



2019 YEAR END REPORT

RUTHERFORD COUNTY

Another year has come and gone, and we would like to share highlights of events, activities and programming from each County department and office. The service from each department and impact on Rutherford County during 2019 has been outstanding. Please enjoy each featured County department.

AIRPORT



2019 was a very busy year for the Rutherford County Airport. Rutherford County welcomed Devon Raisch (pronounced 'rash') to the County team in March as the Airport Manager (**pictured left**). He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in aviation. With family ties to Rutherford County and having worked in the Shelby and Spartanburg airports, he is very familiar with airport operations and many of the customers and vendors that our airport serves. The previous airport manager, Randy Patterson, is now flying medical helicopters in Virginia.



- Solar lighting installed at the airport entrance sign.
- The 24-hour self-service fuel system is in and a light was installed to give an extra level of safety.
- We have had many visitors this year, including the McNair family.
- Special thanks to TDA for initiating/funding our new compass rose. We are so very grateful to the women from the Ninety-Nines (an international organization of women pilots who fulfill the need for air markings by volunteering time to paint airport names, compass rose symbols, and other identifications on airports) who worked through rain and heat to paint the compass rose as a beautiful gift to our county.



- Maintenance team built/installed an amazing L-shaped counter top in the terminal lobby that allows people to have a private work area with a view.
- Thank you to Aubrey Clay from Planning for overseeing the parking lot area overlay project.
- New mail boxes were installed by our staff.



- Solid Waste, through their maintenance team, keep our trucks running well. John Bland, along with help from several inmates, work together to keep the airport grounds looking great.
- Information Technology coordinated the installation of our new security cameras.
- Maintenance and Information Technology installed a tv in the conference room that allows for projection through multiple devices
- Leadership Rutherford was able to utilize the facilities for their meeting/airport tour.
- We had a surprise visit from a B-17, and the crew graciously shared their airplane with many from the community that heard about it being on the field.



- Airport staff have successfully performed hundreds of safe fueling operations in 2019.



Rutherford County Airport contributes more than \$13.4M to NC's economy every year and supports 70 local jobs. Read more about the impact of our state's airports at <https://bit.ly/2Rz2h8c#StateOfAviation>.

We are excited about the possibilities and opportunities coming to the airport in 2020.

ANIMAL CONTROL

This has been a very eventful year at Animal Control. Many updates have been added to the facilities.



- With the help of the Heart of the Foothills and local volunteers, we have opened a cat trailer! This includes a free-range room for people to pet and interact freely with the cats. There are cage banks for healthy kittens, a counter with a sink, new flooring, a built-in cabinet, and a huge basin sink in the restroom.
- What was previously our "cat room" is now a quarantine area for unhealthy or new cats. We no longer house cats in dog-runs or in the quarantine building.
- The facility received donations of two cabinets, dishwasher, exam table, cage bank,

food, temporary cages, leashes, toys, peanut butter, medication, grooming services and more. We are actively drafting a plan to resurface the dog runs.



- On two different occasions this year, we took in approximately 70 animals. The community support that came during these stressful times was astounding. We even have a few volunteers that stayed with us on a regular basis since then.



- Heart worm treatments sponsored for some of our long-term dogs at the facility.



- As of December 11, 2019, Animal Control has taken in 1,575 animals consisting of 353 cats, 853 dogs, 105 kittens, 139 puppies, 2 rabbits, 4 opossums, 5 bats, 1 coyote, 12 raccoons, 1 horse, 1 owl, 1 skunk, 6 foxes, 1 hawk, 3 goats, 1 woodchuck, 6 pigs, 3 chickens, 2 roosters, 1 parrot, and 75 love birds.

- With the advanced support from the county and beyond, the animal survival rate is at 89%, which is huge!



- Animal Control staff has completed over 3,500 calls for service. Over a thousand of those calls were for investigations that lead to educating owners, warnings, citations, or criminal charges.



- Staff provided 1,100 rabies vaccinations to shelter animals and family pets.

- Our officers even tackled two rattle snakes this year!

As always, we encourage citizens to visit our facility, especially if you are looking for a new pet.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

2019 was a Municipal Election year and a time to reorganize and prepare for 2020.

Highlights from the year include:

- List maintenance procedures in January, where Board of Elections was required to send mailings to all voters who had not voted over the last two federal elections to verify they were still at the same address.
- At the end of 2018, the State and County Boards were dissolved due to court rulings. The State Board was appointed under new rules in January, and the county Board was appointed in February taking



our Board to five members. Current members are Frances Lockwood (Chairman), Gail Parton (Secretary), Brian King, Robert McDowell and Linda Smith.



- A new ceiling was installed in our office areas **(pictured above)**.
- In May we began issuing photo identification cards to voters who complete a request.
- In June we hosted a two-district combined meeting at the Tryon International Equestrian Center and had special guests the Executive Director and Chairman of the State Board of Elections **(pictured left)**.
 - We had 36

candidates file for the municipal election.



- State Board training was attended by board and staff in Raleigh and the Director was one of the presenters.
- The Board appointed Chief Judges and Judges for the precincts and they took their oaths in September **(pictured above right)**.
- Board members and staff attended a demonstration in Haywood County on the choices for new voting equipment **(pictured left)**.
- The Director continued to serve on a panel of Directors assisting the State with the development of new software.



- The Board approved a resolution to purchase new voting equipment and in December the County Commissioners approved funding the purchase.
- Filing began for the March primary in December
- Debbie Bedford was blessed with becoming a "Lolli" for Brooks William Bedford born in August **(pictured right)**.



BUILDING INSPECTIONS

The Building Inspections Department has had several large-scale projects permitted during this year with total permit fees received being \$528,488 and 2,467 total permits written. Of these, we had 132 new-house starts. Total project cost of all jobs permitted is \$83,397,641. We have permitted five cell towers, ICC's new 3-story fire-training practice facility, three new apartment buildings with a clubhouse here in Rutherfordton, and TJCA's new 71,709 SF high school. Rutherford Hospital had a great deal of remodeling, including their CT, endoscopy, and ultrasound areas, nuclear medicine, and the mammography rooms. Yogi Bear campground has also begun operation, and diligently continuing to work. Final approval has been given on several buildings including the camp store, activity center, the welcome center, and 20 treetop cabin remodels.

Building Inspections has two new inspectors, Jeremy Hill and Jimmy Bradley—both of whom have a framing background, to round out our inspection staff experience. Of our current inspectors, Lee Pace obtained his Level I electrical certification, Joey Turrubiarte his Mechanical Level I, and Senior Inspector, Caleb Wilson, has obtained his Level 2 Electrical and Plumbing certifications. It takes approximately five years for an inspector to take all his schooling and tests and be fully certified in three levels of five trades.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Regional Equine Educational Workshop

Targeted five NC and three upstate SC counties. This workshop focused on pasture forage management and reached nearly 150 equine producers.

Beef and Dairy promotional events

Hosted four different promotional events for May Beef Month and June Dairy Month. We set up our NC Cattlemen's Association tent at farmer's markets, Tryon International Equestrian Center, grocery stores, and gave out samples of beef products and ice cream to consumers, as well as healthy recipes for preparing wholesome meals.



Value-Added Marketing

Continued to assist local cattle



producers in a value-added marketing program through the Mountain Cattle Alliance. We shipped 12 tractor trailer loads of cattle (~900 head) with a value of \$815,000. These calves were sold at premiums ranging from \$100-\$200/head. At an average of \$150/head on 900 calves, additional profits around \$135,000 went back in the pockets of these producers.



Pastured Pork Workshops

The Cooperative Extension hosted two different pastured-pork workshops. Over 60 participants attended the workshop from four different states and learned about pastured-pork production from farrowing to finish.

Beef Quality Assurance Training

Staff hosted multiple Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) trainings in the west



district for agents, producers and students.

Small Ruminant Workshop

Participated in a regional workshop for sheep and goat producers that taught vitamin/mineral supplementation, lambing/kidding management, and marketing strategies for all producers to consider.

Horticulture Highlights 2019

- Rutherford and Polk counties hosted the first NC Foothills Farm Tour on June 8th with 16 farms participating and over 400 guests visiting farms for the day.
- The Friends of Agriculture breakfast has highlighted multiple types of agricultural producers and agencies each month; all are welcome for breakfast on the second Wednesday of the month at 7 am at the Rutherford Farm Bureau office. We will start breakfast back again in January of 2020.
- The agricultural literacy program, Speedway to Healthy exhibit, Farm City program, 4H mini gardens, and LLCA Garden Club were all held in 2019 as programs for youth to learn more about growing their own food, eating well, and our agricultural industry.



- The Extension Gardener newsletter is released quarterly for each region of the state; this publication is written by Extension Horticulture Agents across the state, and I have served as the regional editor for the past two years.

- The Rutherford County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers spent over 1000 hours volunteering in our community this year; and welcomed eight new volunteers to the group in 2019

Family & Consumer Sciences Programs – 2019

The Color Me Healthy program helps preschool children learn where food comes from, improve willingness to try new foods, and increase physical activity.

The 4th Grade Garden & Nutrition program inspires students to plant, grow, and try a variety of vegetables in a school garden setting while learning about nutrition and physical activity.

Adults who participated in monthly cooking classes developed skills to make cooking at home easier and more enjoyable. There was a 46% increase in meals cooked at home and participants reported consuming less sodium, eating more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and eating healthier overall.

4-H Program Highlights

- **Speedway to Healthy** - A total of 680 fourth grade students attended Speedway to Healthy. Thirty-two adult volunteers and eight youth volunteers assisted and served as station leaders. Students toured an exhibit replicating the human body. They learned how to protect the body, how to take care of the body, and how to eat healthier, with an emphasis on eating more fruits and vegetables. The RHI Legacy Foundation sponsors this event each year.
- **Honor Club** Two 4-H members were inducted into the NC 4-H Honor Club in July. Honor Club is the highest level a 4-H member can obtain. Only one-half of one percent of the total 4-H enrollment are inducted each year. They are chosen based on an application and point system. Points are accrued throughout their entire 4-H career from their projects and various levels of involvement.
- **Mini Gardens (with Hannah)** Eleven youth participated in growing and harvesting their own vegetables this summer in our 4-H Mini Garden program. Youth were encouraged to eat the vegetables at home, share them, or even sale them to friends and neighbors. Nine of the eleven gardeners reported that they tried a new vegetable for the first time as a result.



Presentations

Twenty-seven youth participated in 4-H Presentations. Presentations are illustrated, talked, or demonstrated by youth to enhance their public speaking skills. Eighteen youth gave presentations for the first time this year. Seventeen youth went on to compete at 4-H District Activity Day in McDowell County in June. Seven went on to compete in State 4-H Presentation Finals in Raleigh.



State Fair Booth

Teen leaders worked with the 4-H Agent to construct an “Under the Sea” theme 4-H booth for the NC State Fair in Raleigh. Each of the 5 Extension districts submit one booth each year for competition and display. Rutherford County placed second in this competition and fifth in the County Sweepstakes, comprised of all 100 counties.



Summer Fun

Thirteen summer enrichment workshops were held during the summer. Most were one-day or two-day classes. The Kids and Chefs class was a five-day day camp where youth learned about agriculture and food production, eating healthier, and basic cooking skills. They prepared their own lunch each day, with the supervision of Extension staff and a trained chef. Other classes included wildlife, art, heritage arts, fish and mussels, horses, sewing, and more. Seventy youth attended one or multiple Summer Fun classes.



COUNTY MANAGER AND COMMISSIONERS

Governor Cooper visited Rutherford County in March (pictured right with Commissioner Eddie Holland and below with other County officials, including Commissioners Benfield, Holland, and King).



Commissioner Michael Benfield traveled to Washington, DC where approximately 2,000 county officials and partners participated in the NACo (National Association of Counties) conference, March 2-6, 2019. They focused on federal policies that impact counties and our residents. **(Senator Tom Tillis with Commissioner Benfield pictured left; Capital building right.)**



Cowpens National Battlefield celebrated a special event to commemorate the 238th anniversary of the decisive American victory over the British. Commissioner Bryan King **(pictured left)** was 'enlisted' as one of the reenactors. The Rutherford County Commissioners agreed to contribute planning funds for the portion of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail that will run from Rutherfordton south to Chesnee, SC.

County Manager Steve Garrison and Commissioner Bryan King led the session on Government at the **Leadership Rutherford** event in December. Other city and county officials led a panel discussion on local government leadership and ways that towns improve the quality of life for residents **(pictured right)**.



Governor Cooper launched Hometown Strong to support rural communities in rural North Carolina. The HS team engaged in a video interview with County Manager (not pictured) and Commissioner Bryan King on the Rail Trail behind Yelton Mill, Spindale (right).



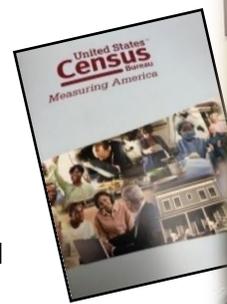
ICC hosted a reception at The Foundation, April 16th, allowing interaction between Hometown Strong and community leaders.



Manager Steve Garrison leads the quarterly Department Head meetings involving each County Department (pictured left).

At one of the 2019 quarterly meetings, a presentation was given by Jan Smiley, Recruiting Assistant, 2020 United States Census Bureau, to the

Rutherford County Department Heads on the importance of supporting the upcoming census. She also answered questions and provided material on the benefits of becoming a 'Census Taker'.



May 2019 County Assembly Day in Raleigh, NC (pictured below).



Foundation Forward, Inc., a nonprofit educational organization, gifted the County with a '**Charters of Freedom**' monument on the local Courthouse lawn. A dedication ceremony was held on September 17, 2019 at 6:00 pm. honoring our nation's history!





Actions taken by the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners during 2019:

- Rutherford County received \$631,667 in Community Development Block Grant funds for Neighborhood Revitalization.
- 2019 Reappraisal provided new values for Rutherford County.
- Grant of \$1,161,548 received to purchase/build a new office for 911 operations.
- Funds approved for the planning process of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.
- Held a goals' setting session on February 21, 2019:
 - The Board agreed that the purpose of the Board should be good governance accomplished through strategic decisions and sound management. The strategic vision goals on which the Board agreed were:
 - Maintain and improve public trust.
 - Effectively manage relationships for the benefit of citizens and visitors.
 - Improve and maintain an environment that appeals to all citizens and visitors.
 - The Board will work with department heads for specific goals that will align with the strategic vision. Those areas in Rutherford County that need improvement are public health/wellness, mental health, jobs (both internal and external), education, and infrastructure.
- Leased old "Rescue Hut" to Cliffside Historical Society.
- Approved incentive grants for Cardinal Tissue.
- Became part of Foothill Health District (McDowell and Rutherford Counties) on July 1, 2019.

- Rutherford County became part of Partners Behavioral Health Management on July 1, 2019.
- Entered into interlocal agreement with Town of Spindale for Henson Road Sewer.
- Reallocated funds in the school's budget in the amount of \$909,759 from capital to current expense and approved a one-time allocation of \$2,000,000 from School Capital Fund 29 Debt Service Fund to School Capital Outlay.
- Purchased property on Sparks Drive in Forest City to locate 911 Operations Center.
- Began the process of construction and equipping of a new RS Middle School.
- Declared Rutherford County as a Second Amendment Sanctuary.
- Approved incentive grant for Fountain Electric in Spindale.
- Received rating of Aa3 from Moody's Investors Service Financial.
- Approved the purchase of DS-200 Precinct Scanner and ExpressVote ADA Marker voting equipment from Election Systems and Software and additional supplies, booths, etc. required for their operation.
- Approved an agreement between Rutherford County and the Economic Development Association of Rutherford County for the employment by the County of the Executive Director or the Association.

For most county commissioners, the position is a part-time job, but the reality is that as an elected official, you are on duty and on call 24 hours a day. Our commissioners not only work closely with one another as members of the county commission, but they stay in touch with the citizens and make an impact on people's lives.



Clerk Hazel Haynes and Deputy Clerk Kim Aldridge attended the 2019 NC Association of County Clerks Conference in October in Cleveland County (pictured left).

The grand opening celebration for the Thermal Belt Rail Trail was held October 19, 2019. Check out the new Thermal Belt Rail Trail website at <https://www.thermalbeltrailrail.com/>. (pictured below).



Grand Opening of Isothermal Community College's Emergency Services Training Facilities on October 26, 2019 (pictured left)

2019 Rutherford County Administration Team



MERRY CHRISTMAS

May you have a wonderful Christmas
and a happy new year!
From The Rutherford County
Administration Team



EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Equipment Advancements:

EMS was able to purchase new equipment to better serve our citizens.

- Upgraded to all Viper radios and began using the Viper network to improve communications.
- Received a \$102,822 FEMA grant to purchase automated CPR machines for all front-line vehicles.
- Put two new ambulances into service.
- Implemented a new medical supply vending machine and tub system for all medical supplies.

Both processes have dramatically cut down on restocking time and the ability to switch into a different ambulance vehicle quickly, when needed.

- EMS upgraded department wide uniforms for the first time in many years. A more visible, reflective uniform shirt has been implemented to assist with better mobility.
- EMS was able to add a new conference room at the Spindale base which has helped tremendously for staff and crew meetings, webinars, and other special meetings. We were also able to upgrade some furniture and renovations to our facilities.



Staff Development:

Staff was able to participate in several programs, certifications and promotions.

- Supervisor Jennifer Mooney completed the EMS Management Institute and Community Paramedic Amanda Watson is currently enrolled in the program.
- Supervisor Kevin Waldrop completed and was certified as a Tactical Paramedic as part of the Sheriff's SERT team.
- Director Kerry Giles graduated from the UNC School of Government's County Administration Course.
- Eight (8) new employees passed their Oral Boards and now function as full paramedics within our system.
- Kaleb Johnson was promoted to the position of Operations Manager upon the 30-year retirement of Terry Baynard.
- Justin Moore was hired to the position of Shift Supervisor.
- Kayla Wynn was promoted to the position of Field Training Officer.
- Amanda Watson and Chris Way completed the Community Paramedic certification.
- Phillip Hill graduated from ICC with an Associates in Applied Science-EMS.



Department Wide Training:

- Grief Training: Employees were able to engage with a panel of speakers on how to deal with grief and providing comfort on scene within the scope of their job.
- OB emergencies: training on childbirth and neonatal emergencies so that the paramedics can take care of pregnancy and childbirth in the field. Additional training was due to Rutherford Regional Hospital temporarily stopping OB services. Rutherford County EMS runs between 40 and 50 OB and childbirth emergencies annually.
- Self-defense: we were lucky enough to have two fantastic instructors from the Sheriff's Office leading the training with great participation from the staff to ensure safety for our employees in the field.
- Injuries to Athletes: practice in appropriately packaging an injured athlete, concussions, and triage. Medics learned how to appropriately move and package a patient for a carry out in a Stokes Basket.
- Physical Agility Testing: EMS utilized the Medic Physical Agility Testing. The testing is job specific and involved 10 stations that had to be completed within a 7:35 time-period.



- Water Rescue and Water Survival Skills: paramedics were shown how to appropriately utilize water rescue equipment and safety devices such as throw bags and Personal Floatation Devices and how to swim in these as well. Medics also demonstrated how to rescue both conscious and unconscious individuals from the water along with removal of patients that may have a diving injury.
- Billing Software: EMS transitioned to a new billing company this year. Staff along with all employees were trained on new process, procedures, and appropriate documentation.
- Monthly Training: EMS changed this year to monthly training rather than quarterly. This allows more consistent time with employees to ensure all skills are staying up to date. Training rotates each month between classroom and online.



Events:

- Rutherford County EMS along with multiple other agencies all came together to help rehab our firefighters during the fire at the American Zinc Plant and to provide standby if anyone would have needed medical attention.
- Went to Adaville Baptist Church and had the pleasure to have the kids go through our unit and ask any questions about EMS that they might have about emergency services.
- Grammy nominee Luke Combs was filming a new music video in our county and we provided medical standby for this event.
- Provided medical standby for Camp Hooty Whooo. This is the first year for this camp. It is for juveniles with Type 1 Diabetes.
- EMS also thoroughly enjoyed EMS Appreciation Week. Congratulations to Lori Roach for being named Paramedic of the Year and to Paramedics Greg Walker, Marc Horne and Kelsea Greene for being selected for the Supervisors Awards.



- EMS participated in Heritage Day at Sunshine Elementary. We were able to give kids tours of our ambulances and explained to them what we do and the reasons to call 911.



- Community Paramedic Amanda Watson had the privilege to be able to work with the Senior Center with teaching a hands-only CPR class, bleeding control, basic first aid, and she participated in their health fair.
- We had a great opportunity to share with a local daycare during Community Service Workers Week. We were able to give kids tours of our ambulances and explained to them what we do and the reasons to call 911.

Year End Statistics:

TYPE OF CALL	NUMBER
Transfer/Interfacility/Palliative Care	1315
Sick Person	1153
Traffic Accident	1121
Breathing Problem	1046
Falls	851
Chest Pain (Non-Traumatic)	734
Unconscious/Fainting	490
Convulsions/Seizure	372
Diabetic Problem	332
Heart Problems/AICD	281
Hemorrhage/Laceration	265
Stroke/CVA	263
Psychiatric Problem/Abnormal Behavior/Suicide Attempt	239
Medical Alarm	221
Overdose/Poisoning/Ingestion	177
Cardiac Arrest/Death	174
Abdominal Pain/Problems	165
Traumatic Injury	124
Assault	101
Unknown Problem/Person Down	96
Allergic Reaction/Stings	71
No Other Appropriate Choice	70
Back Pain (Non-Traumatic)	59
Pregnancy/Childbirth	54
Headache	48
Stab/Gunshot Wound/Penetrating Trauma	31
Choking	29

Heat/Cold Exposure	18
Fire	15
Altered Mental Status	12
Animal Bite	8
Boating Accident	7
Burns/Explosion	4
Well Person Check	4
Assist Invalid	1
Electrocution/Lightning	1
EMS Special Service	1
Eye Problem/Injury	1
Healthcare Professional/Admission	1
Industrial Accident/Inaccessible Incident/Other Entrapments	1
TOTAL CALLS	9,956

BREAKDOWN BY DISPOSITION	NUMBER
Transported No Lights/Siren	6755
Patient Refused Evaluation/Care (Without Transport)	883
Patient Evaluated, No Treatment/Transport Required	713
Cancelled (Prior to Arrival at Scene)	432
Transported Lights/Siren	280
Cancelled (No Patient Contact)	185
Patient Treated, Released (AMA)	173
Cancelled on Scene/No Patient Found	144
Patient Treated, Transferred Care to Another EMS Professional	83
Patient Treated, Released (per protocol)	68
Assist, Public	44
Transported No Lights/Siren, Upgraded	21

FINANCE

The Finance Office had a busy 2019 year supporting the County Departments and Management. The Office received the Certificate of Achievement for Financial Excellence in Financial Reporting this summer for the 2018 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). This was the thirtieth consecutive year the office has received this prestigious award and has submitted this year's CAFR for consideration.

Pictured left to right back row: Commissioner Eddie Holland, Vice Chairman Alan Toney, Commissioner Mike Benfield, Commissioner Greg Lovelace; **left to right front row:** Chairman Bryan King, Angela Ezell, Wendy Hardin, Paula Roach, Holly Kever and Jeanette Bosgra.



The 2019 annual audit has been completed for the County and the Tourism Development Authority--both reports are available on the Finance Office's webpage.

Our team also assisted in a successful sale of Limited Obligation Bonds in December for the RS Middle School Project. The Official Ground Breaking will be in January 2020 with construction to be complete by summer 2021 just in time for the new school year. Following the rating agency calls for the project, Moody's reaffirmed the County's rating at A1 and S&P upgraded the County from an A to A+.

In 2019, the office also processed almost 15,000 invoices for the departments and payroll for over 650 employees during the year.

The office staff continues to work closely with Public Works/Planning to update Vehicle Replacement and Capital Facility Plans. With a small team of only five employees, the director is quite proud of her team's professionalism, hard work and dedication they contribute to the office each day.

HUMAN RESOURCES

2019 has continued to be a productive year for Human Resources. The Board of Commissioners approved Phase 3 of the Pay and Class Study conducted by the Maps Group. Staff is working alongside the Finance Office to implement these changes. Each employee will also receive a 1% COLA. We thank the Board of Commissioners for their support.

Performance evaluation forms have been created by category for employees, supervisors, and department heads. These new forms allow employees to be evaluated by the role they are assigned without using a generic form for every employee. A new exit interview form was created and implemented as well.

The Employee Portal has been a success and employees have adjusted to printing their check stubs and reviewing their employee demographics. ACA reporting continues to be a time consumer. The HR Analyst works diligently with the State to ensure compliance with deadlines and accuracy of reporting. Dental rates were once again renewed with no increase. We were able to negotiate a three-year lock in period.

Human Resource staff continue to attend yearly training for Personnel Law, FMLA, FLSA, and other functions that impact the services provided by the department.

HR hosted the below in 2019:

- Annual blood drive (exceeded goal)
- Flu clinic
- Mammogram Day
- Lunch and Learns
- 401k seminar(s)
- Training seminars
- Tenure Award Program
- Sexual Harassment Training
- Mock Shooter



The County attended and then hosted a FISH Philosophy training at ICC. Most department heads attended. Leadership training was a key topic.

Staff attended training on State Health plan updates and changes.

Greg Dotson, Debra Conner and Brooke Watson attended “Coping and Resiliency Skills for High Stress Occupations” seminar (**pictured left**).

Bob Carruth with NCACC trained department heads on the Learning College, a series of training videos accessible for all employees on key safety topics.

Department Heads hired this year:

- Devon Raisch, Airport Manager
- Birgit Dilgert promoted to Economic Development Director

- Luke Rich, promoted to Garage Supervisor

Retirees:

- Gail Crawford, Transit
- Theresa Justice, Transit
- Robert Davis, Sheriff’s Office
- Scott Patrick, Sheriff’s Office
- Lynn Davis, Sheriff’s Office
- Larry Baily, Garage.



Once again, the Human Resource Department was recognized by Cherrie Berry, NCDOL, at the annual safety banquet for 15 Years of Safety (pictured above).



2019 was a blessed year for HR Director Debra Conner. Her third granddaughter was born in March. Welcome Emryn Kay Lail aka “Wrenny bug” (pictured left).

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology worked on a variety of projects this year. We completed software, hardware and infrastructure upgrades, as well as installing new equipment in our server rooms and many departments while providing support for all county employees. Below are a few of the highlights from 2019:

- Welcomed three new employees to the Information Technology team.
Michael Circello - Network Administrator
Jim Laughter – Desktop Support
Jim Yorke – Desktop Support for Social Services.
- Performed upgrades to the operating systems of our existing server infrastructure and deployed new servers.



- Upgraded server applications for departments.
- Assisted with investigating new software for our Public Safety departments.
- The Desktop Support team provided training classes for County Employees on the Barracuda Email Archival system.
- The Desktop Support team deployed virtual desktops in the following departments. Forensics, EMS, EDC and finished the rollout to Social Services.
- Currently 24 departments have been 100% converted to virtual desktops. The remaining 5 departments are still in progress.

- Of the 287 software packages in use by the County, 90% have been virtualized and 78% have been made functional with Windows 10 (**pictured above**).
- Updated image deployment system to be compatible with newer hardware.
- Engineered, tested and began rollout of new mounted tablet solution for EMS.
- Continued deployment of Lexmark printers to replace outdated printers across the county.
- Continued deploying Microsoft Office 2016 to departments.
- We have started testing and deploying Windows 10 across the county. As of the beginning of December, 13 departments have been migrated fully to Windows 10 and 8 other departments are in the testing phase.
- Performed software patches and updates as needed on all computers and laptops.
- We have added/updated some tools and solutions to manage county resources. They include a Logon Metric Tool to analyze login times, Custom Printer Deployment Engine for better functionality and extensibility, Custom



TSR Agent and Framework for VM/user experience administration, Software package tracking system and an updated Physical Asset Inventory system.

- Replaced Detention and Communications camera viewing computers with video decoders.
- Assisted with setting up a new lab at Isothermal Community College to provide BLET students the opportunity to begin working with Sheriff Office technology.
- Replaced Public Access computers in Register of Deeds with virtual desktops and a cable management system.
- Installed new SANs for the County and Fairground campuses.
- Installed a new video and projection system in the Commissioner Room and Auditorium at the County Administration Building.
- Prepared and auctioned several lots of decommissioned equipment on GovDeals.
- Added additional cameras in several locations.
- Completed 3386 SysAid tickets.

We hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and have a Happy New Year!

LIBRARY

2019 Rutherford County Library System Highlights

2019 Total Circulation of All Items – 257,419

2019 Number of Library Programs – 1,023

2019 Number of Participants for Library Programs – 8,927

2019 New Patron Registrations – 5,135

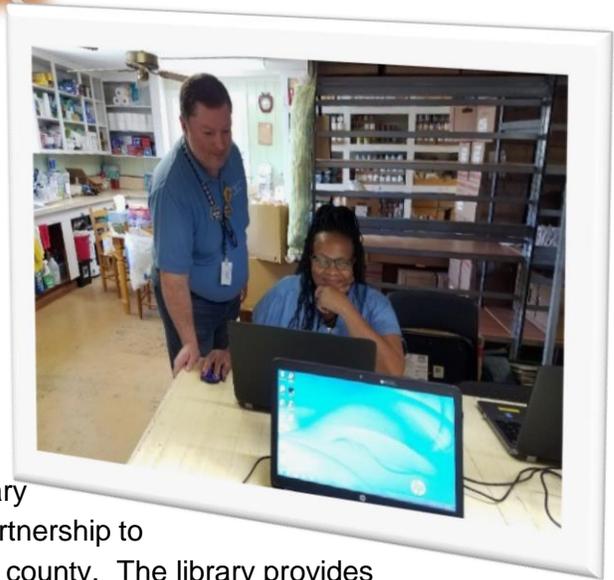
Rutherford County Library System began the REaD Access initiative in March. This program allows all students in Rutherford County public and charter schools access to all the library's online and physical materials, apart from select materials. REaD Access accounts are limited to ten physical check-outs at a time and do not accrue late fees. This is a partnership with our local schools to help ensure student success and to support literacy initiatives.



The library hosted a traveling StarLab, a traveling planetarium with programs about space, at many of the local elementary schools during the month of April. The StarLab was sponsored by the State Library which enabled our library to provide this wonderful resource to Rutherford County. Over the course of the month, the youth services librarian, Tamara Edwards, was likely seen by most Kindergarten to 5th grade students across the county. The StarLab was showcased at the two branch libraries during spring break weeks for the public to take part in the

StarLab fun.

In June, the Rutherford County Libraries partnered with the municipal libraries to host a wonderful summer reading kick-off event at the new Pavilion on Park Square in Forest City. This was a hugely popular event attended by over 400 children and adults. We are grateful for the partnership with Forest City to have had the opportunity to use this excellent venue at no cost.



Beginning in late September, Rutherford County Library and Washburn Community Outreach entered into a partnership to expand library services to the northeastern part of the county. The library provides



weekly library services from 4 to 6 p.m. every Thursday at the Washburn Community Outreach Center. A library staff member brings a selection of books for all ages, several laptops, along with a printer each week. In addition, users of this service may request specific materials to be brought on a return visit. Staff members are on hand to help with computer questions and to provide homework assistance to students. Washburn Community Outreach provides the location and the internet service to make the library's weekly visits possible.

Over the course of the year, the library accepted three grants focused on health; “READ the Rails,” “Exploring Edibles,” and “Now You’re Cooking!” The library received funds from the Eaton Corporation to facilitate the building of a Storywalk® along a portion of the Rail Trail. The Storywalk® will encourage both family literacy and physical activity. The library is currently seeking additional funds to finish this project.

“Exploring Edibles” was funded by the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina. With this grant, we were able to purchase three hydroponic garden towers. These hydroponic towers have been on exhibit

at locations across the county to encourage residents to produce food at home. With the help of Cooperative Extension, the library has offered several classes focused on hydroponic gardening basics, seed saving, and heirloom plants. FFA students from RS Central HS have maintained one of the garden towers at the Rutherford Hospital for several months with much success. In the coming year, we hope to continue our project with the towers in different locations.



Our third grant, “Now You’re Cooking,” was provided by RHI Legacy

Foundation. This grant enabled the library to purchase a mobile kitchen known as a Charlie Cart. The Charlie Cart allows library staff members to provide cooking demonstrations to various audiences in different locations. We hope to utilize food grown on our hydroponic towers in our cooking demonstrations in the coming year.



PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING

- Addressing, GIS and Planning have successfully relocated to 272 N. Toms Street. This move has created a Development Service facility having Building Inspection, Addressing, GIS and Planning all under one roof; allowing for a more efficient experience for County citizens on their development needs.
- Planned and organized capital improvements for all county owned facilities. A few projects include:
 - DSS roof replacement
 - Health Department and Senior Center parking lot resurfacing.
 - Detention Center water heater replacement
 - Detention Center sewer grinder installation.



- Contracted with Harris Integrated Solutions on a project to begin installing HVAC Controls in some of the County's larger facilities. These controls will help provide a more comfortable environment for the occupant and energy savings for the County.
- Ongoing improvements to County Facilities through our Capital Facilities Planning Process
- Facilitated Rutherford County's Community Project Grant program. Community Project Grants for FY2019-2020 were awarded by Commissioners and monitored by Planning Dept. Applicants have until June 30, 2020 to complete their projects.
- Facilitated NCARTS Grassroots Grant Program for Rutherford County.
- Queens Gap development continues to make progress, nearing completion. The anticipated completion date is Spring 2020.
- Prepared for and facilitated monthly Planning Commission Meetings.
 - Working draft of proposed amendments updating Rutherford County's Road Name, Addressing and Display Ordinance
 - Inspected and ensured new Solar Farm projects in the county comply with Rutherford County's Solar Development Ordinance and Watershed Protection Ordinance.
- Actively involved in:
 - Conducting training for GIS and Pictometry
 - Rutherford County / NCDOT Transportation Planning process.
 - Rutherford County's Parks & Recreation Master Plan
- Involved in Rutherford County's Transportation Advocacy Planning.
 - Construction of 221 By-pass around Rutherfordton Committed by NCDOT (Construction 2020)



- Successfully oversaw the construction improvements of the Thermal Belt Rail Trail – RHI Legacy Foundation awarded grant funding for the construction of a 12-foot wide, 13.56-mile asphalt trail from Forrest Hunt Elementary to Gilkey. The County also received \$30,348.45 from the Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund, this funding went toward trail amenities for the TBRT.

- Rutherford County was awarded \$631,667.00 of a Community Development Block Grant funds for the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

- Awarded \$6,000.00 grant from RHI Legacy Foundation to review potential soccer complex locations within Rutherford County.





- Partnered with Foundation Forward to install our Country's Charters of Freedom documents (Declaration of Independence, US Constitution and the Bill of Rights) prominently displayed on our Courthouse lawn.

These are significant accomplishments in addition to the daily routine maintenance of 250 vehicles, 34 facilities, along with the parks and grounds of all county-owned properties. The Garage and Maintenance staff have continued to improve in efficiency and customer service.

This year, we welcome a new member to the team, Caleb Cone, a NCACC Fellowship Intern serving the County as an analyst.

REGISTER OF DEEDS



In April, our software vendor came to Rutherford County for a week and scanned documents from 1968-1973. The ROD staff has been manually entering information related to each document so that records can be searched through an online index. This is a very time-consuming project and is done during staff spare time.

The ROD public computer area has needed attention for many years and finally it has been cleaned up (**before and after pictured left**). The area is much neater and more user friendly with workstations that offer better space for working. Thank you again to the IT Department for helping make this project happen within our deadline!

The ROD office has offered eRecording since April of 2018 and about 20% of our recordings were through eRecording last year. We estimate since January 2019, that the percentage has increased to 34%. The implementation of eRecording has been very successful and new MOU's come through our office every day.

Older plats are being manually indexed into our system so that eventually all recorded plats will be available online. The image of the plat and the names related to that plat will be in the system. There have been 315 plats recorded in the office so far this year.

There have been 207 notary public oaths administered through our office. These continue to be uploaded and sent electronically to the Secretary of State's office.

A total of 212 certificates of Assumed Business Name have been recorded in the office so far this year. This is an increase from last year and is a good sign that new businesses continue to open in the county.



The ROD office maintains all vital records for the county. So far this year, the records processed and filed are:

- Birth Certificates – 105 (low number due to hospital no longer delivering babies as of March)
- Death Certificates – 737
- Marriage Licenses Issued- 423

Throughout the year, older years of births, deaths and marriages are still manually entered into the system by staff during spare time. This will be an ongoing project until all vital records are in the system for all years.



The Register attended (2) NCARD conferences, (2) department head meetings, and (3) district meetings. The Register received her certificate for becoming a certified Register of Deeds at the fall conference in September. This conference was held in Blowing Rock, and for the first time, the staff was able to attend some events and meet other ROD staff from counties throughout the state. It was very enjoyable and a great networking opportunity for the staff.

Again, the year has flown by for all of us and we are grateful for another productive year. Many thanks to 'my girls' for all that they do during the year and for getting so many tasks accomplished. You all bring a positive attitude every day and give the best customer service every day! Your hard work and devotion to this office is greatly appreciated.



REVENUE DEPARTMENT



- We lost longtime Revenue Department employee, Robin Ensley, who passed away unexpectedly after a brief illness on April 7, 2019 (**pictured left**). She would have had 32 years of service as a County employee as of May 13, 2019. Robin also served her community as a Spindale Town Commissioner. Words cannot express our sorrow and grief at the loss of Robin.
- We completed the 2019 Reappraisal project. Notification of the reappraisal values were mailed to citizens on February 13, 2019. Approximately 2300 appeals were reviewed and processed with approximately 550 of those appeals being heard by the Board of Equalization and Review.
- Collections ended the Fiscal Year 2019-20 year on June 30, 2019 with a 97.89% collection rate.
- The Revenue Department also began the process of starting back with the NC Debt Setoff program. Collections used this collection remedy prior to 2015 but suspended the program submissions during the Billing & Collection software transition. This means we will be able to submit unpaid tax bills greater than \$50 so that NC Income tax and lottery winning can be used to pay those outstanding taxes. refunds
- Congratulations to our Revenue Director, Sherry Lavender. During the 2019 NC Association of Assessing Officers Fall conference, Sherry was voted in as President of the Association for the 2020 calendar year. We know she will do a great job continuing to represent our county at the state level.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Revenue Department staff.



SENIOR CENTER

- The Rutherford County Senior Center received numerous grants this year.
 - We received a grant for \$86,643 from NCDOT which will continue to allow the Senior Center to contract with Rutherford County Transit to continue providing transportation for seniors in Rutherford County to the Senior Center.
 - We received two grants from RHI Legacy Foundation (\$50,000 for Home Delivered Meals and \$10,345 for new gym equipment (**pictured below**)).
 - We received \$27,535 from United Way for Home Delivered Meals. This was \$12,881 more than 2018-19 thanks for an anonymous donor.
 - We also received \$10,000 grant for Home Delivered Meals from Rutherford County Endowment, an affiliate of The Community Foundation of WNC (*\$1,000 more than 2018*).
- Senior Games: We had 124 participants in our Senior Games this year (which included Silver Arts and all sporting events.) Twenty-four (24) were first time participants. Fourteen seniors represented Rutherford County in Raleigh at the NC State Senior Games in September. Six (6) seniors were Gold medal winners in their division.
- We received and dispersed 75 sets of vouchers from the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program to eligible participants. These sets vouchers are valued at \$24 a set (total value \$1,800), to be used at the Farmer's Market.



- We received \$649 from the Duke Energy Grant to purchase fans for 2018. We purchased and distributed 49 fans this spring, of which a good portion of them were distributed to the home delivered meal participants – some of the most vulnerable seniors in Rutherford County.
- SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance Information Program): There were 1,353 Medicare contacts made in Rutherford County during the calendar year of 2018, with a total savings of \$888,495 for Medicare Beneficiaries.
- AARP Tax-Aid Foundation Program assisted 630 people during 2018 tax season.
- Our Partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank and the Commodity Supplement Food Program (CSFP) is still going

strong. CSFP is a Federal program administered by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Food Distribution Division for NC residents age 60 and older. The food items are provided by USDA. The program provides a monthly box of food designed to supplement the nutritional needs of low-income senior citizens. This has been a very successful program. We are distributing 135 boxes per month. **We have distributed 2,300 food boxes to low income seniors that live in Rutherford County since July of 2018.**

FY 2018-2019 meal statistics are as follows:

Home-Delivered Meals

- 45,013 meals served (5,013 more than previous year and 110% increase since 2014-15).



- 177 Average daily meals served.
- 254 different participants were served throughout the year.

Congregate Meals

- 39,779 meals served.
- 163 daily average meals served.
- 633 different participants were served throughout the year.



SHERIFF'S OFFICE

- Deputies with the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office teamed up with the Rutherford Housing Partnership during the Week of Caring to assist a local resident. Deputies shared their time and skills by installing a wheelchair ramp for an elder adult. After several hours of hard work and camaraderie, a very deserving woman had a safe and easier way of enjoying her home.



- The Rutherford County Sheriff's Office participated in the Hands Across the Border event. The event consists of



law enforcement agencies from North Carolina and South Carolina conducting motor vehicle law compliance checking stations at the state line. The Rutherford County Sheriff's Office worked jointly with South Carolina state law enforcement agencies specifically during this event.

- The Rutherford County Sheriff's Office, Butler's Jewelry & Loan and The Old Hickory Rifle & Pistol Club sponsored: Relay for Life-Shooting for A Cure.



- Rutherford County Sheriff Chris Francis was recognized as a "Patriotic Employer" by E.S.G.R. (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve).

- Rutherford County Sheriff's Office participated in "Coffee with a Cop", hosted by McDonalds.



- Sheriff's Honor Guard: Cpl. B. King, Det. J. Greene, Sgt. T. Greene, Cpl. W. Stroupe presented colors at the unveiling of the "Charters of Freedom" setting on the courthouse lawn (pictured below).

- Throughout 2019, Rutherford County Sheriff's Office participated in several community events and interacted with potential new deputies.





911 COMMUNICATIONS

Grant Award – Rutherford County was awarded a grant for relocation of the 911 center. The county obtained a new structure in the town limits of Forest City this past year. “**Rutherford County**

Communications” was first opened on North Washington Street in 1982. We have operated in the same space for over 35 years. Our “911 Radio Room”, that once housed two telecommunicators per shift, now has seats for up to (seven) 7. Architects are working diligently to get the space arranged appropriately and within the guidelines and recommendations of the **State NC911 Board**. We hope to transition to our new space by summer of 2020. Rest assured there will be NO disruption of services at any time during this process.



The first ever Sheriff's Standards **Telecommunicator Certification** class was held at Isothermal Community College in October 2019. **Sgt. Bill Short, Shift Supervisor**, is the director and instructor for this instruction. Isothermal Community College will hold a second class beginning January 6th, 2020. If interested, call Marnie Beaver 828-395-1532.





Telecommunicator **Emily Lawson, Cpl. Laurel Messer** and **Cpl. Marie Rhymer** were fortunate to help citizens in the delivery of new babies this past year.



The State of North Carolina is implementing *Next Generation 911 (NG911)* to ensure citizens accessibility to 911 services regardless of their location or the communication technology they use. NG911 is the transition from Legacy 911 to an Internet Protocol (IP) based system for routing digital information (i.e. cell phone calls, text messages) to the appropriate 911 call center or Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). NG911 will establish interoperability, security, economies of scale, competition, and innovation among the 127 PSAPs throughout North Carolina. This will vastly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency response.



RUTHERFORD COUNTY SHERIFFS 911- 11/20/2019
ESINET CUTOVER NEXT GENERATION 911

The NC 911 Board has contracted with AT&T for the implementation of a statewide Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet) and a hosted call handling system. The NC 911 Board has contracted with GeoComm to manage the GIS services portion of the NG911 project. These contracts will help North Carolina transition into a fully functional NG911 exo-system compliant with the National Emergency Numbers Association (NENA) i3 standards and best practices.



Emily Lawson

Melissa Carlisle

Chrissy Buchanan



SOCIAL SERVICES

- Rutherford County DSS became part of the Rutherford County Consortium, with United Way, Sheriff's Department, Health Department, Blue Ridge Community Clinic, and other agencies, to carry out the work of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) RCORP Planning Grant, which was submitted and received by the United Way for the benefit of the entire county. The purpose of the planning grant is to support prevention of and treatment for substance use disorders, including opioid use disorder. The goal of the grant is to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdoses in high-risk, rural communities by strengthening the capacity of the multi-sector consortia to address one or more areas, including prevention, treatment, and recovery. DSS' role will be to be an active participant in the Consortium and provide information and knowledge relating to the dynamics of abuse/neglect and childhood trauma, including qualitative and quantitative data regarding families effected by substance abuse; identifying gaps in services; and provide outreach and messaging to reduce the stigma of substance abuse disorders. DSS will continue to provide and manage contracted therapists, which are part of our substance abuse unit, to be part of the Jail Medication Assistance Treatment Program in the county jail. DSS will also manage the contract of a therapist to provide mental health assessments and therapy in the jail. A portion of the grant funds will be used to provide capacity building training to DSS social work staff focused on systemic change to incorporate trauma focused care, motivational interviewing, and building evidence based/best practice modalities. This will help us improve services to families affected by opioid use and other substance abuse disorders.
- Rutherford County DSS was specifically referenced in the Single Audit Report presented to the commissioners on December 2. Of the nine major programs audited at DSS, there were no audit findings. *"In two-thirds of the counties that we work with, this is not the case. This comes down to the solid leadership team and the knowledge that they have at DSS,"* Dan Mullinix of Gould Killian CPS Group stated. He also noted that DSS personnel from other counties sometimes call Rutherford County DSS for advice.
- The agency met all timeliness benchmarks in all economic services programs, including the Medicaid timeliness standards, every month this year.
- Medicaid completed over 3,000 quality checks and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) staff completed over 2,200 quality checks to prevent errors. Administrative errors were reduced this year by \$20,000 in FNS.
- A state Management Evaluation was completed by NC DSS on the Food and Nutrition Services Program this year. Out of 17 elements reviewed 14 had no findings, and the analyst completing the evaluation stated that this was minimal compared to other counties. The evaluation found our timeliness rate was outstanding, and the analyst observed our staff to be very professional and courteous to consumers, and every consumer that he contacted and interviewed was positive about their experience with the agency. Ten FNS cases were pulled by the state for review with no errors identified for 100% accuracy.
- October 2019 began the second year of a grant from the RHI Legacy Foundation to support the work of a Certified Peer Support Specialist. This person works with the social work team to engage mothers and their partners whose children are in or at risk of entering foster care and to help them begin and complete services needed to address substance use and mental health.



The agency partnered with Family Resources of Rutherford County to manage the third year of a three-year \$100,000 State grant to administer the Community Response Program. The purpose of the program is to improve child welfare services through prevention-focused intervention to identify, address, and correct risk factors, which if not resolved, have a greater potential to develop into issues resulting in child abuse and neglect. Participant families are identified primarily through the Child Protective Services intake screening process when a report is screened out or through social workers who have closed cases, but the families would benefit from being introduced to resources that could prevent future abuse and/or neglect and Child Protective Services intervention.

Rutherford County
DSS NOW
LICENSING
JOIN THE TEAM
We are looking for passionate individuals to join our team as licensed foster/adoptive homes.

FALL 2019 TIPS-MAPP
CLASSES STARTING SOON!!!!
Orientation Monday, September 9th, 2019
from 6:00 - 8:00 PM
Classes begin Monday, September 16th
from 6:00-9:00 PM and each Monday
following from 6:00-9:00 PM through
November 25th!!!

FOSTER ADOPT
RUTHERFORD COUNTY
828.287.6165 Families Helping Families Help Us Help Children

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT FOSTER HOME LICENSING AND RECRUITMENT SPECIALISTS,
JOVAN BACCUS AT (828) 287-6297 OR
ANGELA BLACK AT (828) 287-6295

TIPS-MAPP classes were offered in the spring and fall of 2019, required for prospective foster and adoptive parents. Foster home licensing staff also facilitated *Deciding Together*, one-on-one training offered throughout the year on an as needed basis. This has allowed people to complete the required training to become licensed even when we do not have a TIPS-MAPP class in session or they are unable to attend.

Our two licensing workers, Angela Black and Jovan Baccus, collectively licensed a total of 14 new foster homes through mid-December.

Monthly support and training meetings for our licensed foster families and other resource families were hosted at DSS the 2nd Tuesday of

every month, and we provided a meal and child care to help encourage families to attend. This meeting is a collaboration between DSS and Children's Home Society of NC, who occasionally provide meals and incentives, such as gift cards to local restaurants, for families attending.



Foster Home Licensing staff has maintained successful partnerships with the following community entities:

- Rutherford County Foster Care Closet, managed by James & Rhonda Schneider (Foster Parents licensed through RCDSS). They provide a variety of items to our resource parents to include children's clothes (all sizes), car seats, cribs, luggage (gently used and new), etc.
- Least of These of the Carolinas is a non-profit agency out of Gaston County. They provide a new duffel bag with new clothes for every child who comes into foster care. The bag is embroidered with the child's name in the child's favorite color. This prevents children from having to move from place to place with garbage bags and cardboard boxes. They also host a back-to-school shoe event for foster children where school age children receive a new pair of brand name shoes, school supplies, and a Christmas event in which each child's Christmas presents are provided.
- One More One Less Project is a non-profit organization run by Jeff & Mandy Marburger out of Cleveland County. This faith-based organization strives to promote foster care throughout the faith community and to train churches to create a foster care culture within their congregation. They plan to assist Rutherford County DSS and other agencies across the state with recruitment of foster/adoptive parents within churches of all denominations.

- Hope Community Church Foster Care Closet- Hope Community Church in Shelby, NC has invited our agency to refer our resource parents to their church's foster care closet, as they currently have an abundance of clothes, shoes, coats for children of all ages and sizes. They have been willing to assist resource families from Rutherford County by appointment and can be contacted by cell phone/text.



The Foster Home Licensing Unit hosted a Resource Parent Appreciation Event in May 2019 at Crestview Park in Rutherfordton. A hot dog meal was provided for families along with child-friendly activities such as face painting and a book fair.

Church presentations about foster care and adoption were held at the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration in the Lake Lure/Bat Cave community and at First Baptist Church of Forest City. These churches were provided local statistics regarding foster care needs and information about becoming a foster parent or supporting our foster care program in other ways. A recruitment table was set up at Adaville Baptist Church's Missions and More Event in August 2019.



Our County LINKS/SaySo Chapter traveled to Greensboro in March for the 21st Annual SaySo Saturday! S.A.Y.S.O. stands for "Strong Able Youth Speaking Out" and is a statewide association of youth aged 14 to 24 who are or have been in the out-of-home care system in North Carolina. The Mission of SaySo is *'to work to improve the substitute care system by educating the community, speaking out about needed changes and providing support to youth who are or have been in substitute care.'* All SaySo activities, whether at the state or local chapter levels, support the mission of the organization,

COME ON OUT AND SUPPORT OUR YOUTH. Rutherford County social worker, Stacey Moore, received the Adult Supporter of the Year award. Rutherford's chapter was also named Chapter of the Year for the second straight year. Three Rutherford Chapter members were selected by their peers to serve on the State Board of Directors for this region.

Rutherford County DSS awarded the Employee of the Quarter award to four dedicated, hardworking staff members during 2019.

First Quarter – Elaine Conner, Economic Services

Second Quarter – Madison Hartman, Foster Care

Third Quarter – Hannah Lovelace, Foster Care

Fourth Quarter – Ronnie Reep, Economic Services.

These four are examples of the great staff we have at Rutherford County DSS.





The agency's visitation room, used for parents and children to visit when a child is in foster care and must have supervised visits, was given a makeover in 2019, thanks to two high school students and their mentor. Tenth grader, Emma Roger, and eleventh grader, Faith Vogel, took on the project as part of their senior projects. Emily Wood served as their mentor. The group set up a goFundme page with a goal of \$1,000 and reached the goal within two months. They also received other monetary donations, and created an Amazon wish

list for people who wanted to buy an item that was needed. The makeover included toys, books, new paint, games and items for older children, storage areas, furniture for a sitting area, and a multipurpose table that could be used for meetings with parents as well as visits. The official reveal was held on May 24, which was very timely since May was National Foster Care Month.



The agency observed Child Abuse Prevention Month in April by planting a pinwheel garden in the breezeway of the main building and placing signs around the campus. All employees were asked to wear blue on a certain day, and pictures of various work groups in their blue attire were photographed and shared in our agency newsletter and on our Facebook page.

DSS Helping Others...



DSS workers came together to support fellow employee, Tammy Carter, who was diagnosed with Follicular Lymphoma, a Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma. Employees purchased tee shirts and held other small fund raisers to help raise funds to help with medical costs.

Economic Services sponsored a silent auction with baked goods and crafts donated by employees. The proceeds raised were split between two other employees that are battling breast cancer.

In November, employees gathered supplies to give to Veteran's Affairs to send care packages to those in the military.

The agency has a small food pantry and multiple times a year we accept donations from employees to support the continual inventory to assist our consumers in need.

Employees held a homemade ice cream contest and, later in the year, a chili cook-off to raise money for our Child Welfare and Adult Services Funds.

SOLID WASTE

2019 Tonnage

MSW: 43554.59
Recycle: 4019.05
C/D: 7275.11
Center Hauls: 3613

- Overlooked installation new wells **(pictured right)**.
- Worked on C/D Expansion.
- New gutters on scale office.
- New lights in storage shop.
- Purchased 2 new (used) dump trucks **(pictured below)**
- Purchased a new Loader.
- Purchased new tractor for Airport.



- Recycle packer rebuilt at transfer station.
- Sent out electronics for recycling and metal was sold **(pictured right)**.
- Maintained grounds at Cliffside, Cone mills, South Landfill, Airport and Central Landfill.
- Installed New Cameras.
- Installed and completed new recycle compactor to decrease hauls and increase tonnage capacity per haul at Pea Ridge **(pictured below)**.
- Fixed ruts in concrete where containers slide into



the trash compactors.

- Moved fence so drivers can have better access to compactors.
- Had Camp Electric upgrade all electrical components to compactors.



- Pumped septic tanks at Bills Creek and Shiloh had three loads of gravel added and scraped the back drive.
- Fixed drains under compactors at Shiloh and changed wheels on front gate.
- Upgraded front gate, had all wheels replaced, three loads of gravel added to back drive and scraped, and had fence moved to allow better access to compactor.
- Upgraded electrical system on compactors at Green Hill and replaced metal in floors of both compactors and replaced one of the cylinders.

- Finished and closed the Pea Ridge recycle container grant.
- Applied for 2019-2020 CWRAR from the State. Approved for grant to be used to print outreach materials and purchase a new recycle compactor.
- Attended the 2019 ICC Science Expo regarding recycled materials.
- Attended the 2019 ICC Conservation Field Day to talk and educate about contamination and how to eliminate it from the recycle **(pictured right)**.
- Recycle man J.J. was created and is stationed in the landfill to raise awareness about recycling **(pictured below left)**.
- Participated in the NC Recycle Right campaign to help educate the county residents on what to recycle and what is considered contamination.
 - Visited Mt. Vernon-Ruth Kindergarteners along with Roxi the Raccoon to talk about keeping trash out of the roads and the recycle!
 - ICC Conservation Field Day and Roxi visiting the kindergarten kids to talk trash and recycle.



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Promote Tourism Master Plan Success and Collaboration:

The Tourism Master Plan continues to be the focus and the priority to bring the county together to focus on developing tourism assets for the future. The tourism assets in the plan, create a quality of life and workforce recruitment for all of Rutherford County citizens and industry.



Tourism Plan Implementation and Funding:

The TDA and the Tourism Advisory Committee continue to focus on implementation and funding for the Tourism Asset Plan. In 2019, the TDA hired Destination by Design to assist the county with implementation and raising funds. The first 9 months of the quiet phase has produced over two million dollars for implementation. The two million is made up of: one million in grants, one million from TDA, county funding, and town funding, and 100,000 in contributions. This is a huge success for this campaign. The TDA Board is excited about announcing the campaign to the public in 2020, and to share in the excitement of future ground-breakings in 2020.

Maximize Tourism Occupancy Tax Receipts:

The tourism occupancy tax receipts continue to exceed prior year. The TDA has implemented a Short-Term Rental (STR) monitoring program that identifies all properties that are promoting themselves for overnight lodging. In 2019, the TDA took the data that they received from the STR program and was able to help get individuals and companies compliant. The process was able to guide 15 individuals to become in compliance with the rental of their property. The TDA continues to implement and monitor the STR program to keep compliance at a high level. As of October 1, 2019, VRBO and Homeaway have begun submitting occupancy tax on behalf of the property owners. Airbnb was the only company doing this prior to October.

Implement TDA Marketing Plan:

In October 2018, the TDA hired the Agency, a marketing group located in Charlotte NC. In January 2019, the Agency officially began contract work with the TDA. Over 2019, The TDA, in collaboration with The Agency, produced 10 separate commercials for spring/summer, each in 10 second, 15 second, and 30 second spots. These commercials aired in markets of: Nashville TN, Asheville NC, Raleigh NC, and Greenville/Spartanburg SC. There has also been a fall and winter shoot that are still in the editing phases. The TDA continues to maximize the TDA marketing plan to grow tourism in Rutherford County. The TDA website continues to outperform previous years, showing increased visitor use both returning and organic. The current campaign for TDA marketing is "moments that matter". The TDA will continue to seek new and innovative marketing ideas for the future.

Hospitality Program for Rutherford County:

MOMENTS THAT MATTER

tourism assets and benefits and was of primary benefit during the World Equestrian Games.

In 2018, the TDA purchased and implemented A2D Tourism Awareness Program. The program educated the community on Rutherford County

Implement Trails and Itinerary Program:

Rutherford County has several trails that cover activities from hiking, biking, paddling, and more. It is the goal of the TDA to market each of these trails to their full potential. In 2019, the 13.58-mile Thermal Belt Rail Trail opened connecting three towns. In 2020, we look forward to watching how the growth of the Thermal Belt Rail Trail continues to connect these towns. Also, in 2020, there will be an additional paddle trail entrance made possible by grant funding from RHI Legacy and Duke Energy.



Grow Community Programs/Events:

In 2018-2019 fiscal year, the TDA approved and funded 14 grants for a total of \$37,784. Since July 2019, the TDA has received

grant requests totaling \$29,557.25 The TDA has a committee that is made up of TDA board members and staff to review the grants. In the start of the 2020 year, the committee will review the application process and requirements to receive grants to help maximize the promotion of Rutherford County.



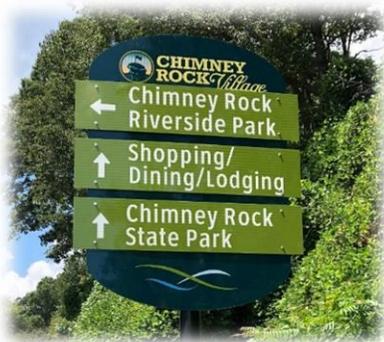
Retire NC:

After attending one of the VisitNC conferences, staff brought back the knowledge of a statewide program recognizing



communities or counties as retiree friendly. Municipalities or whole counties may apply to become a certified retirement community. A small TDA committee was formed to discuss the potential of presenting the opportunity to the county. Upon their approval, a guest speaker from NC state tourism was brought in for a presentation to various community leaders. A subcommittee of some of those leaders was formed to review and evaluate the opportunity of

Rutherford County becoming a RetireNC Community.



County-wide Wayfinding Monitoring Program:

In 2018 Wayfinding signs were installed in Chimney Rock Village, Lake Lure, Rutherfordton, Spindale, and Forest City. In 2019 the final locations and color options for Bostic, Ellenboro and Ruth were completed. In 2020, all wayfinding signage will be in place.

Research and Develop Rutherford County Agri-Tourism Program:

In July of 2019, at their regular board meeting, the TDA Board voted to implement an Agri-Tourism committee. This committee

is made up of three TDA board members, in addition to two TDA staff members. This committee has determined that it was best to implement a larger committee with additional members of the Agri-Tourism community. The TDA committee will continue working to implement this extended committee as we head into the 2020 calendar year. The plan is for this full committee to gather



for the first time in February of 2020 to put together a program of work for the future of Agri-Tourism in Rutherford County.

Enhance and Develop Welcome Center Presence in Lake Lure and Rutherfordton:

The TDA continues to operate the welcome centers in Lake Lure and downtown Rutherfordton. The welcome centers are an asset to Tourism in Rutherford County. Visitation in both locations grew in 2019.



Rutherford County – Keep Rutherford County Beautiful:

The TDA has played a key role in the Keep Rutherford



County Beautiful program. Not only has the TDA contributed funds, but they have organized the group into well-functioning sub-committees, who in turn make it all happen. The sub-committees are: admin/policy, litter pick-up, and marketing. This year has brought about several successful litter cleanups, the addition of litter cams, a high school “Trash Bowl” competition and the famous mascot, Roxi. The winner of the 2019 trash bowl was Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy with over two tons of trash collected.

Provide TDA Staff with Education Opportunities:

TDA staff has furthered their education opportunities through the attendance of conferences and classes that are held throughout the region. Some conferences that the TDA staff attended in 2019 include: ARC Conference, Main Street Conference, Visit NC 365 conference, DIY Tourism Marketing Conference, among many others. The TDA continues to look for new learning opportunities.

Strive to Develop RCTDA to be one of the Leading Rural Tourism Development Organizations in the State of North Carolina:

TDA Board and staff are proud of the accomplishments in 2019. We will continue to strive, grow our programs, and strive to be economically feasible in all that we do. With our focus on making Rutherford County Tourism to be the best that it can be, we want to be one of the leading rural tourism development organizations in the state of North Carolina.

TRANSIT

- In 2019, Transit has been most proud of the updated Tri City Xpress. This is a free route that runs through Rutherfordton, Spindale and Forest City. It includes a Blue Loop and Green Loop and has cut travel time for passengers from almost two hours to fewer than thirty minutes. Since implementing the new route with 2 buses on 3/18/19, we have experienced a 150% increase in ridership compared to same period last year. Feedback from the passengers has been positive and appreciative for the enhanced service by shorting the ride



times by adding a 2nd bus to the service. Graphics at all bus stops and at the three bus shelters were all upgraded to the new design and information.

- New bus shelters at the Courthouse in Rutherfordton and at Isothermal Community College. We are also in the process of installing two additional shelters in downtown Spindale and Forest City in 2020.



- We have provided free employment transportation to county residents going to work inside the county. This was offered on a trial basis during first half of year and has continued throughout the year due to increased demand for this service.
- We have provided free transportation to anyone that may be going for cancer treatments or needs a ride to the grocery store or food pantry.
- Received a \$25,000 RHI Grant to help citizens get to medical appointments, access to food, and access to the Thermal Belt Rail Trail.
- Received seven (7) new Ford Transit vans through a NCDOT grant.



- Hosted a NC Public Transportation Association Roundtable discussion regarding Medicaid Transformation and the impacts to transit systems across the state.
- Conducted annual Emergency Evacuation and Safety training for two days with outside consultant.

- Training this year included: proper procedures for handling tire blowouts, sudden brake failure, RR track crossings, emergency evacuation, wheelchair securement, defensive driving, ADA compliance, CPR and first aid, blood borne pathogens, proper radio communication, and accident reporting procedures.
- Completed a NCDOT Proficiency Review of federal regulations. These reviews are conducted generally every 3 years and are designed to look at all areas of the agency to ensure that the agency is following State and Federal guidelines in their operations. Transit's received an excellent report from the auditors conducting the review. Reviewer also conducted an interview with Transit Director Giles for information to possibly be included in Transportation Research Project.
- Held a Transit Advisory Board retreat at The Firehouse Inn. The retreat is a requirement from NCDOT to conduct training with our board on their role in this capacity, review the Board manual and to have

open discussions of future goals of Rutherford County Transit. Much of the discussion centered on Transit's new Tri City Xpress route and areas for growth.



- Transit completed 125,000 consecutive miles with no at-fault incidents or accidents.
- Transit was pleased to welcome new employees this year: Polly Watson, Mary Mock-Higgins, Mike Keppel, Joe Pitts, Christy Dysart, Eric Lawing, and Michael Shipp.
- Transit purchased new tablets and cradles for each revenue vehicle. Current tablets have lasted 5 years but have met their useful life. A new operating system was required to support the required CTS software programming updates.
- Mobile Communications of America completed vehicle 2-way radio checks and updates. They have also conducted an overall health assessment of the radios, hardware, and network.
- Transit was sad to see the following drivers retire in 2019, but we wish them well: Sarah Lee, Theresa Justice, Gail Crawford!

Year End Statistics:

Total Miles	495,727
Total Trips	63,742
Total Unduplicated Passengers	929

VETERAN SERVICES

The Rutherford County Veteran Services has had a busy, but wonderful year. 2019 highlights of the year include:

- Staff assisted veterans with filing new claims and applying for increases on existing claims. This year alone, topped \$2.6 million coming into our community. This is in addition to the hundreds of veterans that receive VA benefits. Besides helping veterans, this money also flows into our local economy.
- Susan and her husband Melvin visited Belgium in April. They were able to go to the Henri Chappelle Cemetery where four Rutherford County veterans are buried. Two of those fallen are Melvin's uncles.



- Veteran Services had an intern for the spring semester of 2019 from Appalachian State University, Kelsey Ferguson **pictured left**). We still miss Kelsey.
- Resa attended the Spring Conference in Winston Salem and Susan attended the Fall conference in Durham.
- Our office gained a part time employee, Tucker Williamson. Tucker is an Air Force Veteran.
- Staff continue to assist an around 70-100 veterans per week apply for benefits, operating the food closet, planning special events for our veterans and helping with other needs.



- Celebrated our fourth year of our Community Partnership Program.
- Held a drawing for tickets to the Panthers Football game in August.
- Veteran Services continued to have a monthly social for veterans, Coffee and Conversation. Each month we have a special guest to address needs and concerns that our veterans have. Davis Donuts, Food Lion-Rutherfordton and Burger King continue provide our supplies for this event.
- Staff attended required state-training to keep certifications up to date.
- Redecorated the lobby.
- Purchased more research resources to help us better prepare claims.
- Started performing informal conferences for higher level reviews. This is a process where the VSO has a one-time phone appointment with VA rating officers to appeal former decisions. We have approximately 7 of 10 appeals with a positive outcome.
- End of Summer Bash was held in September to celebrate another successful year. Veterans were treated to pizza, pasta dishes, chips, popcorn desserts and a fun time of fellowship. Each veteran was given a T-shirt that was sponsored by our 2018-2019 partners. **(pictured below)**



- Launched our 2019-2020 partnership campaign.
- Resa and Susan visited Facebook to educate their employees on veteran's benefits.
- Susan spoke at an informational forum at Isothermal Community College concerning veterans' issues.



•Our District Manager left and was replaced by Tim Moore, an Army Veteran. Tim works out of the Morganton State office.

•Veteran Services gave out 17 Thanksgiving dinners and 12 Christmas dinners to veterans with donations from the American Legion Post 74.

•Partners' T-shirts (pictured below)

•Several community organizations continue to donate to our food closet. We serve approximately 20-25 veterans per month.

•Annual

Christmas party was held on December 12th.



Staff (L to R: Susan Hall, Resa Thompson, Tucker Williamson)





County Manager
Steve Garrison

County Commissioners
Bryan A. King, Chairman
Alan Toney, Vice Chairman
Michael Benfield, Commissioner
Eddie Holland, Commissioner
Greg Lovelace, Commissioner

County Office
Hazel Haynes, Clerk to Board
Kim Aldridge, Deputy Clerk
Richard Williams, County Attorney

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