

# GRANGE NEWS

North Carolina's  
**Hartsell & Howerton**  
Claim Both National Junior  
Grange Ambassador Positions!



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

February 18-20	Winter Youth Conference
March TBD	Family Conference
July 10-16	Summer 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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## A NOTE FROM JIMMY: PARTNERSHIPS MATTER

I was asked to speak recently by Zoom to a class at NC A&T State University about the importance of partnerships in agriculture. In addition, another speaker was James Lamb, Grange member from Taylor's Bridge Grange who works with Prestage Farms and is a swine producer who was recently named as the Sunbelt Farmer of the Year for North Carolina. This gave me the idea to share the same topic with you in this column.

We are living in an age in which it is difficult for any organization to stand alone, especially when it comes to advocating for a legislative agenda. Yes, sometimes with certain issues we still act alone in letting our desires be known with legislators, but the reality is that for the most part, we need other organizations to be advocating for the same things that the Grange is working on. This does not mean that we are weak! It means we are smart enough to realize that there is strength in numbers, and we are much more effective when there are many voices working toward the same end. It is not unusual for the Grange to work with coalitions who share our views in order to strengthen our message. For example, we are currently part of a coalition called "We Work for Health" which helps us to advocate for policies related to health care. We also belong to the Agriculture Alliance through which we advocate for agricultural issues. I freely admit that we are careful about

the coalitions that we become affiliated with because it is important that our legislative policies agree. Several months ago, we left a coalition that began advocating for issues for which we were opposed. Working with coalitions also helps us to build new relationships which is extremely important.

Not all partnerships exist within the legislative arena. We have established great relationships with other groups because we support what they do. This would apply to a lot of agriculture commodity groups in the state. In addition, we partner with the agricultural universities and the Department of Agriculture. I believe that it is vitally important for the Grange to be involved in these relationships to help us to be a vital part of all that is going on in North Carolina that fits our interests.

Should local Granges have partnerships? Absolutely. Building relationships at the local level could help to conduct larger projects, involve more people, gain more ideas, and even increase funding capacity. It can increase the potential to accomplish more than you may be able to do alone. I encourage our local Granges to look for opportunities to partner with others in the community which can lead to each of the partners being stronger and more effective.







## 2021 NATIONAL CONVENTION by: Jessica Horton

### WICHITA, KANSAS

The 155th National Grange Convention was held in Wichita, Kansas and hosted by the Great Plains region (Nebraska, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado), for the first time since 2015 when National Convention was held in Lincoln, Nebraska. Most delegates arrived over the previous weekend in time for the Delegate tour of sights around Wichita, but the convention officially opened on Tuesday, November 9 with the President's Address. National Grange President, Betsy Huber spoke about the Grange's involvement in coalitions surrounding agriculture, healthcare and rural broadband.

Tuesday also brought the announcement of new National Grange Communications Director, Philip Vonada from Pennsylvania. Vonada has grown up in the Grange and worked to set up a communications department in his home state. Vonada served as a Senior Communications Fellow at the National Convention and is eager to provide his service to the organization when he officially takes the reins in January. Vonada holds a Bachelors Degree in Speech Communication and Theatre from Millersville University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Arts from Villanova University. Amanda Brozana has been filling this role as well as Membership Director, but she is glad to pull back and focus on membership alone.

Wednesday meant that most of the North Carolina crew was arriving. Youth Grangers representing North Carolina included Olivia Barber (Bushy Fork), Asheton Medlin

(Bushy Fork), Cole Settle (Little Mountain), Matthew Settle (Little Mountain), Baylor Howerton (Bushy Fork), Lillie Roquet (Cape Fear), Jacob Roquet (Cape Fear) and Autumn Whitaker (Little Mountain). Adults in attendance were: Jimmy and Anita Gentry (Troutman), Mark and Joyce Hood (Grantham), John and Wanda Crawford (Grantham), Dianne Hudson (St. Johns), Sharon Ritchie (St. Johns), John and Emily Hartsell (St. Johns), Jennie Gentry (Southern Wake), Charles Howerton (Bushy Fork) and Jessica Horton (VilleWorth). We also had three juniors in attendance; Ryleigh Hartsell (St. Johns), Raegan Hartsell (St. Johns) and Cade Howerton (Bushy Fork).

Among the many resolutions up for debate, the hottest was the sale of the National Grange Headquarters. On Wednesday a roll call vote was taken, and the sale of the building passed. "It was a necessary step," said National Grange President, Betsy Huber. "It was an emotional



decision - I understand that. Our mission is not to operate a building as landlords. We need to dedicate more of our efforts and money to Grange programming rather than managing a building.”

On Wednesday evening, all Grangers gathered for the annual roll call of states which was followed by the Quilts of Valor Presentation led by National Grange Program Director Chris Hamp. Many of the NC Youth served as escorts to the 13 service men and women as they received their quilts. Quilts of Valor are presented to service members and veterans to cover them with comfort and healing.

Thursday brought several workshops for attendees not in session to attend. National Grange Legislative Assistant Sean O’Neil presented an advocacy workshop; Communications Director Philip Vonada presented on fundraising; Membership Director Amanda Brozana-Rios presented on membership and leadership development; and the National Youth Ambassadors and Young Patrons presented games and team building activities. As part of the State Youth Ambassador requirements, Cole Settle and Lillie Roquet led a leadership workshop on working with groups, which came with a team building task. All workshops can be found online at the National Grange YouTube Channel, [youtube.com/nationalgrange](https://youtube.com/nationalgrange).



The G.R.O.W. Club banquet was held Thursday evening with new inductees, Lillie Roquet and Cole Settle from North Carolina. The G.R.O.W. Club is made up of Grangers who have served as an Ambassador or Young Patron. Following the banquet, the youth held their costume party with the *Wizard of Oz* theme.

Grangers met up again that evening for a fun show from the Peterson Farm Brothers, a YouTube sensation! They told their story of how they began making videos to get their “city friends” to understand just what farming means

by making parodies of popular songs. Their work has taken them across the world, and Grangers thoroughly enjoyed having the chance to see and meet them.

Friday, the Youth Officer Team opened the session led by Assistant Steward, Matthew Settle and Lady Assistant





Steward, Baylor Howerton. All the officers did an outstanding job! Following the opening, many Grangers took off in different directions to tour the sights of Wichita. The General Tour stopped at the art deco building housing the Kansas Aviation Museum where Grangers saw a diverse collection of airplanes. They then stopped at the Nifty Nut House, a third-generation family-owned business that offers a variety of candy, chocolates and nuts. Their last stop was the Wichita Sedgewick County Historical Museum, which is housed in the former City Hall. This museum offers information on the area, and oil.

Simultaneously, the Youth were on a tour of their own. They stopped at Botanica, Wichita's Botanical Gardens. They toured the elaborate gardens and completed a service project. The project was to assist the staff and volunteers putting out light displays for the holiday season. Youth worked to set out luminary lights, cages and secure them along pathways. The tour included a ride on their impressive, restored wood carousel.

Friday evening, many members were recognized for their outstanding work in their communities. Distinguished Granges and Legacy Families were all announced as well as the new Ambassador positions. North Carolina took home three of the four positions with Cole Settle as a new National Grange Youth Ambassador and Ryleigh Hartsell and Cade Howerton as the new National Grange Junior Ambassadors. These are both the highest honor and leadership positions their age groups can obtain.

Saturday, Grangers were offered the 7th Degree and some much needed free time. That evening, the banquet was hosted and many items were raffled during the meal. The evening concluded with talent winners performing from across the country. Ryleigh and Raegan Hartsell performed their dance duet and Baylor Howerton performed her sign-a-song. They all represented North Carolina beautifully!

Grangers had a great time in the Great Plains Region and look forward to Sparks, Nevada next year in the Western Region!



## SETTLE NAMED NATIONAL YOUTH AMBASSADOR

by: Jennie Gentry

The Awards Ceremony at the 2021 National Grange Convention in Kansas brought much excitement for North Carolina. After the amazing announcement that both Ryleigh Hartsell and Cade Howerton were selected as the new National Grange Junior Ambassadors, our very own Cole Settle was named National Youth Ambassador. He received his new sash from the outgoing National Ambassador Britney Mercado from New York. Words cannot describe the excitement that his friends and fellow Grangers from North Carolina felt when his name was announced.

Serving as National Grange Youth Ambassador is the most prestigious leadership position youth can hold in the National Grange, which Settle worked very hard this year to attain. He will serve throughout 2022 by assisting the National Youth Director, traveling to Regional Conference, giving presentations, promoting the youth program, engaging in legislative work, and leading a wide variety of activities. Settle will be joined by Amber Corll of Ohio who was also selected for this honor.

The selection process for National Youth Ambassador involves several requirements including an interview with a panel of judges. Settle also presented a 30-minute leadership workshop with fellow Youth Ambassador Lillee Roquet at the National Convention. His leadership experience and Grange participation throughout the year helped prepared him for this role, which was also highlighted in a notebook that he was required to make about his year while serving as Ambassador in North Carolina.

Settle, a member of Little Mountain Grange, is a senior at Appalachian State University where he is studying Criminal Justice to become a wildlife officer. The son of Virgil and Mitzi Settle, he is a member of the university's archery team, loves to play mandolin and guitar, and enjoys mentoring younger Grangers. On being selected as National Youth Ambassador, Settle stated, "I'm excited to be part of the National Grange Youth Team and hope to make a positive impact on youth across the country. I'm honored to have been selected and look forward to 2022."

NC Grange is very proud of Cole for his many accomplishments this year. It has been a privilege to watch this impressive young man grow into such an impactful leader over the years. We look forward to watching him lead in 2022 and are excited to see the many things he will accomplish.



# HARTSELL & HOWERTON NAMED 2022 NATIONAL JUNIOR AMBASSADORS

by : Emily Hartsell

The 2021 National Grange Convention held in Wichita, Kansas, was amazing. NC Grange had two outstanding Junior Ambassadors representing us, Ryleigh Hartsell from St. John's Grange, and Cade Howerton of Bushy Fork Grange. They competed against other Junior Ambassadors for the title of National Grange Junior Ambassador. At a special awards ceremony during the convention, both Ryleigh and Cade were announced as the new Junior Ambassadors for 2022 and received their sashes.

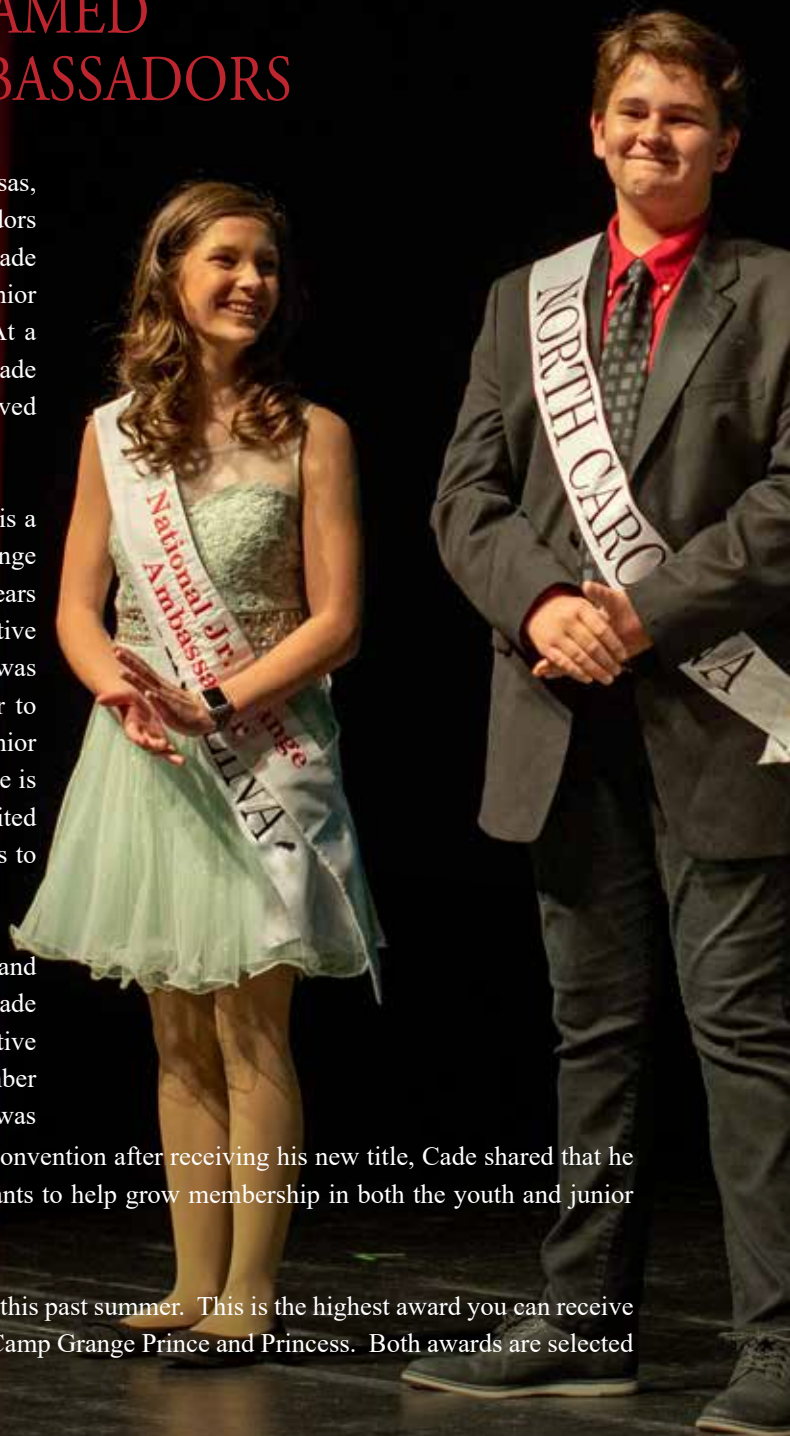
Ryleigh is the 13 year old daughter of John and Emily Hartsell. She is a 7th grader at Mount Pleasant Middle School. She started attending Grange activities as a baby and attended Grange Camp when she was 4 ½ years old. Ryleigh has held several State Junior Offices including Executive Committee, Ceres, Flora, and most recently, Vice President. She was selected to be part of the Junior Leadership Team this past summer to help lead activities at camp where she was named State Grange Junior Ambassador. When asked at the National Grange Convention what she is most excited about for the new position, Ryleigh stated, "I am most excited to travel and meet more new people." She also shared that she hopes to develop into a stronger leader and to help grow the Junior department.

Cade is the son of Charles and Allison Howerton. He is 13 years old and in the 8th grade. He started attending Grange Camp at the age of 5. Cade has held several State Junior Offices including Secretary and Executive Committee. He also served as the Junior President this year and member of the Junior Leadership Team at camp this past summer where he was named State Junior Ambassador. When interviewed at the National Convention after receiving his new title, Cade shared that he is most excited about meeting new people. He also stated that he wants to help grow membership in both the youth and junior departments.

Ryleigh and Cade both received the Hunt Best Camper Award at camp this past summer. This is the highest award you can receive as a Junior Granger. They were also both selected as the 2021 Junior Camp Grange Prince and Princess. Both awards are selected by our Junior counselors.

As part of their work trying out for National Junior Ambassador, Ryleigh and Cade interviewed with several judges at the convention. They also each had to give a presentation on how weather affects agriculture. Ryleigh talked about what happens during a drought while Cade presented on what happens during a flood. They also attended all Junior activities. This is the first time I have taken Junior Ambassadors to a National Convention. Not only have these two showed us what they can do for the Junior Grange Program and how great they are, but they went to Kansas and showed the judges how awesome they are. I could not be prouder of these two. They worked very hard for this title and represented our State Junior Grange program well.

Ryleigh and Cade have a full year ahead of them as the 2022 National Grange Junior Ambassadors. They will travel to different states visiting with juniors, presenting more workshop, and helping lead activities with the National Junior Director, Samantha Wilkins. I wish them well on this journey and cannot wait to see them evolve into even better leaders than they already are.







## YOUTH LEAVE THEIR MARK ON KANSAS by: Jennie Gentry

### YOUTH NEWS

A group of eight youth proudly represented North Carolina at the National Grange Convention in Wichita, Kansas this year. They participated in a wide variety of youth activities and supported each other through contests. It was great being able to travel and interact in person, and it was very special watching the impact these youth made on those from other states. They also brought home several special awards and honors.

Among our group were Cole Settle (Little Mountain Grange) and Lillie Roquet (Cape Fear Grange) who represented our youth program as State Youth Ambassadors. They led a 30-minute leadership workshop together at the convention and interviewed for the National Ambassador program. At a special reception, they were inducted into the National Grange GROW Club which is comprised of anyone who has ever served as a Prince or Princess, National Grange Youth Team member, Young Couple, Young Adult Patron, or Youth Ambassador. Cole and Lillie have worked extremely hard as leaders this year and have been instrumental in helping our NC program to successfully get back on its feet since the Covid pandemic. At an Awards Ceremony event, our state cheered loudly when Cole

Settle was named the National Grange Youth Ambassador for 2022. We are so proud of Cole and Lillie for being amazing representatives of North Carolina.

Four of our youth served as National Youth Officers this year and opened the Friday morning Grange Session with a drill and officer opening. Made up of youth from across the country, the officer team did an excellent job with this long-time convention tradition. Matt Settle served as Assistant Steward with Baylor Howerton by his side as the Lady Assistant Steward. They each designed, taught, and led the opening and closing drills for the session which impressed the crowd. Asheton Medlin served as Treasurer and Autumn Whitaker served as Pomona. The youth officers also attended a reception with the adult National Grange Officers. Youth met the officers they represented to learn from them and received great advice and encouragement.

The Youth Tour this year took the group to Wichita's Botanica Gardens where they walked the paths of amazing horticulture and landscape and rode the indoor carousel. They also participated in a service project at the gardens by helping set out and secure





Christmas lights for the garden's annual Christmas Extravaganza. The day was bright and sunny, perfect for being outside in such beautiful scenery. Youth also took part in the traditional costume party at the convention and dressed up as characters from the Wizard of Oz, the theme of the party.

Saturday morning of the convention held the National Parliamentary Procedure Contest, for which our team of six youth worked hard to prepare. After a written test, live performance, and judges' questions, our NC team brought home first place in the contest. This team was made up of Olivia Barber, Jacob Roquet, Cole Settle, Matt Settle, Autumn Whitaker and Lillie Roquet, who served as President. Matt Settle received Highest Individual Score overall.

The Evening of Excellence was held on Saturday night after the celebration banquet this year. During the event, the crowd cheered loudly for Baylor Howerton who gave another incredible Sign-a-Song performance to the song *Guns and Ships* from the Hamilton Musical. Junior Grangers Ryleigh and Raegan Hartsell also danced in the Talent Show giving a fantastic performance from The Greatest Showman.

A new award was started this year, the Grange Spirit Award. All youth and young adults participating in

the convention from across the country submitted a ballot mid-week to vote for one person for this award. We were thrilled when our own Asheton Medlin was named the recipient of the award, receiving a Grange Spirit Stick. It was a well-deserved honor for her.

Outside of the awards, honors and performances, this outstanding group of young people represented our state demonstrating professionalism, hard work, dedication to the Grange, and love for their Grange friendships. They supported each other through all activities and cheered each other on, which is part of what makes the Grange "family" so special. They also made many new friends from other states and cheered them on as well. We are extremely proud of our youth.





# GRANGE SPONSORS CENTURY FARM REUNION AT THE STATE FAIR

by : Jennie Gentry

October is a beautiful month in North Carolina. Fall is in full bloom, leaves turn colors, and the weather cools down giving us that nice, crisp air. One of the most exciting events of the fall is the NC State Fair in Raleigh, which brings thousands of visitors daily. This year, the NC Grange had a booth for the week and was the sponsor for one of the fair's biggest events, the NC Century Farm Family Reunion.

The Century Farm Program exists to recognize farms that have been in continuous family ownership for 100 years or more. It honors family farms for their longstanding contributions to North Carolina's agriculture heritage. The Century Farm Reunion is a celebration hosted at the fair every four years to bring these families together, which started at the 1970 NC State Fair when the program launched. Around 1,600 farms are enrolled in the program including several Grange families. NC Grange was proud to be the main sponsor of this year's event which was held at the NC Horse Complex on October 18.

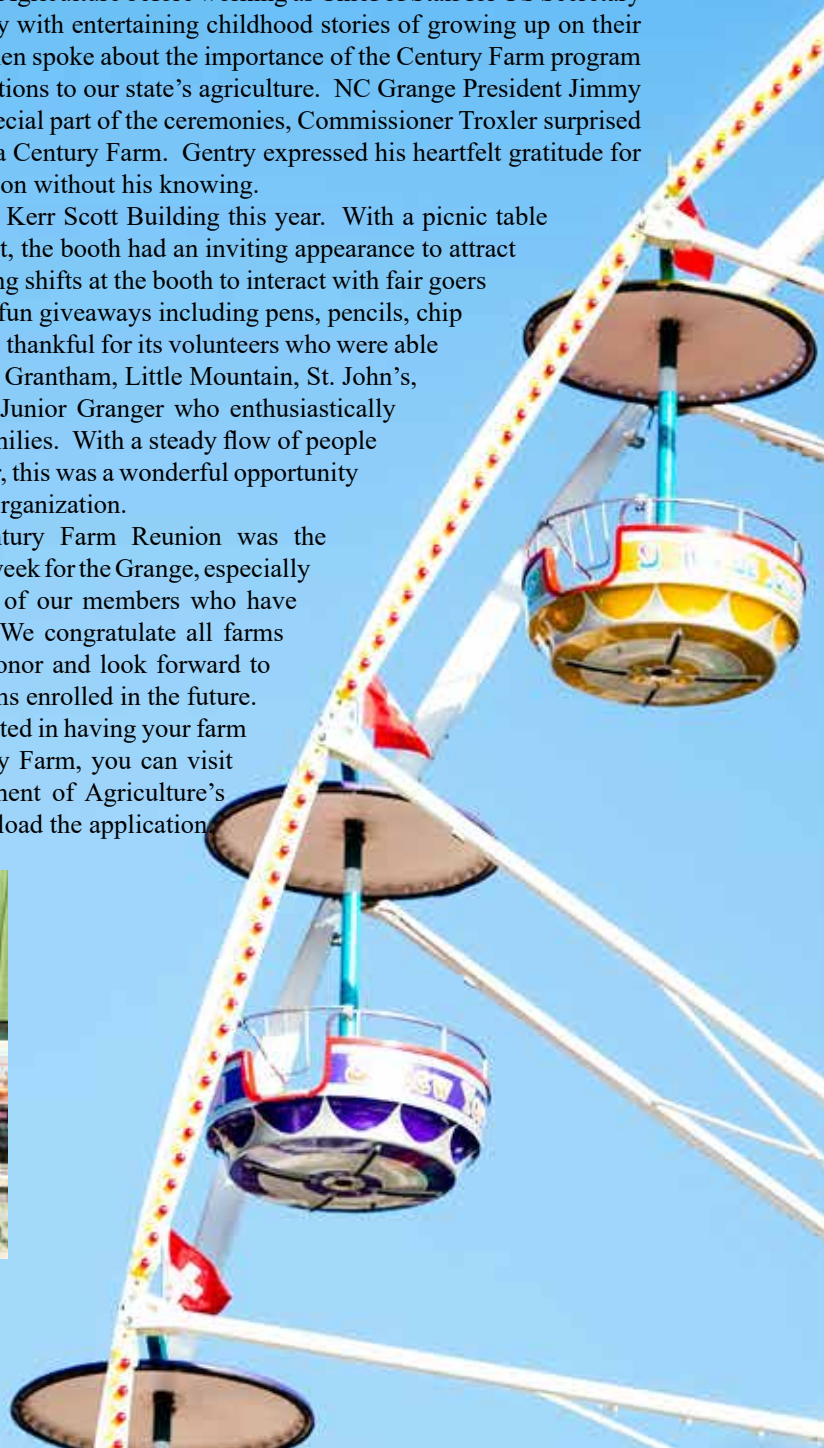
The reunion's keynote speaker was Ray Starling, General Counsel for the NC Chamber of Commerce, who previously served as General Counsel for the NC Department of Agriculture before working as Chief of Staff for US Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. Starling spoke of his own family with entertaining childhood stories of growing up on their family farm. NC Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler then spoke about the importance of the Century Farm program and thanked all the family farms for their legacies and contributions to our state's agriculture. NC Grange President Jimmy Gentry also spoke at the event on behalf of the Grange. As a special part of the ceremonies, Commissioner Troxler surprised Gentry with a framed certificate proclaiming Gentry's farm as a Century Farm. Gentry expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the honor and for his family who submitted his farm's application without his knowing.

As a sponsor, the NC Grange also had a booth in the Kerr Scott Building this year. With a picnic table surrounded by fall décor and miniature lights that hung above it, the booth had an inviting appearance to attract the crowd. Volunteers and staff promoted the Grange by working shifts at the booth to interact with fair goers and give out information on our organization. We also offered fun giveaways including pens, pencils, chip clips and beach balls that portrayed our logo. The NC Grange is thankful for its volunteers who were able to work the booth including members of Bushy Fork, Corriher, Grantham, Little Mountain, St. John's, and Troutman Granges. We even had several youth and one Junior Granger who enthusiastically spoke about the Grange and its many programs for kids and families. With a steady flow of people attending the fair, this was a wonderful opportunity to promote our organization.

The Century Farm Reunion was the highlight of the week for the Grange, especially seeing so many of our members who have century farms. We congratulate all farms who hold this honor and look forward to seeing more farms enrolled in the future. If you are interested in having your farm named a Century Farm, you can visit the NC Department of Agriculture's website to download the application.



photo provided by Heather Overtton





# FERGUSON GRANGE

by : Sharon Underwood

Ferguson Grange has been busy this fall. We met to fill 24 boxes full of treasures for the OCC community service project for needy children. We also welcomed several new members to our Grange family. At our October meeting, we planned activities for upcoming months gave door prizes, a large pumpkin and gourd grown by two of our members.

In November, the Grange helped with the Celebration of Life for a dear member and our Secretary, Lloyd Howell, who passed away October 11 after a long illness. The event was held at the beautiful Howell family farm in the Grandin community with a large, covered dish meal, music, memorial program, and activities for the children. It was coordinated by members Clarkie and Mike Brown. Ferguson Grange helped with the Whippoorwill Academy and Village's annual Veteran's Day program on Saturday November 13 by providing home baked goodies for refreshments. The program is held to honor our local veterans.



# VILLEWORTH GRANGE

by : Jessica Horton

October 9 was pumpkin patch opening day for VilleWorth Grange in downtown Huntersville, North Carolina. Opening day was held in conjunction with the First Baptist Church of Huntersville's Fall Festival. Over 150 people attended the event for games, lunch, hay rides and pumpkin purchases. The Grange sold pumpkins grown and purchased wholesale from Patterson Farm in Mooresville and sold hotdogs, chips and drinks. Over \$1700 was raised that first day and over \$3500 was raised in total from the project. Funds will be used towards garden infrastructure in the 2022 season.



Signage painted by Jessica Horton (left), Josh Klein & Andrea Swanick inspect pumpkin pickup at Patterson Farm (right)

## LOCAL GRANGE NEWS

# GRANTHAM GRANGE

by : Joyce Hood

On September 23, Grantham Grange members John Crawford and Brandon Jones participated in Paddling for Pennies, a 150 mile kayak trip on the Neuse River to raise money for fallen fire fighters in the Clayton community. It is an annual event that was started by Knightdale fire fighter, Allen Williford, who is the son of Grantham Grange members Sherwood and Jane Williford. Supporters pledged small amounts of money per mile of the trip. Grantham Grange made a monetary donation of \$300.00.

We held our big fundraiser from September 30 to October 9, which is our food booth at the Wayne Regional Agriculture Fair. The Grantham Volunteer Fire Department and Grantham Grange work the booth for 5 days each and split the profits between the two groups. The Grange had approximately 45 members to help as well as numerous family members and friends. On Senior Citizen Day, we donated five free meals as door prizes.

We are still accepting donations for our NCTA Caisson Unit fundraiser with a new address to mail donations: Grantham Grange, 633 Weaver Road, Goldsboro, NC. 27530. To date, we have received \$30,204.00, which is great! Our goal is \$50,000.00. We thank everyone who donates to help us reach our goal.



## A ROUND-TO-IT

With this issue of Grange News, we will close out 2021 and look forward into 2022. Reflecting back on the year, I am sure that I do not stand alone when I say that we have all put off doing a few things this year. It is so easy to do, especially when we are busy with other daily tasks. We say to ourselves, “I will get around to it later,” and the next thing we know, that task is way far behind in the rear-view mirror, collecting dust. As 2021 ends, let us all inventory our “round-to-it” depository. This is a prime time to dust off some of those old “round-to-it” tasks and get them handled so we will not carry excess weight into the new year.

I am sure that 2022 will contain challenges and changes for all of us. Many will see major life changing events in the coming year. For example, I will exit my current health insurance and join the Medicare coverage. That move will require forethought, as I need to plan for the various events that must occur for a smooth health insurance transition. I will need to contact the Social Security office sometime between late March and April to make sure that I am signed up for Medicare Part “B” coverage.

Meanwhile, the issue of making my current year’s Health Savings Account deposit as well as making the 2022 deposit prior to August comes into play. After receiving my “red, white, and blue card,” hopefully by May, I will have to decide on which “plan” I should join based on the anticipated medical needs by the first of August. This all makes me wonder, “HOW DID I GET THIS ‘YOUNG’?” My college graduation, my first job with Pitt-Greene PCA (Farm Credit), and even starting work with the NC Grange cannot be that far back. It was just a little while ago – wasn’t it? Well, life moves on and today turns into yesterday very quickly, so we all must carefully get to our “round-to-its” as they tend to pile up.

I am going to issue a challenge to all of us as we look forward into 2022 to start reducing the number of “round-to-its” we have deposited over time so that we can enjoy a less complicated life. If part of your “round-to-it” depository includes a review of or the need for life, health, disability, or long-term care insurance, our NC Grange Independent Agents are ready to assist you in cashing out that deposit. Give us a call today!

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

by : Sharon Underwood

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” What does the “Golden Rule” mean to you? Does it connect with how your Grange plans their community service projects? What are the needs in your community? If you walked in the shoes of those in need, how would you want to be treated and helped?

Years ago, my dear friend, Tony Deal, gave me a poster to use in my classroom that was entitled: “The Golden Rule(s) -Ethics 101: A History of Human Relations.” The poster had many versions of the Golden Rule from diverse cultures and religions from around the world. They all promoted this important rule of “treating others like you want to be treated,” a simple but truly valuable way for children and adults to consider in relationship with others. Tony Deal gave the posters to all the schools in his county and to friends and anyone else who wanted one. My students really enjoyed the lesson this poster was able to teach on being kind and fair to each other. I wanted to share a few of the poster’s different versions of The Golden Rule that still speak to us throughout the ages. Regardless of background or culture, this verse rings true.

- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. (Christianity)
- One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts. (Traditional African Proverb)
- Do not do unto others what angers you if done to you by others. (Socrates)
- What you do not yourself desire, do not put before others. (Confucius)

As you plan your Grange’s devotionals and community service project for 2022, keep this verse in mind. Together, doing unto others as we serve our communities, the Grange can make big changes and impacts. Please reach out if you need ideas as you plan projects for your year. I will be sharing our 2022 State Community Service Project in the next edition of Grange News, and I look forward to hearing about the wonderful things your Granges will be doing in the coming year.





## THE TRUE LIGHT

'Tis the season of lights!! Lights of all kinds are everywhere. You see candles on the tables and in windows; strings of bright white and multicolored lights on trees, bushes, rooftops, and houses; brightly lit Christmas trees; the light of a warm fireplace; outdoor decorations; dramas and plays; celebrations and parties; lamps; and even side streetlights galore. Seeing them just makes me excited and happy. I just love to see the sparkling eyes and smiles of little ones as they view these beautiful sights and sounds.

And let's not forget the handiwork of God's light from the sun, the moon, and the stars, from the beginning of the world, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light," (Genesis 1:3). Physical light is necessary for physical life. When we simply flip a switch, we expect a light to shine. We should give thanks for this resource and God's provision, not just for the holiday seasons, but every day.

As mortals, we believe in the divine light. "The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is my stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?" I remember when I was a small child, I was afraid of the dark, but my sweet daddy would always hug me tight and tell me not to be scared because he and mama were close by in the next room. Even now as an adult when I close my eyes at night, I still feel the love and reassurance of my heavenly Father telling me He is always nearby.

When I've been through the darkness of many hard times and pain in my life, physical, emotional, and personal, I thought the light would never shine again. As some of the lyrics in a song I sing states, "I've cried tears I didn't know I had. Some nights I've just held on and prayed for dawn. But God has promised me this, one day the clouds will lift." And when I finally make it to my heavenly home, "Jesus Christ himself will be the Light." What a promise!

In 2nd Corinthians 4:4-6, we read, "The god of this age (the devil) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge

of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Oh, to see the shining face of Christ one day gives me hope of eternal life basking in His light.

At this holiday season of lights, let us be reminded of how that star light above the manger guided the shepherds and wise men to the True Light of this world. We, ourselves, didn't see Him then, but the promise is there in His Word, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," and in the gospel of John when he came to witness to the light of Jesus Christ, "the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world," John 1:9 NIV. He shines every day for us all, our saving Light.

Jesus' true light shines brighter today than any other light of this secular world. So, whenever you go to see and enjoy all the beautiful lights in the festivals, the towns, the homes, the churches, and the celebrations, give our Lord the thanks for His abundance of light. He is the only True Light that shines on all of us. He said, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life," John 8:12 NIV. Let us, too, reflect the Light of Christ to others.

### *In Memoriam*

*Kenneth Sparkle  
Gladys Scarlett  
Shirley Misenheimer  
Catherine Adams  
Lloyd Howell  
JoAnn Snyder*

*Associate  
Summerfield Grange  
St. Johns Grange  
Beaufort County  
Ferguson Grange  
Guilford Grange*

Governor Cooper signed the first budget that North Carolina has had in two and half years on November 18. This came after months of negotiations between the Senate and the House and then with the Governor. The 627 page, two-year bipartisan budget passed with a final vote in the Senate of 41 to 7 and 101 to 10 in the House. Governor Cooper signed the bill immediately.

The State of North Carolina has not enacted a biennial budget since 2017. This year was quite different than in previous years. In good faith, the Republican-led General Assembly and Governor Cooper compromised for several months and were able to reach a budget agreement, both compromising on different issues. Majority Leader Rep. John Bell (R-Wayne) expressed how important is it to have bipartisan support in the budget process. He thanked the nine House Democrats who did vote for the budget and chose to stay involved throughout the process.

The Grange was very pleased and proud that the appropriation requests we lobbied for were approved. They are as follows:

- A&T University Doctoral Program: \$7,500,000.00
- A&T Agriculture Research & Cooperative Extension: \$3,000,000.00
- 4-H Centers: \$1,700,000.00
- NC FFA Center (White Lake): \$1,500,000.00
- Healing Transitions: \$5,000,000.00
- The NC State Troopers Caisson Unit: \$275,000.00

Highlights of the 2022-23 NC budget bill are below, courtesy of *McGuireWoods*:

- The budget will spend \$25.9 billion in FY2021-22, and \$27 billion in FY2022-23. Coming in at nearly \$1.1 billion more than the current operating budget, the final spending plan is nearly 4.5% larger than the budget enacted in 2017.
- The proposed budget also issues significant tax relief. The personal income tax rate would be reduced to 3.99% over six years, down from 5.25%. The franchise tax would be reduced, and the corporate income tax rate would be phased to zero by 2030. Additionally, the standard deduction would be raised from \$10,750 to \$12,750, and from \$21,500 to \$25,500 for married couples. The bill will also eliminate state income tax for retired military personnel and will increase the child tax deduction by \$500 per child.
- While the budget does not expand Medicaid, it will extend Medicaid eligibility for 12 months postpartum for pregnant women with incomes less than 196% of the federal poverty guidelines. The budget does keep the door open for expansion by creating a joint legislative study committee on health care access and Medicaid expansion.
- Most workers in the state will feel immediate relief from the budget's retroactive bonuses and raises for teachers and state employees. Public school teachers and state employees will

receive a 5% average raise over the biennium, an immediate \$1,000 bonus for all state employees, and an additional \$1,000 bonus for teachers. Those state employees earning less than \$75,000 annually will receive an extra \$500 bonus. State retirees will receive a 5% cost-of-living bonus over the next two years.

- To assist rural and poor counties who often struggle to recruit aspiring teachers against urban counties with larger county supplements, the budget allocates \$100 million to low wealth school districts, including charter schools, which will allow these 95 counties to provide supplements as high as \$4,250 per teacher. Local school employees who are not teachers will see their wages climb to \$15 per hour beginning in 2022.
- Realizing the importance of the one-time stimulus from the federal American Rescue Plan and the CARES Act passed by Congress this year and last, Rep. Dean Arp (R-Union), a Senior Appropriations Chair said this budget smartly appropriates one-time funds to one-time, desperately needed projects. \$5.9 billion will go towards paying down debt and building, repairing, and renovating public school buildings, including in the UNC System and community colleges.
- Additionally, \$84 million will go to Elizabeth City State University for a residence hall and new facilities, and \$528 million will be transferred to the Needs-Based Public School Capital Building Fund, amounting to a total of \$2.6 billion to be spent on school capital projects.
- The budget invests heavily in broadband expansion to bring high-speed internet to rural counties. In addition to incoming federal funds from the federal infrastructure bill, the state budget appropriates \$1 billion to broadband infrastructure projects and grants. This includes over \$600 million for GREAT grants for service providers, \$15 million for broadband at 25 rural community colleges, \$4.6 million in recurring funds to bringing broadband to all public school buildings, and new initiatives to bring high-speed internet to charter schools.
- Charter schools will receive additional opportunities from this budget. A grant program will be established to award funds to charter schools to assist them with providing transportation for their students. The bill also requires municipalities to provide water and sewer services to charter schools.
- The budget would give an average of 1.5% raises to teachers and most state employees in each of the next two years, and a \$1,500 bonus to state employees with an annual salary less than \$75,000. It would also provide a \$13/hour minimum wage for noncertified employees in schools, community colleges and universities. It also allocates \$5.4 billion of federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to various grants and programs to respond to the pandemic.

## News from The Hill

Congress has also been extremely busy garnering votes for the President's Build Back Better bill which passed the House on November 19. Among many things, this bill would fund universal





pre-K, Medicare expansion and renewable energy credits. The bill has now moved to the Senate. The \$1.75 trillion bill passed 220-213. Below are additional highlights.

- Universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds. In addition to helping millions of children prepare better for school, the benefit would enable parents of young children to return to the workforce earlier.
- A child-care cost cap of 7% of income for parents earning up to 250% of a state's median income.
- Four weeks of federal paid parental, sick or caregiver leave.
- A year of expanded Child Tax Credits. During the past year, these credits have raised households with more than 3 million children out of poverty and cut overall child poverty in America by 25%.
- Extended pandemic-era Affordable Care Act subsidies. So far this year, these subsidies have increased ACA enrollment by more than 2 million.
- New hearing benefits for Medicare beneficiaries, including coverage for a new hearing aid every five years.
- A \$35-per-month limit on the cost of insulin under Medicare and a cap on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs at \$2,000 per year.
- \$500 billion to combat climate change, largely through clean energy tax credits. This represents the largest-ever federal investment in clean energy.
- An increase in the State and Local Tax deduction limit from \$10,000 to \$80,000. (CNBC, 2021)

The **Infrastructure Bill** also referred to as the **Jobs Bill** was another piece of significant legislation that passed the Senate and the House and was signed into law on November 15. This bill will significantly affect and aid many of our rural communities by offering high-speed broadband to rural homes, communities, and businesses across the country which will in turn increase access to more jobs, education, health care, banking, and markets for farmers and rural small businesses.

In addition this legislation includes a total of \$40 billion for budget repair, replacement and rehabilitation which is the single largest dedicated bridge investment since the construction of the interstate highway system. This investment will have rippling effects for businesses in rural areas.

According to Moody's Analytics predictions, the new infrastructure bill will add over 2.4 million jobs by the end of 2025 as the result of spending for road construction and additional preschools. Added jobs are expected to increase wages all across the US.

(Small Town America Media website, November, 13)

## STEVENS NAMED TO WAYNE COUNTY

### AGRICULTURE HALL OF FAME Steve Herring, New Argus Correspondent

Ed Stevens, a lifelong Grantham farmer, and is one of the newest members of the Wayne County Agricultural Hall of Fame. Stevens is well-known as a lifelong farmer in the Grantham community, and after inheriting 30 acres of the family farm in the late 1970s, he and his wife, Cindy, worked to build the farm into what it is today, said Extension agent Jessica Strickland, who presented the award.

"Over the years, he has served in many leadership roles in his church, local fire department, Wayne County Farm Bureau, Grantham Grange, along with many other organizations," Strickland said. "For several years, he has partnered with Wayne County Soil and Water and Cooperative Extension offices to host a hay day so other farmers have the opportunity to learn best management practices to implement on their own pastures. He now is teaching his daughter Katie and her husband Peter how to manage the family farm. He is an inspiration to many of us in how he has overcome several obstacles in his life through hard work, perseverance and prayer. He believes it is his responsibility to be a good steward of the earth and leave behind a lasting legacy of responsible agriculture." Exerpt from the Goldsboro News Argus



TO OUR NEWEST  
GRANGE MEMBERS!

Elizabeth Zuber - Old Richmond

Lyndon Bray - Old Richmond

Sullivan Bray - Old Richmond

Jane Beaman - Grantham

Joseph Beaman - Grantham

Tom Lewis - Cape Fear

Natalie Lewis - Cape Fear

Elis Lambert - St. John's

David Simpkins - Beaufort County

Rebecca Buck - Beaufort County

Brad Lanning - Corriher

Mandy Lanning - Corriher

Olivia Lanning (Jr) - Corriher

Taylor Ezell - Corriher

Ashley Ezell - Corriher

Harrison Ezell (Jr) - Corriher

Sara Hartzog - Ferguson

Harper Hightower (Jr) - Ferguson

Beth Hubbard - Ferguson

Jeannette Piastuch - Ferguson

Betty Compton - Schley

Jeff Pills - Schley

Britta Pills - Schley





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*Merry Christmas  
& Happy New Year  
from the NC Grange*