:20 – "That seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah."

Our lives go through the various seasons just as nature does around us. We must have faith that the Master, our Lord, will take care of us no matter what season we are experiencing. In John 14:23, God makes a promise to each of us to how far He will go and be with us in our daily life if we love Him – "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will

come to him and make our home with him." We can trust God with our lives and to be with us in our time of need. God made a promise to His people – "No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it." – I Corinthians 10:13.

If you have not taken time lately to talk with God, I highly recommend doing so. Life goes by too fast, and the pressures of life can be so overwhelming that we get lost and forget to live and experience the pleasures that God created for us. We must have faith in God to carry us every day. The apostle Paul describes our need for faith in our life in Hebrews 11:6 – "Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Spring has sprung with a fresh release on life all around us. As human beings, we need to follow the signs of nature and also renew ourselves. The only true source for a new release on life begins where all things began and that is with God. With God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26 states that Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." I encourage you to get energized and be connected to the creator of all life. Spread the hope and encourage one another to seek the love of God.

Have a blessed day!

### In Memoriam

*Gov. James Hunt  
Karen Dale  
Margaret Nichols  
Carl Bost  
Rella Jernigan*

*Associate  
Mingo  
Schley  
St. John's  
Grantham*

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

*Psalm 138:28  
\* 50 Year Member*

# COMMUNITY COLLABORATION SUPPORTS HANDS-ON LEARNING AT WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by : David Allen

On March 19, 2026, an evening of fellowship and shared purpose brought together members of the Wilkes Community College Grange (WCC Grange), Little Mountain Grange, and Ferguson Grange at Wilkes Community College. The combined meeting welcomed more than seventy Grange members and community partners, highlighting the strength and unity of these organizations.

The gathering featured updates from each of the three Granges, showcasing a wide range of community service projects and engaging activities. These reports reflected these Granges' continued dedication to supporting their communities and promoting agricultural education.

A highlight of the evening was a special presentation made to Wilkes Community College President Michael Rodgers and Frank Blevins of the WCC Grange. During this presentation, Ferguson Grange, Little Mountain Grange, and the North Carolina State Grange announced their financial contributions toward the construction of a sixty-foot diameter lunging round pen and storage facility on campus.

This new facility will play a significant role in enhancing hands-on learning opportunities for students. By establishing an on-campus horse-training arena, the college

will reduce the need for students to travel off campus to gain practical experience with livestock. The round pen will directly benefit courses such as Equine Studies, Beef Production, Sheep and Goat Production, and Introduction to Animal Science.

Beyond its academic impact, the project also strengthens community connections. The facility will provide new opportunities for the WCC Grange to deepen its partnerships with local FFA and 4-H programs, further supporting youth development and agricultural education in the region.

The evening served as a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished through collaboration, generosity, and a shared commitment to education and community growth.

This event at the Wilkes Community College and the March 2, 2026, ground breaking event of the Grange supported Agriculture Laboratory Building at the Wayne Community College are excellent examples of how the North Carolina Granges, at all levels, advocate for education and invest in our next generation.





# 2026 Family Conference

By: Jessica Horton

The 2026 Family Conference was held in Asheville, NC, at the AC Hotel in Biltmore Village. Members of all ages from across the state gathered during the weekend for fun and fellowship. This area of North Carolina was one of the hardest hit during Hurricane Helene and the NC Grange Board of Directors elected to host the meeting here in an effort to assist with the economic recovery of the storm. Just down below the hotel sits the historic Biltmore Village where shops and restaurants were fifteen deep under water and mud from the storm. The Cathedral of All Souls, an Episcopal church in the village, is currently still fenced off and closed.

Members gathered Thursday night with a welcome and interactive activities hosted by NC Grange Program Director Bobbie Dellinger of Corriher Grange. Friday morning, attendees gathered for a round robin of speakers from NC Extension offices in the area. Holly Jordan kicked off with an overview of the impacts Hurricane Helene had on her and her area as a brand new director. Thirty-plus inches of rain fell in seventy-two hours with wind gusts up to 140 miles per hour. This caused catastrophic flooding, landslides, power and telecommunication outages, water outages and the loss of over 100 lives.



Following Mrs. Jordan, Brandon Pittman, Mitchell County Extension Director, described how cut off his community became because of down trees, powerlines, and roadways covered in water. He spoke about the trees coming down in droves, forcing his family to climb rough terrain just to get to their distribution point.

Skyler Murray, the McDowell County Livestock and Field Crops Agent, then spoke about the damage to her area. An estimated 822,000 acres incurred some level of damage because of the storm, resulting in \$214,000,000 of timber loss. Their office created a distribution center to meet animal food needs. Farmers in her county who previously had fields full of crops found their fields covered with boulders after the hurricane.

Niki Maness, the Family and Consumer Science Agent in Yancy County, spoke about the challenges her department faced. They had to manage water-boil orders for weeks, enforced food safety rules, taught residents about safe canning practices and provided “grab and go” facts to help during an emergency.

Lastly, Meghan Baker, the Small Farms Agent in Buncombe County, spoke on maximizing land use to get the most yield from their space. Their area suffered transportation challenges, supply chain disruption, farm cleanup efforts, loss of markets, etc. They had to immediately respond to fixing fencing and getting equipment into the area to work.

These five employees from western North Carolina painted horrifying pictures of what looked no different than a warzone. They also spoke of the kindness of neighbors, the resilience of children, and how communities cared for one another, things you hope for after a massive disaster.

The morning concluded with NC Grange President David Allen hosting a workshop for Grangers to intermingle and share ideas to celebrate both America’s 250th this July and Farmers Appreciation Day this November. This was concluded by an afternoon of touring and dinner in the

Asheville area independently. The evening was filled with the annual bingo tournament.

Saturday morning, Grangers were invited to hear Representative Blair Eddins and his wife Angie speak. They explained Eddins’s journey into the legislature while also working for Samaritans Purse. Eddins represents District 94, encompassing Alexander and Wilkes Counties. He was newly elected just as Hurricane Helene hit in 2024.

**“Extension was already trustworthy. It helped create connections and service to neighbors. People are still coming in and helping from Michigan, Alaska and Canada.” - Brandon Pittman, Mitchell County Extension Director**

Grangers then participated in a giant community service project together, working on a quilt. Grouped at different tables, some members cut different sized squares of material while others pinned and sewed them together. The hope is to have a quilt prepared for State Convention this fall to present as part of the Quilts of Valor program.

Again, Grangers departed for an afternoon of touring, but gathered again for an evening game night following dinner at the hotel. Members sat in groups playing Phase 10, Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza, Codenames, Sequence, Othello and many others. This provided a wonderful opportunity to experience fellowship across all age groups and Granges.

Sunday morning, attendees gathered for a worship service led by NC Grange Chaplain Dewitt Hardee before departing the conference. It was a wonderful weekend full of fellowship, and we look forward to seeing our members in September for our annual State Convention in Durham.





## LITTLE MOUNTAIN GRANGE

by : Nina Hayes

Little Mountain Grange held our annual Harvest Festival on November 1, 2025. A dinner of BBQ pork, slaw, green beans, and hush puppies were sold as our major yearly fundraiser. Live music was provided by Sassafras Band. A large crowd attended as drawings were held for our two raffles. A beautiful donated American Star quilt was won by Red Blanton, and the Ruger RXM 9mm Handgun was won by Bert T. The winners were very happy! Other door prizes were also given out.



Hard work and sacrifice deserve recognition and appreciation. On Thursday evening, November 13, 2025, Little Mountain Grange hosted a free dinner event for our area farmers in recognition of NC Farmers Appreciation Day. A meal of Pork BBQ, Grilled Chicken Tenders, stewed red potatoes, green beans, slaw, homemade hush puppies, rolls and ice cream were provided to approximately 100 attendees. A short summary of our Grange's history and community activities were presented by our President, Mickey Hayes. Jimmy Gentry, newly retired NC Grange President, gave a short talk about the NC State Grange. We are so thankful for our sponsors, James River Equipment from Mount Airy, NC and Blue Ridge Tractor from Wilkesboro, NC, who each provided a new cab tractor and hay baler for display. Triangle CC, DeKalb Seed, and Ag South Farm Credit from Wilkesboro gave short remarks and gave away hats, pads, pencils, and calendars to our farmers. Sassafras Band provided live entertainment. Austin Fire Department provided parking assistance. Israel Garcia provided an instant photo for those attending. We tried our best to make our farmers feel loved and appreciated for all they do to provide our country with food and fiber for our existence. Thank you Farmers for a wonderful evening.



# Craig Named 2026 Producer of the Year

by : Jennie Gentry

Debbie Craig, member of Grantham Grange, was recently named the 2026 Outstanding Pork Producer of the Year by the NC Pork Council. This award honors a producer who has made significant contributions to the NC pork industry through leadership, stewardship and commitment. This award also reflects Craig's many years of dedication, diversified farming operations and service.

As part of the award to educate the public about pork producers, the NC Pork Council developed a video highlighting Craig and her farm. She reminisces about her childhood, moving to a farm at the age of eleven in Missouri. Years later, she and her husband moved to North Carolina after he landed a job in the pork industry. She worked to help grow their pork farming operation while also raising a family in Wayne County. The goat dairy operation was added to their farm later.

The Council's video interviews several people who refer to Craig as one of the hardest working people they know who does so much for others, as well as for agriculture, without ever asking for credit. Those who know Craig can also attest to her resilience, strength, and innovation. While she is known for her dedication to her pigs, her work and to agriculture, she is also known for her service to her community.

The Grange congratulates Debbie Craig on this well-deserved award. It is so wonderful to see passionate, hard-working farmers like her being honored, and we thank Craig for her endless commitment to the agriculture industry. You can watch the video on YouTube by searching 2026 Outstanding Pork Producer of the Year.



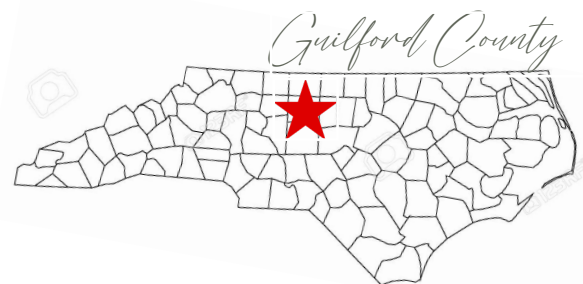
## GUILFORD GRANGE

by : Diane Everhart

Guilford Grange, located in Greensboro, NC, made several charitable donations in the last few months. In November 2025, \$3,000 was donated to Western Guilford Middle School. Many students in the school are economically disadvantaged. The money was used to support and provide presents for homeless children at Christmas. The school staff purchased items they knew the students needed and wanted.

In December 2025, \$350 was donated to the ELP (Ernestine L. Penry) Foundation in honor of Jerry Snyder's 90th birthday. Jerry has been an active member and leader in the Guilford Grange for many years. This is a foundation that Jerry and his wife, Joanne, led for over forty years. The Foundation was started by Jerry's church pastor, Herb Penry, in honor of his wife, Ernestine, who worked to support their family so Herb could attend divinity school and fulfill his calling. The Foundation raises money to assist people pursuing a seminary degree. Over one million dollars have been raised through the years.

In November and December 2025, Guilford Grange raised \$2,500 through a raffle to help homeless veterans. The money was matched by the State Grange, and in February 2026, \$5,000- was donated to the Servant Center in Greensboro. The center's mission is to empower homeless and disabled veterans by providing housing, healthcare and restorative services. They serve over 2,000 people every year. Veterans and disadvantaged students continue to be a focus for the Guilford Grange as populations to serve.





The North Carolina primaries on March 3 turned out very much like predicted by political forecasters. In the General Assembly races, much attention was focused on the race between Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger and Rockingham County Sheriff Sam Page. Senator Berger, an attorney and one of the most powerful figures in North Carolina, has represented the state's 26th Senate district, which includes Guilford and Rockingham counties, for thirteen terms. After the final tally of votes, Sheriff Page led the race by twenty-three votes. As expected, Senator Berger requested a recount which did not change the outcome. Senator Berger then requested a "hand-to-eye" recount. Because the final vote margin was less than one percent, election officials randomly chose three percent of the precincts' ballots to be recounted by hand. With the hand recount not changing the outcome of the election, Senator Berger conceded the race to Sheriff Page.

The North Carolina General Assembly has held only skeleton sessions recently. The House and Senate have yet to reach an agreement on the 2026–2027 state budget, particularly regarding tax cuts and spending levels. Lawmakers are currently scheduled to reconvene on April 21st for the beginning of the 2026 Short Session during which they will hopefully come to an agreement and approve and finalize a budget. In the meantime, North Carolina continues to operate under the last approved budget.

During this period of relative quiet at

the North Carolina General Assembly, oversight committees have continued to meet regularly. These include committees focused on Transportation, Health and Human Services, Medicaid, Government Efficiency, Emergency Management Oversight, America's Semiquincentennial, Property Tax Reduction and Reform, the General Statutes Commission, and Involuntary Commitment and Public Safety. Over the past month, much of the focus has centered on tax policy—particularly property taxes—including discussions around potentially reducing or eliminating certain tax exemptions for hospitals.

Governor Stein has not remained quiet during this budget impasse between the House and Senate. At the end of March, he joined law enforcement officials at the campus of Central Piedmont Community, to talk about his proposed Critical Needs Budget; one of those priorities being the vital need to fund public safety priorities. He was quoted, "My Critical Needs Budget invests in the people who keep North Carolinians safe by raising pay for troopers, correctional officers, and other state public safety professionals and ensuring agencies like the SBI and Department of Adult Correction have the resources they need to do their jobs effectively."

On March 24, The Fiscal Research Division (FRD) and the Office of State Budget and Management (OSMB) released an updated consensus revenue forecast. The forecast shows \$35.079 billion in revenue for Fiscal Year 2025-26 and \$34.72 billion in revenue for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

Recent reporting across multiple outlets points to a period of significant strain and disruption in Washington, D.C. and nationwide. Ongoing conflict involving the United States and Iran has contributed to global instability. (The World)

There is very little that happens in world politics that does not somehow also affect U.S. agriculture. Since the beginning of "Operation Epic Furry" in late February, the Strait of Hormuz—a critical global shipping route—has been under heightened scrutiny. Any disruption in this region can significantly impact the movement of energy supplies and agricultural inputs, such as fertilizer and fuel, which are essential to American farmers. As tensions persist, the ripple effects are felt not only in international markets but also across rural communities here at home.

All over the country, a partial government funding standoff has led to widespread staffing shortages within the Transportation Security Administration, creating long lines and delays at airports across the country. In some cases, wait times have stretched for hours as officers go unpaid and absenteeism continues to rise. (The Guardian)

## **From the Hill**

By: Burton Eller, National Grange Legislative Director

*Following are excerpts from the National Grange's March edition of Policy Updates and Issue News:*

**Farm Bill Clears House Committee**  
The farm bill 2.0, or "skinny farm bill,"

was adopted by the House Agriculture Committee in early March on a 34-17 bipartisan vote. Full House consideration has not yet been scheduled. The Senate Agriculture Committee is expected to take up the farm bill later this Spring. This legislation authorizes the remaining farm and rural programs not included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025, which authorized commodity programs, crop insurance, and foreign market promotion. Corn farmers and biofuel producers lobbied hard for an amendment to ensure E15 ethanol year-round and nationwide availability was included in the farm bill. However, it was ruled that another committee, Energy and Commerce, has jurisdiction because it is a fuel additive. The farm bill legislation contains a controversial provision to invalidate California's Proposition 12, which mandates and regulates animal husbandry practices for food products entering California from other states. There was considerable concern that the bill also moves \$1 billion from the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to other conservation programs. EQIP is very popular with livestock farmers and ranchers as a cost-share program to install watering equipment, water crossings,

stream fencing, cross fencing, manure storage facilities, and other working farm and ranch conservation practices.

#### **Support for rural stress and mental health**

The National Grange and Rural Minds have been strong supporters of the USDA's Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN). The National Grange joined the National Farmer Union, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, and others on a strong letter of support for funding to the leadership of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. FRSAN is a program that supports a service provider network connecting farmers, ranchers, and their families to stress assistance and mental health resources. Four regional centers are increasing access to stress resources across the country by coordinating efforts to serve the unique needs of the rural populations in each region. A FRSAN help line is staffed by farm and rural-savvy professionals.

#### **Grange moves to protect rural hospitals and clinics**

Early this month, the National Grange supported the release of a new analysis by Magnolia Market Access that examines how Medicare hospital reclassification

policies increasingly divert resources from rural hospitals to large metropolitan health systems. This resource diversion weakens the rural health care safety net and threatens access to care for millions of rural residents. The report, "Hospital Dual Classification: How Urban Hospitals are Capitalizing on Medicare Reclassification Policies," documents how geographically urban hospitals reclassify as administratively rural to access rural-specific Medicare benefits while simultaneously receiving higher urban wage index payments. According to National Grange president Chris Hamp, "Rural hospitals are closing at alarming rates, and yet federal dollars meant to keep them open are being syphoned away through a regulatory loophole." Rural-focused support, such as the 340B program and other rural-specific Medicare benefits, was designed to benefit rural communities and should not divert scarce dollars from rural patients. The National Grange is working with rural hospitals, rural health care providers, and patient advocacy groups, calling on policymakers to close the 340B dual-classification loophole.



## SAVE THE DATE!

PLAN TO JOIN US  
IN OKLAHOMA THIS  
NOVEMBER FOR THE  
NATIONAL CONVENTION!



## YOUR LEGACY AND ITS EFFECT ON OTHERS

Recently I have reflected on how others have influenced my own life and helped to shape the person that I am today. Some have taught me how to work, how to aspire to goals that seemed too far out of reach, and how to expand my own knowledge and skills. Others have taught me things to avoid and to be aware of, shunning negative influences and their resulting consequences of pain and failure.

I think of my Grandpa Hutchens, a simple man that seemed to be able to talk to anyone and could play about any kind of string instrument. He was a small farmer in Yadkin County, and when he “retired,” he often helped in a small country store and gas station not too far from their home. I can never recall Grandpa losing his temper, and I do recall how he was always willing to give a helping hand when folks needed that little extra boost. When he saw a need, he was willing to do what he could to help. One of the funniest stories was when Mom and Dad bought the farm I grew up on. Dad decided that we needed a milk cow and was talking to Grandpa about that. Next thing we knew, Grandpa took him out to his barn where he had a very young Jersey heifer calf. Before we left their house to head back home, Grandpa and Dad had loaded that calf in the trunk of our '49 Plymouth car and we were on the road. I can remember hearing the calf bump around a bit on the hour or so trip. I don't remember what shape the trunk was in when we got home, but I'm sure Dad had a mess in that trunk to clean up.

Later, as a child, there was my first Little League Coach, Mr. Holder. His memorable attributes included kindness, patience, and forgiveness. No matter if we missed a big catch or struck out, he'd reassure us: “That's alright son, everything will be fine.” He taught us how to be young sportsmen. That season, our team won the Sportsmanship Award which meant more to him than if we had won the World Series.

I would be remiss if I didn't include my own Dad in this discourse. He taught me the value of hard work, the love of the farm life, as well as always doing your best, treating folks as you would want them to treat you. He preferred to stay out of the limelight, choosing instead to work behind the scenes, anticipating needs and stepping

in whenever necessary. He was my version of EF Hutton - when he did speak, folks normally listened to what he had to say.

There were also others who taught me what not to do or what to avoid. There was Bill, who rented the homeplace house from my parents, but lived paycheck to paycheck. He never seemed to get ahead of the next bill. Bill taught me the importance of saving for that rainy day. Elisha, who lived around the bend from us, was a WWI veteran living on Social Security and his VA check. About two or three days before the checks came in the mail, you could see his “friends” start dropping in. With the check cashed, it was party central at his house. The liquor, beer, and whatever else appeared to flow freely for about a week, then Elisha's friends disappeared until the next month, leaving Elisha in solitude for the next two to three weeks. The evidence of the “festivities” was enough to fill a ten-foot gully between his house and the creek where we rabbit hunted. Seeing this as a youngster taught me to choose my friends wisely.

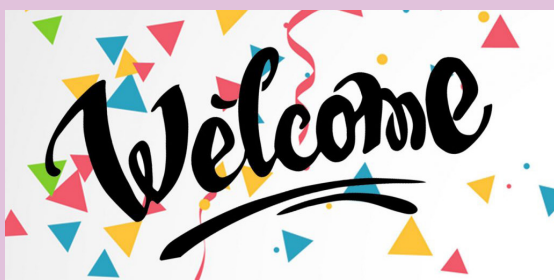
One last example was an individual who seemed to derive enjoyment out of being a thorn to most everyone they encountered. Whenever their name came up in casual conversation, even if they weren't present, I noticed people's responses were consistently negative. Matter of fact, his obituary had a statement included that I've never seen before. It stated something to the effect of “Please be respectful of the family and refrain from any negative comments.” I thought to myself, “What a reputation to leave this earth with.”

We all leave a legacy behind, and many times we have no idea the influence that we are having on our family, friends, co-workers, and community. Grandpa never had any idea that I would remember some of the Sundays when the family would gather around the front porch, making music and singing. This influence has challenged me to pick up a couple of string instruments to attempt to learn how to play them. Coach Holder, some sixty years later, still has impact on my life to be the “sportsman” he taught us to be, win or lose. Elisha's influence has helped me make great friendships over these years but built on the right foundation. At one board meeting, the Chair-

person described me as “thorny,” but this was because I remained committed to the core strengths of the organization I was serving at the time. Of course, when the Chairperson called me that, he was not being too serious, and we all had a great laugh at it.

This brings me to the final point of why I changed my employment some twenty-seven years ago from a Branch Manager and Loan Officer to an Insurance Agent. We had a loan with a family that I thought of more as a friend than a client. I had worked with that family for over fifteen years, approving their loans for their farming operation and the construction of a new home. We had meals together and went deer hunting together. They were almost family to my family as well. Then one evening after the couple had spent the day in the shop preparing for spring planting, the husband sat up in bed while having a major heart attack. He was gone before his head could land back on the pillow. Although people tried valiantly to save him, their attempts were unsuccessful. Upon learning of his death the following morning, my colleague from the loan office and I visited the widow to offer our condolences. What a comfort it was to be able to tell her not to worry about their loans, he had insurance to cover everything they owed, and to come by the office when she was ready. I’ve also been on the other side of the story where we had to tell another widow that her separated husband had let their insurance lapse and unfortunately their debts would now fall on her shoulders alone. Those experiences revealed to me the significant impact insurance can have on our legacy. Did we prepare for what life throws at us, or did we fail to prepare?

Get with one of our NC Grange Insurance Agents today so they can help you prepare for the unexpected and make your legacy a living positive influence on how to do things the right way!



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

<u>Associate Members:</u>	Thomas Lynch
Mitchell Paige	Robert Neal
Marlene Paige	Jane Brewer
Anthony Butts	George Venters

# Save The Date!

## State Convention

### September 17 - 20

### Durham, NC

### Sheraton Imperial





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