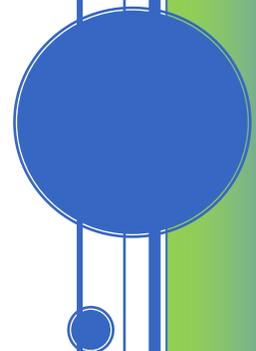


RUTHERFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT

2015 - The End of Year Review



12/15/2015



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With the addition of three new County Commissioners, a new County Manager, multiple new administrative staff, and recognizing that the county for the first time in eight years is seeing some signs of economic recovery, 2015 has been all about laying a sound foundation and setting the cornerstone to begin the process of rebuilding our great county. To truly move our region forward, county leadership recognizes that it must first identify where we have been and acknowledge the building blocks this county and nation were built upon. With the Rutherford County Courthouse and the County Administration Building newly adorned with the US Motto "In God We Trust", the county is poised to methodically and strategically take the first steps forward.



The following information is presented as highlights of the action items, projects and programming implemented during calendar year 2015.

Agriculture/Cooperative Extension Service

The mission of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service-Rutherford County is to provide citizens with research-based educational information in order to improve the quality of their lives. The Rutherford County Cooperative Extension Services are the "extension" arm of NC State and NC A&T Universities to the people of Rutherford County and the



surrounding region. The department's educational efforts are offered through many different methods and address the needs and issues most important to our citizens. Listed below are a few highlights of the department's efforts in 2015:

Youth nutrition programs were conducted in six elementary schools reaching 408 students in grades Pre-K through 4th grade. These programs were conducted in nine sessions over a three-month period. Students (79%) increased recognition of healthy foods; 23% of students improved skills in reading nutrition labels; and 76% of students increased their willingness to try new fruits and vegetables. Parents and teachers reported that children were choosing water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages more often, consuming more fruits and vegetables, and engaging in more physical activity.

4-H Health Rocks was taught to 184 elementary and middle school students. The 4-H Health Rocks is a ten-hour program on substance abuse prevention, along with teaching youth about peer pressure and making wise decisions. The program was taught in school classrooms and after school settings. These are a few of the outcomes from the program evaluations:

- 20% increase in youth feeling confident that they could talk a friend out of trying drugs.
- 30% increase in youth who said they will consider how their choices will affect their future when making decisions.

Livestock Educational programming efforts continued helping producers improve the quality of their operations through numerous programs in marketing, nutrition, pasture management, breeding soundness of bulls and artificial insemination to help them improve their production systems.

Rutherford County Cooperative Extension, partnering with Polk, Cleveland, and McDowell County Extension and Southeast Livestock Exchange continued to work with these producers to co-mingle calves to sell in truckload lots under the Mountain Cattle

Alliance. This group evaluated and processed these calves to verify that health and quality issues were addressed in order to market high quality cattle. Data collected was based on weaning weights compared to weekly auction prices and then sale weights/price compared to weekly auction prices. There has also been informal evaluation in the form of feedback provided by producers who are very pleased with the additional profits received from marketing cattle through this alliance. Over 25 producers sold 14 loads of cattle (~1050 head) in 2015 valued at \$1,600,000. These calves were sold at premiums ranging from \$150-\$250/head. At an average of \$200/head on 1050 head of cattle, that is an additional \$210,000 profits back in the pockets of these producers. Using a multiplier of six, there was a direct economic impact of \$1,260,000 to our four-county region.

Most of today's generation is a generation or two removed from Agriculture. Although a rural county, Rutherford County is no exception. In an effort to raise agricultural awareness, with support from local partners, Rutherford County Cooperative Extension conducted a **Farm/City program**. This program was multi-faceted and reached out to county governmental leaders as well as elementary school students. This year's program focused on the local equine industry as a result of the Tryon International Equestrian Center. For the adults, we toured the Equestrian Center and learned about their plans to continue expansion and the direct result it is having on the local agricultural economy. 4th graders in each school were asked to draw a poster that reflected a "Grow it, Make it, Use it" theme. After posters are complete, staff members go back into each school and give the students a lesson on the importance of agriculture to our everyday lives and announce the poster contest winners in front of their peers. As a result, staff members were able to raise the awareness of over 600 participants.

Urban & Consumer Horticulture assisted over 1,500+ clients with residential horticulture programs and individual requests. Outreach efforts included Spring Garden School, Extension Successful Gardener on-line newsletter articles, civic, school and non-profit organizations, and Extension Successful Gardener Programming with the

Extension Demonstration & Teaching Garden. The department successfully implemented a community garden and rainfall collection cistern for the Demonstration & Teaching Garden & Community Garden areas.

Volunteerism: Rutherford County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers

The department coordinated 36 active volunteers, with 2,526 volunteer hours donated (\$55,925 valuation), EMGV's logged 7,773 miles. The development of Rutherford Master Gardener Volunteer Association occurred in 2015.

Commercial Agriculture assisted 2,200+ clients. The department networked with NCDA&CS Marketing Division and Farmers Market assisting with *Farmers Market Nutrition Program* - 17 growers participating (coordination with local WIC/Senior Center staffs for program implementation). NC Private and Commercial Pesticide Applicator Recertification Trainings for Polk & Rutherford County licensed applicators occurred in 2015 as well as the WNC Ag Options - Grower Mentor programming. An *Agriculture Innovation & Solutions Center Project* Feasibility Study was completed for the Town of Forest City and Rutherford County. The *Agriculture Literacy Program* is in its 5th year of networking with 2nd grade students in the promotion of agriculture & reading (10 elementary schools - 704 students reached).

Airport

Service:

- The Airport Department placed our vehicles, fuel pumps, and other equipment on a regularly scheduled maintenance program to help ensure they will be safe and dependable for our customers. This was not done in the past under the "FBO System."
- The airport became its own department, streamlining personnel, maintenance and



budget requests, creating greater continuity and accountability in the operations of the airport.

- The airport continues to maintain competitive fuel and hangar rental prices.
- The Department partnered with Skyhawk Aviation, the local flight school, to refurbish the old terminal building and begin offering flying training and lessons.

Safety:

- The Airport Department developed a set of policies and procedures to deal with **the** day to day operations at the airport.
- Replaced the outside hangar lights with new, LED lights to increase safety and reduce power consumption.
- The department is currently working with a vendor to replace all interior lights in the terminal building with new LED lights to increase safety and reduce power consumption.
- Replaced outside obstruction lights to increase safety and longevity of the antenna on which it was mounted.
- Partnered with the Solid Waste department to use their staff, equipment, and inmate labor to maintain all the airport grounds.
- Cleaned and repainted the fuel tank spill retainer walls.

Community:

- The department has opened up our conference room to other county departments for their use if needed.
- Recommended and assisted in the establishment of, and continue to mentor, the "Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy Aviation Club" at its high school. This is a school sponsored club that is designed to provide school kids grades 6-12 an opportunity to explore different career fields in the aviation industry.
- The department sponsored one high school student with a job shadowing day. (East Rutherford High School)

- The department sponsored two different high school students with their senior projects on "Jobs in the Aviation Industry". (Polk County High and R.E.A.C.H.)
- As part of the 40th Anniversary of the inauguration of the Rutherford County Airport, the Airport Director was interviewed by Jordan Rankin of The McConnell group and a press release was developed for the milestone. The article was included in several Rutherford County media sources.

Board of Elections

The biggest items that impacted the Board of Elections (BOE) department in 2015 were the decision not to move our office, the change of candidate filing to December in order to have a March Primary, and the BOE receiving a Best Practice award from the State Board of Elections.

- In December 2014, staff packed up a large part of the office in preparations to move. However, the plans changed and the department is staying in the current location for the time being. This decision was made due to the lack of an appropriate facility available and to allow the County to do a study and inventory of all county buildings.
- The Legislature decided to move the 2016 Primary election to March 15th and this in turn moved candidate filing back to December 2015. To date, we have had very few candidates file with the BOE, although this cannot be directly attributed to this change.
- In August, the BOE was awarded a Best Practice designation by the State Board of Elections for our innovative videos that we used in training our poll workers. Staff worked along with the students and professor in the Broadcasting program



at Isothermal Community College to create these videos at no cost to the County.

Building Inspections and Code Enforcement

- Solar farm tax credits have impacted the Building Inspections Department in a positive way. Companies have been scrambling to get all their “ducks in a row” to get their farms permitted, built, and inspected by year end. The solar farms, in their planning stages, prompted our county leaders to make and adopt plans that would make them less intrusive to their neighbors. The farms also bring in tax revenue and help with energy conservation.
- With increased building permit requests, the department is seeing signs of an upturn in the economy. Since the recession, the department was permitting fewer houses—most of those small. Now the department is seeing, not only more houses, but much larger houses. This increases the department’s inspection load, but it also helps to continue fueling the economy by adding work in the private sector.



Economic Development

The Economic Development Department saw an increase in prospect activity for the calendar year 2015, responding to approximately 55 industrial recruitment and expansion prospects throughout the year. Three existing industries announced expansions with plans to create over 53 new jobs and invest upwards of \$204,420,000. In support of 12 industrial companies, 25 grants are currently administered by our office. Requests for close-out of four of these industrial grants were processed in 2015, indicating job commitment and investment requirements were met. Greater emphasis

was placed on marketing and advertising activities to promote Rutherford County and the Economic Development product through the use of print and social media, as well as the updating of the Economic Development website and the creation of the Gateway West Commerce Park website. The Economic Development team continues their work on a comprehensive market plan for the Gateway West property.

EMS

In 2015, EMS was able to see the completion of their new EMS station in the southern portion of the county. EMS staff also hosted two community events with a Wellness Fair at Walmart in May and the Stuff the Ambulance Toy Drive in December. EMS was pleased to receive two different awards. The Department along with 911 received the NACC Excellence in Innovation Award for their 911 Cell Phone Campaign, which included a \$1,000 gift that was applied towards the employees' fitness program. EMS also received a \$66,450 grant from the RHI Legacy Foundation to help fund their new Community Paramedicine program.



Fire Marshal/Emergency Management

Fire service highlights include the extension of the Danieltown Fire Protection Service District served by the Shiloh-Danieltown-Oakland Volunteer Fire Department. This was made possible as a result of the construction of a second rated fire station by the Shiloh-Danieltown-Oakland Volunteer Fire Department located on W.V. Thompson Road. This action resulted in providing a reduction in fire insurance premiums to approximately 205 property owners.

Additionally, we were able to program and distribute 800 MHz radios to the fire department from Rutherfordton west. These mobile and portable radios were purchased with funding from Assistance to Firefighters federal grant. The radios operate on the Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responder (VIPER) system.



A grant from the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management provided the County with the opportunity to hire a consultant to assist us with a tabletop exercise. The exercise was based around a winter storm. There were 55 personnel representing 18 agencies that participated in the exercise. The exercise was a huge success, highlighting the resources and capabilities we have and identifying areas where we can improve.

Human Resources

This year has been a big year in turnover/retirements for management positions with the County. The following is a list of positions that have been filled:

- Hired Steve Garrison as the new County Manager
- Promoted Jai Doherty to IT Director and Peter Gaulin to Assistant IT Director
- Promoted Steve Hill to Interim Building Inspections Director
- Hired Apryl Tessener as Assistant Finance Director
- Hired Kim Aldridge as Assistant Clerk/Public Information Coordinator
- Hired Randy Patterson as Airport Operations Manager
- Contracted with former Rutherford County Economic Developer Tom Johnson to serve in an Interim Manager role for the Economic Development Department

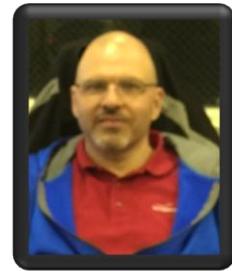


New ACA reporting rules were put in place this year. HR staff has been working diligently preparing for the rollout in 2016.

The Human Resources Director has been working with consultant Becky Veazy with the MAPS Group on updating the Rutherford County Personnel Policies. The policies are in the final stages of editing.

Information Technology

Looking back at 2015, the Rutherford County Information Technology (IT) team recognized that Information Technology is always in a state of flux. 2015 saw more changes to infrastructure and general thought processes on how to provide services than ever before. Since the introduction of virtual environments, cloud storage, and software as a service, IT is transitioning from a go-everywhere-touch-everyone computer mentality to a centralized, efficient management of resources and infrastructure. In 2015, IT staff started the deployment of VMware virtual desktops utilizing some existing old equipment to provide a proof of concept desktop environment for the Revenue Department. That pilot program has blossomed into a full scale deployment covering four county departments and over fifty desktops.



IT now manages these pools of computers from a central location needing only to create and maintain one template desktop for each department and deploying linked clones to all of the users in that department. The latter part of 2015 was spent evaluating the environment and planning equipment upgrades to improve performance and continue the transition of physical to virtual. The department estimates the virtual desktop count to be in the mid 300's this time next year.

Library

Makerspace at the Library: Since it's opening on September 19th, 2015, the Dream It, Build It, Use It (DBU) Makerspace at the Rutherford County Library has attracted 120

people who have spent over 65 hours attending classes, receiving individual instruction, and working on personal projects. A sample of the classes conducted in the Makerspace includes an introduction in the use of the 3D printer, an introduction to Arduino programming, and basic



weaving techniques on a tabletop loom. Sunshine Elementary School brought their 5th grade class for a tour of the Makerspace. In addition, library staff worked with the robotics club from Forrest Hunt Elementary School, teaching them how the 3D printer works and assisting them in printing off their own designs. The DBU Makerspace has partnered with Isothermal Community College's Small Business Center to offer classes in 3D printing and 3D design to local small business owners. In addition to working with these outside partners, the library is in the process of starting its own maker clubs. The first of these clubs, the Middle School Makers, met for the first time on December 12th and will meet again the second Saturday of every month to work on different projects. Plans for Adult and Teen maker clubs are in the works and the first meeting of each should take place in January.

The response from our community has been overwhelmingly positive. Home school groups, teachers, hobbyists, and local business owners have all stated how much they enjoyed their time in the Makerspace and what a valuable resource they feel it is to have in our county. Of particular note are the home school parents who have brought their children to classes and to work on individual projects. Many of these parents have expressed gratitude for having the Makerspace resources available because it allows them to give their children exposure to technology they would not otherwise be able to afford. *The DBU Makerspace was made possible by funding from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology*

Act as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources.

Books for sharing from the Library:

During the summer of 2015, Rutherford County Library started a book exchange service at the Senior Center Congregate Meal Sites. The meal sites include Bethel Baptist Church in Ellenboro, Henrietta First Baptist Church in Henrietta, and Shingle Hollow Community Center in Shingle Hollow. Approximately 50 books were given to each site on the initial visit. Library staff members have delivered a new box of books to each site about every other month since the program began. These books are mostly fiction titles by popular authors, such as James Patterson, Danielle Steel, and Nicholas Sparks.

The Senior Center Meal Sites serve food and provide social opportunities for older adults who may not want or be able to get to the main Senior Center in Spindale. These community members might also have difficulties in getting to the library. The donated books can be taken home for free by the people that visit these meal sites. They can then be returned to the meal site or to any library in the county, or they can be given to someone else who would enjoy reading them. A label is attached to each book so that people will know that they can be borrowed and then returned. This label provides brief information about the library.

Most of the books given to the meal sites had been donated to the library but were already owned by all three branches of the county library system. Since these items were in excellent, like-new condition, the library had been keeping them in storage as extra copies in case a replacement was needed due to damage or loss. When storage space became needed for other materials, library staff decided to find another way to utilize these books; rather than sell the books in the book sale for 50 cents each, staff chose to offer them for use in the community.

Response to the meal site books program has been positive. When the library staff brought new books to the Ellenboro site in the fall, the manager there said that most of

the books from the first visit had already been taken home, read, and returned. One participant there said that he loves to read and the program keeps him from having to go all the way to the library. One woman said that the books really help her since she lives by herself. Some of the seniors had contributed their own books from home to share with others at their site.

This program has also positively impacted the library itself. It has provided space in the storage closet for other materials. It has brought publicity to the library to those who might not be aware of our services. It has also opened up possibilities for future programming and outreach opportunities at the meal sites and at other locations in the county.

Planning Department

Rutherford County's Planning Department has had a productive and busy year. Two major accomplishments of 2015 are the development of the Rutherford County Capital Facility Plan and the construction of two new county facilities: the Haynes Library and Foothills EMS Station. Additional tasks that this department has been actively involved in are the completion of the Land Classification Study and its approval/acceptance by NCDOT and the pending Comprehensive Transportation Planning process now underway. Meanwhile, the department has overseen the development of numerous solar farms throughout the county and the ongoing site construction of the Queens Gap and Greyrock development as well as the expansion in The Vista at Bill's Mountain, which developed a fourth phase and has begun a cottage phase.

The Planning Department, along with the help of the County Manager and Finance Director, have completed the Rutherford County's Capital Facility Plan (CFP). Rutherford County's CFP is a ten-year comprehensive plan focused on the present and future needs for all county-owned facilities. Creation of the CFP required many hours in order to perform walkthrough inspections of each county-owned facility, calculate each estimate, and create a spreadsheet that can serve as a living, fluid document for years

to come. This plan will be utilized in future budget considerations along with the facility requests from Rutherford County Schools and Isothermal Community College.

The Planning Department has helped to facilitate and monitor construction of the new Haynes Library and Foothills EMS Station. The department's job throughout the project was to serve as a contact for the contractor, help ensure the project stayed on budget, and guarantee the county receives the best end product as possible. The two projects are near completion as a few loose ends are coming together. These new county facilities will provide a positive impact for the Southeastern portion of Rutherford County.

Solar Farm Development has been a major contributor to the workload of the planning department in 2015. This year, four solar farm plans have been reviewed and approved and three solar farms are under construction or have been completed, all of which are required to meet the Rutherford County Ordinance for Solar Energy Development. The Rutherford County Ordinance for Solar Energy Development has been a helpful tool to ensure that development of solar farms will not pose a threat to public health and safety. In fact, Duke Energy has indicated that a 61 MW farm may be developed in Rutherford County; however, there are currently no plans or development applications that have been received at this time.

Queens Gap and Greyrock are two developments that the Planning Department has overseen for the past few years. Both developments continue to make steady progress.

Queens Gap has been approved to begin paving Project 2 and 3. Greyrock is near completion and is scheduled for the final overlay of asphalt in the next few months. These two developments, once completed, will offer beautiful scenic lots and well-constructed roads for the many property owners in the developments.



Rutherford County Planning Department has accomplished multiple additional projects in the planning process. Noteworthy projects from this year are the Gilbertowne American Battlefield Protection plan and improvements to the Biggerstaff Hanging Tree site. The Gilbertowne American Battlefield Protection Plan grant provided archeological research and resulted in the discovery of several artifacts that are now in custody of the State Repository and may eventually be on display. Improvements at the Biggerstaff Hanging Tree site have resulted in a premium gravel parking lot, National Park Services three sided kiosk with self guided tour information panels and a flagpole donated by the Woodmen of the World organization. The department also helps facilitate monthly Planning Board meetings and Thermal Belt Rail Trail meetings. The department provides a service to surveyors throughout the county answering questions regarding plats and subdivisions. This department is also responsible for implementing and monitoring the Rutherford County Community Project Grant program and the Grassroots Arts Program grant. In this upcoming year, the Planning Department looks forward to better serving Rutherford County and its citizens.

The Planning Department played a large role during 2015 to accept and award bids on the Ruth School property, the Old Caroleen Ball Field property and the Magnolia house. Staff also played a key role in the continuing improvements of the Thermal Belt Rail Trail.

Revenue Department



The Revenue Department is currently finalizing the last phase of the tax software implementation and plan to be completely converted by the end of January. The first and second phases are complete and the department is beginning their third tax billing cycle in the software. Staff is learning something new every day and seeing increases in efficiency and accuracy.

The Revenue Department retired two employees in 2015. Michael Stewart retired just before Thanksgiving and Cathy Ellenburg's last day will be December 31. Together Mike and Cathy have almost 50 years experience in the office. They will be sorely missed.

Lots of new and exciting things are coming to Revenue in 2016. In addition to the tax software being fully implemented, the department will also be rolling out a new GIS website in late January. Katie Doherty, GIS Coordinator, has worked on getting more mapping layers and a lot more functionality for not only County employees but the public as well. The department is excited to be able to offer this new service.

Other highlights for 2015 include Sherry Lavender, Revenue Director, receiving her certification for Tax Collector and Tax Assessor of Rutherford County and the extending of the revaluation date to January 1, 2019.

Senior Center

The Rutherford County Senior Center received recertification on June 19, 2015 as a "Center of Excellence" for the next five years, from June 30, 2015 – June 29, 2020. In order to achieve this highest of certification, a Senior Center must complete a self-evaluation including data gathered over the previous five years, address and correct any recommendations from the previous site visit, and have all the five years worth of documentation reviewed on-site by a team from the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services, UNC-CH School of Social Work's Center for Aging Research and Educational Services (CARES), Area Agency on Aging, senior center staff outside of the applicant's region, and the Senior Tar Heel Legislature delegate from Rutherford County.

The Rutherford County Senior Center received first-time grants from the following organizations: RHI Legacy Foundation (\$50,000 for Home Delivered Meals), Rutherford County Endowment (\$5,000 for Home Delivered Meals), and Community



Foundation of WNC People in Need Grant (\$12,000 Pre-packaged meals for Home Delivered clients on weekends).

Senior Games: We had 99 participants in the sporting events and 53 participants in the SilverArts, which included Heritage, Literary, Performing, and Visual – of these 32 were first-time participants. Six seniors represented Rutherford County in the NC State Senior Games in September. Three seniors were medal winners in their division.

Additional 2015 Highlights:

- We received and were awarded 85 sets of vouchers from the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program to eligible participants. These vouchers are for local produce at the Farmer's Market.
- There were 746 contacts made during the Medicare Part D annual election period.
- AARP Tax-Aid Foundation Program served 656 tax-payers.
- FY 2014-2015 meal statistics are as follows:

Home-Delivered:

- 22,252 meals served
- 89 daily average meals served
- 157 different participants were served throughout the year

Congregate Meals:

- 44,032 meals served
- 176 daily average meals served
- 738 different participants were served throughout the year

Sheriff's Office

Detention Center

- The Detention Center was able to complete Phase 3 of our camera installation and 2-way intercom system. This allows for incarcerated individuals to report emergencies immediately and for the staff to have better access to cameras to provide for a safer environment for Detention Officers and inmates alike.
- The Detention Center sent eight staff members to the NCJAA conference. Staff members were provided with additional training in safety, searches and legal updates. Detention Center administration received vital information regarding changes in laws and education in Inspection, and we participated in a forum to discuss issues that face Detention Centers across North Carolina.
- The Detention Center has benefited with the addition of four new Detention Officer positions that have allowed more time on the floor and a safer environment for Detention Officers.
- The Detention Center also finalized plans for the female jail expansion and plans. Also, a feasibility study was presented to the County Commissioners in November.

Crisis Intervention Training

In 2015, a grant was received to fund training for local law enforcement officers in Crisis Intervention. Two training sessions were conducted in 2015 with the next session scheduled for January 2016. Officers from the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office, Rutherfordton Police Department, Lake Lure Police Department, Forest City Police Department, Rutherford County Communication Center administrators, and Rutherford County Detention Center have attended. The training is designed to aid law enforcement officers to effectively interact with persons with behavioral health issues. It is a 40-hour, five day curriculum for each session that is approved by the Law Enforcement Academy. The training is critical as law enforcement officers and other

public safety personnel are often the first responders to work with an individual in crisis. High-risk situations require a trained response to ensure safety for all involved. The training is also critical to ensure appropriate treatment and jail diversion for mentally ill individuals and decreased liability for public safety officers.

Components of the course include a mental health overview, site visits, consumer and family perspective, hearing voices simulation, overview of medications, de-escalation, role playing, special topics (substance abuse, veteran's issues, self-care of LEO and dementia), and what community resources are available. Officers are also instructed in how to effectively manage situations with consumers who need special consideration to maintain safety: veterans, aging or young populations, persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities and homicidal or suicidal persons.

As mental health services are inherently limited in rural communities, this training is important and beneficial for public safety officers working with persons with persons in psychiatric crisis regardless of the availability of mental health services. The CIT training is preparing officers to professionally and effectively respond to these situations.

911 Communications



Rutherford County 911 Communications was the first county in Western North Carolina to make 911 texting available to the public. **Text-to-911** was released and made available to the public mid December 2014 but the department fully pushed out the program to citizens in 2015 via news articles, press releases, social media articles and flyers.

On June 25th of this year, 911 hosted **A Victim's Plea, Meeting Expectations** at Isothermal Community College. 911 staff members from

Rutherford County as well as several other NC counties attended. Nathan Lee, founder and President of the Denise Amber Lee Foundation, with Ryan Chambers, former dispatcher and trainer for Guilford County Metro 911 and UNC Chapel Hall tied together the elements of the Denise Amber Lee tragedy to demonstrate deficiencies that occurred one horrible day in Florida (Ms. Lee, wife of Nathan Lee, was kidnapped, raped and murdered on January 17, 2008 in North Port, Florida) and participants learned how critical leadership, recruitment and training are to a 911 operation. Mr. Lee's message emulates a common message spoken by Sheriff Chris Francis, "We can't become complacent". The story gained national attention and has been featured on Dateline, Dr. Phil, The Today Show, 20/20 and many other nationally broadcast shows. Mr. Lee is committed to traveling the nation to tell his story and educate as many people as possible so others do not have to endure what he and his family have gone through. Visit www.deniseamberlee.org for more information.

Department of Social Services

In July 2015, DSS staff completed an Employee Satisfaction Survey. The survey was completed through Survey Monkey, and was completely anonymous. The goal of the survey was to maintain a working environment where all employees' opinions are known, and to maintain a working environment where employees can thrive as professionals, and are inspired to do their best for the citizens served by the agency. 80% of the staff responded to the survey. Although many areas covered on the survey fell on the positive end of the rating scale, an employee group was formed to review the results and identify ways that the agency can further improve the working environment for employees and their relationship with supervisors and management. The ability to voice concerns and opinions was important to staff, and there has already been a noticeable improvement in morale. The agency will conduct the same survey next year at the same time and evaluate changes. This is an excellent way to regularly evaluate the department's working conditions and morale of agency employees. In addition, staff also had the opportunity to evaluate supervisory staff through a ten question

survey. The purpose of this was to give staff the opportunity to offer constructive feedback to their supervisor, or any supervisor that they work closely with on a regular basis. Managers have reviewed the results of the survey with supervisors and discussed ways to improve their supervision of staff, and how they might go about changing negative perceptions. These surveys have been well received by the supervisors, and staff did an excellent job providing work related feedback that can help create a more positive work environment.

The Income Maintenance Leadership Team held a day-long meeting around the theme "Back to the Future" on November 6th. The meeting allowed the team to look back a life before NC Fast and evaluate ideas and practices that were productive in the old world and apply the same concept to the new electronic world. The leadership team was very creative in their new ideas of training new employees as well as keeping seasonal employees motivated.

In August of 2015, the department underwent a Process Monitoring of Child Protective Services (CPS). All one hundred counties expect to be monitored, and Rutherford DSS requested to be one of the first counties reviewed. The purpose of the review was not punitive, but to improve CPS across North Carolina. The department specifically requested that only "out of compliance" cases be pulled for review. The department wanted to identify issues and common themes of these cases so that they could address those issues in a systematic manner. Following the Program Monitoring the department received a report which clearly identified findings that would require corrective action. As a result of the report the agency developed a Program Development Plan. Believing that protecting our county's children should be a community task, the department is in the process of formulating a Steering Committee, chaired by Sarah Horne, of Preferred Choice Health Care, to guide and direct the Improvement Plan. Other key stakeholders have been identified to join the steering committee and to be a part of various work groups around the eight improvement goals. There will be between ten to fifteen Steering Committee members. Meetings will be once per quarter for four quarters. The

role of the Steering Committee is to guide the work groups organized around the eight improvement goals. This would include reviewing progress reports and giving strategic feedback for increased improvement. Each work group is chaired by a community co-chair and a DSS co-chair.

Soil & Water Conservation District

The North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program (NCACSP) is a voluntary state government program to reduce the delivery of agriculture non-point source pollution into the waters of the state and therefore improve water quality. For the Program **Year 2015**, the District was allocated **\$66,341** for Best Management Practices (BMP's).

2015 Program Year for the Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP)

Best Management Practices

Pond \$20,000

Well \$ 5,000

The purpose of the AgWrap program include:

- Identify opportunities to increase water use efficiency, availability and storage
- Implement best management practices (BMPs) to conserve and protect water resources
- Increase water use efficiency
- Increase water storage and availability for agricultural purposes

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Partnering Agency Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) 9 Contracts - \$264,235

These contracts installed conservation practices to improve water quality, decrease soil erosion, improve soil condition, benefit/improve domestic animals health and condition,

improve/increase water quantity, improve plant condition and quality, and benefit and improve fish & wildlife habitat.

Rutherford Watershed Commission

- Conducted repairs and maintenance on 19 flood control dams on 2nd Broad River
- Updated and created Emergency Action Plans for 8 of the 19 dams

Conservation Field Day was held for county 5th grade students on October 7, 2015. The department hosted approximately 530 students and 25 teachers from 9 county schools. The students rotated around 10 stations for a conservation lesson about NC Forest Service, wildlife, Bees, Rutherford County Wildlife, Soils, Recycling, Vermacomposting, FFA, Energy, and Forestry Products.

District Staff worked with the Cooperative Extension Service and other agencies to promote the Farm City Week program and lunch and the Farm City Week poster contest for Rutherford County 4th Grade students. The theme for the Farm City poster contest is “Grow it...Make It...Use It” to show the importance of farms and cities working together. FFA students from each High School presented a lesson in the art classes at each elementary school. Awards were given at an assembly at each of the 12 schools to present a lesson on the Importance of Agriculture in our Everyday Life. A Farm City breakfast, program and tour were held at the Tryon International Equestrian Center. Invited guests included County Officials, Agriculture related businesses, board members and organizations, School Officials and representatives, and business owners and media.

An Outdoor Environmental Learning Center (OELC) Grant from the NC Foundation for Soil & Water for the Rutherford Opportunity Center (ROC) was installed and completed in April 2015. The Center included a pergola with benches for lessons outside.

Solid Waste Department

The Solid Waste department has been extremely busy this year. The department has made several grant requests that has enhanced opportunities for the citizens of Rutherford County while dealing with legislative and policy changes from the state level impacting local operations.

- The Solid Waste department received \$52,000 in state grants to add recycling compactors at the Gilkey and Greenhill Convenience Centers. Each year the department applies for these grants and so far the department has installed six recycling compactors at the convenience sites. Through this grant we have been able to add the opportunity for citizens to recycle anti-freeze and cooking oil at these six sites. With all of these changes in recycling, Rutherford County Solid Waste has become a model for the state's recycling enhancement efforts. Staff members have made presentations at several different conferences and even hosted a state recycling event.
- The grant process has enabled our department to add new signage at the convenience centers and landfill. The addition of new signage has made the locations more customer friendly.
- Unfortunately, our department had a negative issue dealing with electronics. The issues were created by House Bill 765 and a falling commodity market. The department had to change vendors due to price increases beyond our control. This required the department to stop accepting electronics for free at the convenience centers and now are charging for these items at the landfill.
- This past year our department acquired the ground maintenance of the airport. Airport Director Randy Patterson has received a tremendous amount of



compliments on the appearance of the airport from citizens and users of the airport.

Transit

In 2015, Transit was able to celebrate 25 years of providing public transportation to the



citizens of Rutherford County. This celebration included recognition of past accomplishments, fare free service for 25 days and the launch of a new Laundromat shuttle service. Transit also completed their five-year Community Transportation Strategic Plan through NCDOT, which included a new five-year budgeting tool. Finally, Transit ended their year with the recognition of being a 2015 Harvard Ash Center

Bright Idea in Government Award recipient for their pantry shuttle service.

Veterans Services

The Veterans Services Department continued the great work they do to support the veterans of Rutherford County. The department fed approximately 100 veterans recently during a holiday luncheon and assisted four families at Thanksgiving by providing them with gift cards for Ryan's with assistance from the American Legion Auxiliary. The department worked with various groups in the county including The American Legion, The Daughters of the Confederate War Veterans, and others to provide gifts to give out at Christmas. The department hosted a hotdog fundraiser in 2015 to raise funds to enhance opportunities to assist the veterans. The department also participated in the annual Toys-for-Tots program raising 4,728 toys for 625 Rutherford County children.