Another year has come and gone, and we would like to share some of the highlights of events, activities and programming from each County department. The service from each department and impact on Rutherford County during 2018 has been outstanding. Please enjoy each featured County department.
AIRPORT

2018 was a very busy year for the Rutherford County Airport. We saw the completion of a runway-taxiway-apron asphalt overlay. This project was completed in three stages to reduce the time that the runway would need to be closed. Work went smoothly and was completed on time. We also began construction of a new fuel farm for both Jet A and 100LL fuels. The old fuel storage tanks and pumps have been removed and new, double-walled fuel storage tanks and self serve pumps will be installed in January of 2019. Not only will this allow fuel to be sold to local and transient pilots on a 24-hour basis, but the new fuel tanks are safer and in compliance with current EPA and fire safety regulations.

After partnering with T.D.A. to complete an awesome promotional marketing video of the airport, we were the grateful recipients of a grant to have a new sign designed and placed on the main hangar at the airport. Quite often, the Rutherford County Airport is the first glimpse of the great adventures and opportunities in our county. This sign, and the landscaping and lawn maintenance provided by the Solid Waste Department, present a professional and welcoming image to our guests.

Our Airport, and more specifically the 57 Alpha Café, was featured in the February edition of “Our State” magazine. Rutherford County native Ron McKinney has become famous for his “Hundred Dollar” hamburger and the best bannana puddin in the south!

As natural disasters strike in and around Rutherford County, the airport continues to support activities by providing temporary command posts for our local and state officials in our conference room and a staging area for emergency and public service aircraft.

As we get ready to enter into 2019, the Airport is excited and ready to help Rutherford County grow in tourism and economic development.
**ANIMAL CONTROL**

- Animal Control officers answered 3899 calls.
- Animal Control staff gave 725 rabies vaccinations.
- The facility took in 1880 animals this year.
- Staff has conducted regular meetings with rescue groups.
  - The facility ordered baffles and have been installing them.
  - Improvements to the facility this year include central heating and air, new windows and septic system.
  - We are in the process of ordering a new truck.
- Staff has attended training opportunities.
  - The facility has received donations from different individuals and organizations for the animals. These donations consist of money, animal treats, toys, bedding and food.
BOARD OF ELECTIONS

This was a year for Mid-Term elections with candidates filing with our office in February for a May Primary and General Election in November. This was also a year of constant changes from the Legislature and Courts including:

- A delay in the filing of judicial candidates until June and no Primary was held for these contests due to a Court decision.
- County Board members were not sworn in until April due to legislative change to a four-member board and a court decision that delayed their appointment for almost a year.
- Records from the 2016 General Election were required to be retained indefinitely due to ongoing investigations.
- Early one-stop voting on the Saturday before each election was removed and then added back through legislation.
- Early voting hours were changed state-wide to 12 hours per day and they began one day earlier each election.
- A court order ruled that NC statutes on challenges to Candidates based on residency were a violation of federal law.
- Subpoenas from the US Attorney’s office required the preservation of all voter registration documents from 1/1/2010 through 8/30/2018.
- The entire election process was placed under Homeland Security which included many new security measures and policies. Our office was visited by Homeland Security in August and an assessment was made of our office and storage areas.
- New rules were approved by the State Board that included new signage and setup instructions for the precincts.
- Recent legislation that has been chaptered includes changing the county board from 4 members to 5, requiring voters to show ID when voting and requiring our office to produce photo ID’s when requested. During the year, our office trained over 150 poll and one-stop workers for each election including student workers. With the additional hours for early one-stop voting for the general election, we implemented new 12 hour shifts with workers on for two days and then off for two. The one-stop workers liked this arrangement and we were able to stay under budget even though the additional hours were added after budgets were finalized. Our staff worked over a month of very long days including weekends due to the new hour requirements.
- Many hours were also spent testing and working on our equipment. We are required to replace this equipment in the next year.

The Director continued her position on the committee with the State Board that is working with programmers to update the entire election software system that is used statewide.
The Building Inspections Department had a productive year with 108 new house starts. Total permit fees were $532,239, which included 2,503 new permits. Project cost of all permit jobs came in at $86,449,738 and total inspections completed were 9,071.

New commercial projects include a new 18,000 square foot school gymnasium for the Lake Lure Classical Academy located in Lake Lure, a new church in Ellenboro, a new Public Works building for the town of Rutherfordton, along with two new projects located at ICC, which include an equine facility, fire training classroom building and a burn building. The new ICC Applied Sciences and Workforce Development Building is nearing completion and, depending on the weather, could be open to students by the Spring Semester. Inspections on the Jelly Stone Camp in Golden Valley continue to move forward with a new General Store and a 10,000 square foot pool with anticipated open date of Spring, 2019.

Our inspectors are certainly staying busy with the Duke Energy meter base replacement program. They have contracted with Utility Partners to change out thousands of aging meter bases in the county and all of those need inspections on the service change.

Several of our inspectors are still attending classes, taking their State exams, and gaining certifications. Over the past year, Caleb Wilson has gained his Fire Level I certification; Ronnie Martin has gained his Plumbing Level I certification; Lee Pace has gained his Plumbing Level I and Mechanical Level I certifications; and Joey Turrubiarte has gained his Fire Level I, Building Level I, and Plumbing Level 3 certifications. Congratulations to these inspectors!

Last, but certainly not least…our department has moved to a new location at 270 N Toms St, Rutherfordton. It was certainly a lot of work moving but was well worth the effort!! Our customers love the convenient parking.

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. 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 2018:
4-H Program High Lights – Speedway to Healthy, Summer Fun and Teen Leadership

- We were fortunate to host Speedway to Healthy twice during 2018. Served fourth grade students both times, during two different school years.

- March 2018: Served 800 Fourth grade students from the county public, charter, and private schools; utilized 65 volunteers to build and manage the exhibit.

- November: Served 752 Fourth grade students from the county public and charter schools; utilized 60 volunteers to build and manage the exhibit.

- Each summer, we offer a series of workshops to engage youth in various activities during the summer. This summer we offered seventeen different classes, geared toward various ages and topics. Topics included Agriculture, STEM, Electricity, Entomology, Equine Science, Expressive Arts, and Cooking.

- Two Rutherford County members served as North Carolina State 4-H Officers for the 2017-18 year. Anthony Vagnozzi served as our State 4-H President while Joah Bickley served as our State 4-H Secretary. They represented North Carolina 4-H at numerous events across the state. Also, James Nelson served as the District 4-H Vice President for the Western part of North Carolina for 2017-18. Currently, we have two young ladies serving as District 4-H Officers Madison Breedlove is serving as the West District Vice President and Dixie Lovelace is serving as the West District Reporter. The West District includes the western-most 21 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Horticulture High Lights

- LLCA Garden club has 23 members in the 3rd-5th grade this year and meets weekly; they are gathered together via our EMGV Ramona Howell.

- Steps to Health Curriculum focusing on healthy eating and active living along with growing vegetables in the school garden was delivered to the LLCA garden club and to all of the 4th grade.

- The 2018 Spring Garden School Symposium put on by Rutherford Master Gardeners had over 100 people in attendance for the day of gardening and landscaping focused classes.

- 30 individuals participated in the Fall Gardening class series and 10 of the participants will be continuing into the Master Gardener training course in 2019.

- The Friends of Agriculture breakfasts were started in partnership with Farm Bureau and ICC and are monthly educational networking events for our agricultural community.
• The WNC Green Team trained 28 Landscape Professionals in the Certified Plant Professionals short course over the span of five weeks.
• The Rutherford Food Network steering committee met and determined two major projects to pursue and are making good progress on both of them, one of which is the establishment of a community garden.
• A partnership with the Polk County Agricultural Economic Development office has been made and the first NC Foothills Farm Tour has been planned for 2019.
• Over 30 home owners were visited and had their landscape issues diagnosed and solutions for their problems determined.
• 8 individuals who have recently started or are wanting to start farming in the near future worked through farm plans and enterprise decisions as well as marketing opportunities in the county

Livestock Hight Lights

• The 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.
• Hosted 4 different promotional events for May Beef Month and June Dairy Month. We set up our tent at Farmer’s markets and grocery stores and gave out samples of beef products and ice cream to consumers, as well as healthy recipes for preparing wholesome meals.
• Continued to assist local cattle producers in a value-added marketing program through the Mountain Cattle Alliance. We shipped 11 tractor trailer loads of cattle (~825 head) valued at $792,000. These calves were sold at premiums ranging from $100-$200/head. At an average of $150/head on 825 head of cattle, that is an additional $123,750 profits back in the pockets of these producers.
• Our staff participated in a Forage Research Demonstration Plot and worked with a local producer on seed-head suppression in Kentucky 31 Fescue. Fescue has some toxic properties found primarily in the seed-head that negatively affect livestock performance. With this demonstration plot, we were able to show producers how they can potentially manage around fescue toxicosis.
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

- County Manager Steve Garrison led a session on Government at the Leadership Rutherford event in December. Rutherfordton Town Manager Doug Barrick, Spindale’s Manager Scott Webber, and Forest City’s Manager John Condrey also led a panel discussion on local government leadership and ways that towns improve the quality of life for residents.
- Approved building reuse grant and an economic development incentive for SSD Designs.
- Adopted 2019 Schedule of Values, Standards, and Rules for the 2019 Reappraisal
- Approved resolution to disengage with Vaya Health and join Partners Behavioral Health Management. The Board received comments over the next five months and received and reviewed a Disengagement Plan, a Continuity of Service Plan, and a Distribution of Real Property Plan, along with a financial liability report. The Board then approved a resolution that would state their approval of the three required plans and the report, would approve a formal request to Partners’ Board to support the realignment, and authorize to the County Manager and others to complete necessary steps to affect the resolution and the LME/MCO disengagement and realignment. NC DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen notified the County on December 28, 2018 that the realignment with Partners Behavioral Health was approved effective July 1, 2019.
- Approved matching funds for the construction of a sewer line to the Henson Road property owned by Rutherford County.
- Accepted a gift from Foundation Forward which would be a Charters of Freedom interactive setting that would house replicas of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- Applied for 2018 Community Development Block Grant Neighborhood Revitalization Grant for up to $750,000 to assist individual low-moderate income homeowners to receive home repairs to improve conditions that pose a serious and immediate to the health and welfare of the neighborhood.
  - Amended mobile home park ordinance.
  - Referendum was approved to levy a one-quarter cent sales tax. The Board approved a resolution to begin collecting tax October 1, 2018.
  - Approved bid for paving Thermal Belt Rail Trail.
  - Approved changes to Animal Control Ordinance.
  - Approved DOT’s plan to make improvements to the six-point intersection at Six Points and intersection improvements at the Bostic Sunshine/Salem Church Road/Andrew Mills Road and Piney Mountain Church Road in Bostic.
• Formed a Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee.
• Approved resolution committing additional sales tax funds to critical public education capital facility needs.
• Received a solid waste fee study.
• Approved a resolution allowing the County Manager and County Attorney to negotiate and enter into a contract with Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy that would permit Thomas Jefferson to purchase at fair market value an approximate 40-acre tract subjected by a reversionary clause.
• The NCACC awarded Katie Doherty, Frankie Hamrick, and four fire departments (Lake Lure, Chimney Rock, Sandy Mush, and Bostic) with the Excellence in Innovation Award, which is presented each year by the NCACC.
• Three Commissioners (Bryan King, Alan Toney and Michael Benfield) were re-elected for an additional four-year term.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

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

- Ten (10) new 12 Lead Cardiac Monitors
- Received a $25,000 grant from RHI Legacy Foundation to purchase I-stat blood analyzers
- New medical equipment backpacks for all the ambulances
- Recently submitted a FEMA grant to purchase Lucas Devices (auto CPR machines) for all ambulances
- Purchased two new ambulances
- Upgraded to a new medical supply inventory control system
- Switched all radios to the Viper Network for dispatch and enhanced coverage

Programs
- EMS worked extensively with the Sheriff’s Department to create two tactical paramedic positions that work as part of the Sheriff’s SERT team for special operations. The tactical paramedics train and are on site to assist with any medical issues that might arise.
- EMS worked with Isothermal Community College to develop a bridge program between a paramedic certification and an Associate’s Degree. Several employees are currently pursuing their degrees because of the effort. EMS was also able to get approval for certification increases for those that have an Associate’s Degree or achieved National Registry.
- EMS updated medical protocols per the NC Office of EMS for the benefit of the community.
- EMS continues to strength and utilize the Peer Support Program for employees in an effort to improve mental wellness.
Staff Development
Staff was able to participate in several programs, certifications and promotions
- Supervisor Phillip Hill completed the EMS Management Institute.
- Supervisor Jennifer Mooney is currently enrolled in the EMS Management Institute and will complete the course in the spring.
- Community Paramedic Amanda Watson became a Certified Privacy Officer and Certified Documentation Specialist.
- Two paramedics volunteered to compete in the Regional Paramedic Competition in July and performed well.
- Kevin Waldrop was promoted to Shift Supervisor upon the retirement of Crystal Suttle.
- Eight (8) employees passed their Oral Boards and now function as full paramedics within our system.
- EMS was able to advance three employees to the positions of Field Training Officers. All three have created stable and growing environments on their shifts.

Events
- Participated in the active shooter training at East High School with Sheriff’s Department, and local police, fire, EMS, and rescue squads.
- EMS celebrated National EMS Week with different events for EMS Staff and their families and Terri Carswell was named Paramedic of the Year.
- Worked in conjunction with Polk EMS around the World Equestrian Games in September.
- Several staff had the privilege to attend the national EMS Today Conference in Charlotte.

Year End Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF CALL</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer/Interfacility/Palliative Care</td>
<td>1142</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sick Person</td>
<td>1124</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traffic Accident</td>
<td>1038</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breathing Problem</td>
<td>916</td>
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<tr>
<td>Falls</td>
<td>820</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chest Pain (Non-Traumatic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unconscious/Fainting</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Other Appropriate Choice</td>
<td>382</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convulsions/Seizure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart Problems/AICD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetic Problem</td>
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<td>Stroke/CVA</td>
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<td>Hemorrhage/Laceration</td>
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<td>Psychiatric Problem/Abnormal Behavior/Suicide Attempt</td>
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<td>Cardiac Arrest/Death</td>
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<td>Overdose/Poisoning/Ingestation</td>
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<td>Health Issue</td>
<td>Calls</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Abdominal Pain/Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
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<td>Traumatic Injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allergic Reaction/Stings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unknown Problem/Person Down</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back Pain (Non-Traumatic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnancy/Childbirth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
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<td>Choking</td>
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<td>Stab/Gunshot Wound/Penetrating Trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heat/Cold Exposure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Altered Mental Status</td>
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<td>Burns/Explosion</td>
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<td>Fire</td>
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<td>Eye Problem/Injury</td>
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<td>Carbon Monoxide/Hazmat/Inhalation/CBRN</td>
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<td>Electrocution/Lightning</td>
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<td>Boating Accident</td>
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<td>Industrial Accident/Inaccessible Incident/Other Entrapments</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CALLS</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,596</strong></td>
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**FINANCE**

The Finance Office had a busy 2018 year supporting the County Departments and Management. The Office received the Certificate of Achievement for Financial Excellence in Financial Reporting this summer for the 2017 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). This was the twenty-ninth 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 Mike Benfield, Commissioner Greg Lovelace, Vice Chairman Alan Toney and Commissioner Eddie Holland; left to right front row: Jeanette Bosgra, Wendy Hardin, Angela Ezell, Holly Keever, Paula Roach and Chairman Bryan King.

The 2018 annual audit has been completed for the County and the Tourism Development Authority--both reports are available on the Finance Office’s webpage. In 2018 the office also processed almost 17,000 invoices for the departments and payroll for over 650 employees during the year. The Office 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.
FIRE MARSHAL & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rutherford County Fire Marshal and Emergency Management has had a very eventful 2018. These are just a few of the events and tasks completed/performe this year.

- The retirement of Roger Hollifield and promotion of Frankie Hamrick as Director.
- John Greenway was hired as the Assistant Director.
- Major landslides in Chimney Rock.
- Several Hazardous Material related calls.
- Assisted other counties with resources.
- Three major floods due to a tropical storm or hurricanes and an above average winter storm, which also required the opening up of temporary emergency shelters.
- And much more.

This year several departments have come together and worked as one team helping better serve the County of Rutherford. Thank you for all the help throughout the year as it couldn’t have been done without teamwork.
HUMAN RESOURCES

2018 has continued to be a productive year for Human Resources.

The Board of Commissioners approved Phase 2 of the Pay and Class Study conducted by the Maps Group. Staff worked alongside the Finance Office to implement these changes effective December payroll. Each employee will also receive a 1% COLA increase in January. 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.

The Employee Portal was opened last year, and employees have adjusted to printing their check stubs and reviewing their employee demographics. ACA reporting continues to be a time consumer. The HR Specialist works diligently with the State to ensure compliance with deadlines and accuracy of reporting.

HR staff provided assistance in the hiring and training of the new Health Director.

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 following in 2018:
- Annual blood drive (exceeded goal)
- Flu clinic
- Mammogram Day
- Medicare Lunch and Learn
- 401k seminar(s)
- Training seminars
- Health & Wellness Fair
- Tenure Award Program

New Department Heads hired this year:
- Frankie Hamrick, promoted to Emergency Management Director and Fire Marshal.
- Vivian Douglas, Detention Administrator

Once again, the Human Resource Department was recognized by Cherrie Berry, NCDOL, at their annual safety banquet for 14 years of Safety.

2018 was a blessed year for HR Director Debra Conner. God blessed our family with the news that our first granddaughter would be born in March. This was a long awaited adoption process. Little did we know that God already had another plan in place and a sense of humor. My daughter found out she was pregnant in February. Needless to say, we have “Irish twins” and could not be more overjoyed. Isla Conley Edwards born March 2018 and Ivy Grace Edwards born October 2018. To add to the joy, my youngest daughter is expecting a little girl in April. My heart overflows.
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 2018.

- Welcomed Chad Doty, our new Network Administrator, to the IT team.
- Performed upgrades to the operating systems of our existing server infrastructure and deployed new servers.
- Upgraded server applications for departments.
- Implemented new backup and monitoring system for the virtual environments.
- Installed new domain controllers and decommissioned the older ones.
- Deployed new county website and trained users to administer their department pages.
- Assisted with investigating new software for our Public Safety departments.
- Assisted Finance Department with the rollout of the KeyNet Employee Portal.
- Deployed new antivirus and malware software with investigative capabilities.
- Expanded the storage on our virtual desktop environment to support the continued rollout of virtual desktops.
- Our desktop support team deployed virtual desktops in the following departments: Narcotics, Detectives and Social Services. The Social Services rollout is still in progress.
- Continued deployment of Lexmark printers to replace outdated printers across the county.
- Deployed iPads to the Sheriff’s Office to replace some of the laptops (MDTs). Those still using MDTs are using the Horizon Client to access their virtual desktops.
- Continued deploying Microsoft Office 2016 to departments.
- Upgraded our Mobile Device Management system.
- Installed new SAN for our 911 environment.
- Upgraded the sound system in the Commissioners Chamber.
- Prepared and auctioned several lots of decommissioned equipment on GovDeals.
- Attended the NCLGISA Conference in Wilmington, NC.
- Started hardening our network with multi-pathed connections to critical departments.
- Extended our network to cover new County buildings (Building Inspections and Public Defenders office)
- Added additional wireless access points at high traffic locations.
- Added additional cameras in several locations.
- Expanded our door entry system in several departments.
- Orchestrated the setup of a scanning station for DSS to archive Child Support and day sheet files. Configured and installed computer, scanner, and software. This station enabled DSS to archive 1940 Child Support case files, and over 6 months’ worth of files (62 folders) for day sheets.
- Coordinated with Maintenance the addition of new network drops for the newly deployed DSS equipment.
- Inventoried DSS computer equipment prior to the deployment of new equipment.
- Completed 1018 SysAid tickets.
- Partnered with PANGAEA to provide a temporary back-up/redundant fiber line to the Town of Lake Lure during the December winter storm, which knocked out their network for three days.

We hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Rutherford County Library System was awarded an LSTA Grant, which was the stepping stone that allowed us to hire Jessica Flores, Spanish Library Assistant, purchase more items in Spanish (fiction, non-fiction, audio books, etc.), host multiple bilingual library programs, and have a Spanish speaker available in each library at least once a week for our Spanish speaking patrons. Jessica has already been hard at work doing outreach to the local Hispanic community as well as translating as needed. The LSTA Grant is very competitive and we were lucky to be chosen to receive funding.

Rutherford County Library System was also awarded a grant from RHI Legacy Foundation Auxiliary. This grant allowed us to purchase 16 Fitness Kits to be distributed among County, Haynes, and Mountains Branch Libraries. These “Try It Before You Buy It” kits include some sort of exercise equipment (bicycle, stepper, weighted medicine balls, jump ropes, resistance bands, yoga, waking), a cookbook, user guide, and a DVD to go along with the type of kit. These kits are available for a 2-week check-out period.

Rutherford County Library partnered with Workout Anytime and they have provided free 2-week trial membership cards to include with every checkout.

The Friends of the Mountains Branch Library purchased a beautiful new digital information sign for the Mountains Branch Library. The sign can be changed to reflect current happenings at Mountains Branch Library on an ongoing basis. We thank the Friends for their continued support!

The 2018 Summer Reading Program was AWESOME! “Libraries Rock!” was our theme and we sure did Rock It!! We had over 300 children participate, over 40 adults participate, and 30 teens register for the FIRST ever Teen Summer Reading Program! We hope to increase these numbers next year! During Summer Reading, we hosted Maker Camps for children, teens, and adults. Each week the Maker Camp participants made something new using the materials found in our MakerSpace. The Adult Maker Camp went so well that the campers requested to keep on going. They now meet once a month to do MakerSpace activities.

The Storytime Kits that were introduced to Rutherford County Library System in 2017 were so successful, we have added 10 more kits to our inventory. These Storytime Kits are available at County, Haynes, and Mountains Branch Libraries and are appropriate for ages 1-5 years old. The kits include books, manipulatives, DVDs, and music CDs.

We are so excited to announce that Rutherford County Library is now a Passport Acceptance Facility! Kenneth, Stephanie, Brianna, and Maria are all trained and certified to help you with your passport needs. We are able to answer questions and assist with your new passport application.

Haynes Branch Library has hosted several travelling exhibits this year. Currently, “Rich in the Rare” is on display now until January 11, 2019 at Haynes. These traveling exhibits are made possible by North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – Division of Education & Outreach Traveling Exhibit Program. County Library
hosted “Unmasking Brain Injury” in June 2018. These masks and the stories behind them were a powerful reminder that not everyone shares the same life.

January 5, 2018 saw a water line break at County Library that destroyed about $6,000 worth of non-fiction books. We were very lucky to be able to replace the lost materials with new updated versions of most of the items lost. Special thanks to Maintenance for getting us up and running so quickly.

Rutherford County Library continues to partner with RC Reads. We hosted several tutor training sessions to ensure RC Reads has tutors on hand when new students apply. Remember, RC Reads is the newish Literacy Council working with any adult student who needs help with reading skills. There is no charge to the student. Please call April at 828-287-6117 if you would be interested in being a tutor, or if you know someone who might benefit from the program.

We would like to thank Macy McDaniel for thinking of Rutherford County Library System as she planned her Girl Scout Gold Award. Macy gifted us with three backpacks that contain everything you might want for an Adventure Pack...binoculars, pencils, tape measures, bird call identifiers, and more. These Adventure Packs are available for checkout.

We have had so many wonderful programs this year, I would like to highlight them all. But since it would require too much space, I will mention my favorites...the Titanic presentation, the Bag Piper, all the local authors we have had in to read from their own books, Healthy Cooking in the New Year, Harry Potter Party, and so much more!

PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING

- Planned and organized capital improvements for all county owned facilities.
- College/School/County Facilities Planning and budget coordination.
- Facilitated Rutherford County’s Community Project Grant program. Community Project Grants for FY2018-2019 were awarded by Commissioners and monitored by Planning Dept. Applicants have until June 30, 2019 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/Summer 2019.
- Prepared for and facilitated monthly Planning Commission Meetings. The Planning Commission successfully completed three Commissioner goals that were tasked to them:
  - Amended Rutherford County’s Mobile Home Park Ordinance to address Recreational Vehicles.
  - Reviewed the current Solar Development Ordinance to see if amendments are needed.
  - Reviewed the need for the County to adopt a Cell Tower Ordinance.
• Addressing and GIS functions were restructured into the Planning umbrella allowing us to better serve the public’s developmental needs. This transition welcomed the move of Katie Doherty and Janet Lovelace from the Revenue Dept. into Public Works & Planning Dept.

• Began process to update 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.

• Actively involved in:
  o Rutherford County’s Comprehensive Transportation Planning (CTP) process.
  o Isothermal Regional Bicycle Plan
  o Charlotte/Main Street Design Plan

• Involved in Rutherford County’s Transportation Advocacy Planning.
  o Construction of 221 By-pass around Rutherfordton Committed by NCDOT (ROW 2018)

• Event Venue Study

• Renaming of US 74A Bypass Hwy to College Avenue.

• Parking lot improvements at Honeysuckle Park in Cliffside.

• Overseeing the renovation of 270 N. Toms St. basement.

• Guaranteed energy savings performance contract review.

• Oversee surplus county property listings and sales.

• Paving project of the Thermal Belt Rail Trail – RHI Legacy Foundation awarded $4,250,000.00 for the construction of a 12–foot wide, 13.56-mile asphalt trail from Forrest Hunt Elementary to Gilkey.

• Awarded $30,348.45 from the Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund. Rutherford County was one of ten nationwide awardees. Funding will go towards trail amenities for the TBRT.

• Awarded $8,000.00 grant from RHI Legacy Foundation for the design to widen the Rutherford County trail system at Callahan Koon and Fairground and to connect trail to the TBRT.
• Received the LG-FCU 2018 Excellence in Innovation Award.

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. And multiple additional projects in the planning process.

This year, we welcome new employees: Christina Nix, Henry McKinney, Robbie Hewitt and Pam Mooney.

REGISTER OF DEEDS

The ROD office began offering eRecording April 24, 2018. This process of recording documents is simply another means of delivery for those companies or individuals that may be out of town and want a fast delivery. This process is handled through a 3rd party vendor and through our current software vendor. The “submitter” pays the 3rd party vendor and electronically submits their documents for recording. It is a very easy, efficient and cost-free process for our office. It has been very well received and our office was 81 out of 100 counties to offer this process. Since eRecording began, 20% of our recorded documents have been sent electronically. We are very happy to offer the process and expect that percentage to increase each year.

Plats are kept organized throughout the year and are always placed in jackets and hung up. There have been 267 plats recorded in the office.

The process of microfilm began in January 2017 and continues to be a backup to all recorded documents in the office. This has been a great process as it saves space and is much more cost effective.

There have been 193 notary public oaths administered through our office. These are now uploaded and sent electronically to the Secretary of State’s office.

There have been 175 certificates of Assumed Business Name recorded in the office so far this year. This is a good sign that small businesses are alive and well in the county and surrounding counties. The new laws regarding DBA’s (doing business as) allow a business owner to record the document in one county and it can cover all 100 counties or be specific to certain counties.
The ROD office maintains all vital records for the county. So far this year, the records processed and filed are:

- Birth Certificates - 350
- Death Certificates - 734
- Marriage Licenses Issued - 407

Throughout the year, older years of births, deaths and marriages are manually entered into the system by Tina and Patti during spare time. This will be an ongoing project until all vital records are in the system for all years. The old real estate records are being scanned by Megan in her spare time and this too will be an ongoing project until all land records are in the system.

The Register has attended (2) NCARD conferences, (3) department head meetings, (3) district meetings, and (3) workshops that covered records retention, managing public records and land records management.

It seems as if our year has flown by and we are happy to continue to keep the office well organized, cleaned and easily accessible to all. A big thank you to the staff for their continued hard work, dedication and eagerness to get the work done. You all are dependable and devoted to your job and that is very much appreciated!

**REVENUE DEPARTMENT**

It been a busy year in the Revenue/Tax Office. Some of the accomplishments this year are:

- Completing field review of all parcels for full measure and list reappraisal project.
- Collaboration with neighboring NCPTS tax software counties that also are completing reappraisal projects for 2019 such as Burke, Henderson, and Randolph.
- Completion and Approval of 2019 Schedule of Values for Reappraisal.
- Completion of first full year contracting with outside law firm, Kania Law, to handle the mortgage-style foreclosures. Since September 2017 we have collected $252,153.80 and our first sale is scheduled for January 31, 2019 at 11:00 am on the courthouse steps.
- Collections ended the Fiscal Year 2017-18 with a 97.21% collection rate.
- Due to new state legislation we began to implement the new Gap Bills for motor vehicles. Gap bills are meant to bill any gaps in motor vehicle registrations.
- For the first time in five years we have a full staff with no employment vacancies. The entire staff has been working so hard and the newest employees training is ongoing, but they are learning well.
- This is a lowlight and a highlight. GIS Coordinator, Katie Doherty, and Land Records Customer Service Rep, Janet Lovelace were moved from under the Revenue Department to the Planning Department. We miss them terribly. But it did give the opportunity to promote Lois Shuford to Land Records Supervisor and Kali Ellis to Land Records Customer Service Rep.
- The Revenue Department is continuing to raise money for The American Cancer Society and the Relay for Life by maintaining a book sale of slightly used books. This is done on their own time and through book donations by staff and taxpayers alike.
- During the 2018 NC Association of Assessing Officers Fall Conference in November, Sherry Lavender was voted in as Vice President elect for 2019 by her colleagues and peers.
The Rutherford County Senior Center received numerous grants this year. We received a grant for $129,460 from NCDOT ($59,097 more than 2017) which will allow the Senior Center to contract with Rutherford County Transit to continue providing transportation for seniors in Rutherford County to the Senior Center while also helping with shopping and field trips. We received a grant from RHI Legacy Foundation for $50,000 for Home Delivered Meals. We received $14,654 from United Way for Home Delivered Meals ($1,654 more than 2017). We also received $9,000 from Rutherford County Endowment, an affiliate of The Community Foundation of WNC ($2,800 more than 2017).

Senior Games: We had 112 participants in our Senior Games this year (which included Silver Arts and all sporting events.) Twenty (20) were first time participants. Twelve (12) seniors represented Rutherford County in Raleigh at the NC State Senior Games in September. Three (3) seniors were Gold medal winners in their division.

We received and were awarded 85 sets of vouchers from the Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program to eligible participants. These sets vouchers were valued at $24 a set and were to be used for at the Farmer’s Market in North Carolina.

We received $530 from the Duke Energy Grant, plus an extra $200 donation from Rutherford Heating and Air to use to purchase fans for 2018. We purchased and distributed 54 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 1,471 Medicare contacts made during the calendar year of 2017 with a total savings of $1,056,969 for Rutherford County Beneficiaries.

AARP Tax-Aid Foundation Program assisted with 1,003 during this years’ tax season.

We did something new this year to give back to the community. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. We held a “Rock in Recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness and Bake Sale”. We raised $465, all proceeds went to RHI Legacy-Be your own Beautiful.

We were excited to partner with Second Harvest Food Bank in July this year with the Commodity Supplement Food Program (CSFP). CSFP is a Federal program administered by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Food Distribution Division for NC residents. The food items are provided by USDA. The program provides a monthly package of food designed to supplement the nutritional needs of low-income senior citizens. This has been a very successful program. We started with distributing only 65 boxes in July, but we are now up to 150 boxes per month. From July to December 2018 we have distributed 594 boxes.

FY 2017-2018 meal statistics are as follows:
- **Home-Delivered:**
  - 40,000 meals served (4,422 more than previous year)
  - 165 Daily average meals served
254 Different participants were served throughout the year

Congregate Meals:
39,661 meals served
163 daily average meals served
718 different participants were served throughout the year

SHERIFF – DETENTION CENTER

- Rutherford County Sheriff’s Office in partnership with Safe Kids Rutherford County, Participated in Spindale Safety Night 2018.
- Trinity Christian School provided snacks and scriptures for the Sheriff’s Office.
- Rutherford County Sheriff’s Office was one of the community organizations which provided information to visitors of the Rutherford County Senior Center’s Health & Wellness Fair
- Rutherford County Sheriff’s Office hosted groups of Eighth graders from the Rutherford County School System, who participated in the McNair Connect Tour
  - Deputy Mark McCracken with K9 “ACE”, Deputy Wilmer Chavez-Perez, Cpl. Matt Owens and Lt. Leon Godlock had the pleasure of attending the “Hispanic Festival” at the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church.
  - With the assistance from numerous local, state and federal agencies the Sheriff’s Office was able to locate an abducted juvenile in Oklahoma.
  - “Shop with the Sheriff” impacted several families during this Christmas season. Sheriff Chris Francis and Rutherford County Sheriff’s Deputies were able to take several children on a shopping spree. Shop with the Sheriff was made possible through the generous donations from Salem United Methodist Church in Bostic, Wal-Mart and individuals.
911 COMMUNICATIONS

Each Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), 911 Center, must be in compliance with the State of North Carolina Administrative Code which provides rules and regulations for State agencies and committees. This was our first review/survey and we were so happy to receive a deficiency free survey (05/03/2018).

While out and about in the community we were welcomed by friends at Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy as Sgt. Quinn taught us the importance of 911.

Our very own Amy White brought home the Highest Score on the Telecommunicator Certification State Exam. We are very proud of Amy and the job she does for our callers.

Congratulations is extended to Sgt. Susan Lawter for receiving Region C – Telecommunicator of the year.

A standout from the past year was our visit from the NC911 Board Executive Director, Pokey Harris, who is known as the selfie queen.

Who can forget the Lip sync challenge this summer. Go team 911!

SOCIAL SERVICES

• In May 2018, Rutherford DSS was host to several focus groups conducted by the Center for the Support of Families, a vendor contracted by the State to develop a plan to reform the State supervision and accountability for the social services system in North Carolina. In addition to Rutherford County, participants represented McDowell, Jackson, Burke, Buncombe, and Haywood counties. There was a
total of six focus groups held over a two-day period, including educators, relative and kinship caregivers, child placing agencies, court personnel, service providers, and foster parents.

- In July 2018, DSS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, along with the State’s other 100 counties as required by House Bill 630. The intent of the agreement is to outline required performance measures for all programs administered by the Department of Social Services, with the exception of Medicaid. The county/agency could be held accountable in the event that goals are not met. There is an appeal process built into the agreement, and deficiencies; if any, will be addressed through a corrective action plan. Seventeen of the twenty-six measures were recently changed to growth measures, meaning that goals will be based on the prior year’s performance in each area. The agency continues to work with the State to validate the data that is used to measure performance and will not be held accountable for any deficiencies until July 2019. We feel confident that we will continue meeting all required performance standards.

- The agency partnered with Family Resources of Rutherford County to manage the second year of a three-year $100,000 State grant to administer the Community Response Program. This was done to reduce the overhead cost of the program so that more financial resources from the grant can be used for client services. Also, having the program physically away from DSS increases the likelihood that families will participate. The purpose of the program is to improve child welfare services through the use of 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. The CRP is completely voluntary and based on a collaborative effort between the family, DSS, Family Resources and other community partners.

- In October 2018, Rutherford County DSS received a $50,000 grant from the RHI Legacy Foundation to hire 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 goal is to increase the number of mothers involved with DSS who successfully complete service agreements to prevent their child from entering foster care or complete their foster care reunification plan so that the child can be returned to the home more timely than traditional service provision allows. The Peer Support Specialist is part of a unit called Project Safe Harbor, an in-house program designed to support adults with mental health and substance abuse issues who are being served by Child Protective Services or Foster Care. Two contracted licensed counselors facilitate support groups that include topics such as; life skills development, mental health management, relapse prevention, self-care, job seeking, and interviewing skills. They also assist social workers and individuals with needs assessments and referrals to the appropriate care and community resource providers.
In October 2018, DSS entered into a contract with Southwestern Child Development Commission to administer the Subsidized Child Care Program. This program is locally administered and uses State, Federal, and Smart Start funds to assist families with the cost of child care. Southwestern is a private, non-profit agency established in 1973 that provides an array of child care related services in the western counties of the State. Their staff is housed in the DSS office and consumers should see no difference in the provision of services. We believe that this relationship with Southwestern will enhance the subsidy services for the citizens of the county, and result in savings to the county as fewer local dollars will be needed to administer the program.

SOIL AND WATER

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 2019, the District was allocated $52,656 for Best Management Practices (BMP’s).

North Carolina Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP) is a voluntary state government program to:

- 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.

For the 2018 year, the District was allocated $35,000 to assist farmers in increasing water availability with one farm pond and one irrigation well.

North Carolina Drought Recovery Program

For the 2017-2018 budget year the District received $107,000 for Drought Relief. These funds were used to reseed pastures damaged during 2016 drought.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Partnering Agency

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) received 6 Contracts - $404,830 for the program year. 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 and wildlife habitat.

Rutherford Watershed Commission and staff conducted watershed dam inspections and maintenance on 19 flood control dams on Second Broad River and updated the Emergency Action Plans for all the watershed dams.

Education: Conservation Field Day was held for county 5th grade students on October 19, 2018 at Isothermal Community College. We hosted around 500 students and 25 teachers from 9 county schools. The students rotated around 9 stations for a conservation lesson about the NC Forest Service, Rutherford County wildlife from Chimney Rock State Park, Soils from Division of Soil & Water, Recycling from Rutherford County Solid Waste Department, Vermicomposting from Cooperative Extension, Livestock from ICC Ag Business Technology Department, Air quality from the Division of Air Quality, and Forestry Products from Gilkey Lumber Company.
Vermicomposting lesson – Rutherford County Cooperative Extension

Education and Outreach: The District Administration and Education Specialist worked with the Farm City Planning Committee to promote the Farm City Week program, meal, Poster Contest and school assemblies. A Farm City Tour and presentation was held on October 30, 2018 at the Beam Farm and at the Rutherford County Livestock Educational Facility. Invited guests included county officials, agriculture related businesses, board members, agriculture organizations, school official representatives, business owners and media. The Farm City Planning Committee sponsors a 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. Poster Certificates and Poster Awards were given at an assembly during Speedway to Healthy. The students were taught a lesson on the Importance of agriculture in our everyday life.

The District Administration and Education Specialist works with The Rutherford County Extension Office, Farm Service Agency, Farm Bureau and Agriculture volunteers for the Agriculture Literacy Program. This program promotes agriculture by selecting and purchasing agriculture related book to read to second grade students and donate the book to the school library to increase the agriculture section.

The District Education Specialist completed the Methods of Teaching Environmental Education Workshop. This workshop was beneficial to learn a variety of teaching techniques and instructional strategies. The Specialist presented Enviroscope lessons in 8th grade classrooms to teach water quality lesson showing human impact on our natural resources. The Rutherford District also participates in the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Contests by sponsoring District Poster Contests.

The Rutherford Soil & Water Conservation District sponsored Caden Francis to attend the 2018 Resource Conservation Workshop held June 24 – June 29, 2018 on the campus of North Carolina State University. The Resource Conservation Workshop is a weeklong intensive study and hands on conservation workshop teaching students about natural resources and their management in today’s environment. The students also learn what college life is about and they are exposed to professional groups for career opportunities. Subjects to be covered included Soil Characteristics, Soil Conservation, Wildlife and Fisheries Management, Forest Management, Nonagricultural Uses for Soils, Water Quality and Watershed Management.
SOLID WASTE

- Closing C/D side sections.

- Purchased new roll off truck.

- Purchased Bomag trash compactor.
• Bush hogging of closed landfill.

• Purchase and installation of new scale and paving.

• The Solid Waste department continues to manage budget cuts from the State dealing with tires, white good and electronics.
• Maintained all 10 Convenience Centers throughout the year.
• Pea Ridge convenience center is currently installing a recycle compactor using state grants.
• Installed bollards at the following centers Danieltown, Avondale and Colfax.

• Repair septic system at Bills Creek and Shiloh convenience centers.

• Installed new cylinder and repaired major hydraulic leak at Avondale and Danieltown.
• Implemented a portion of the capital improvement plan.
• New recycling coordinator, Alma Resendiz.

• Supported and participated in Pick It Up ROCO!
• Serving on the “Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee”.
• Shop staff maintained and repaired all landfill equipment, vehicles, and airport fuel trucks.
• Staff continued to perform all the mowing, bush hogging and grounds maintenance for the Rutherford County Airport.

TOURISM

Promote Tourism Master Plan:
The Tourism Master Plan was completed on August 31st, 2018. The plan will be communicated to the public in the near future during the implementation process. Timeline will be 1st quarter of 2019.

Tourism Plan Implementation and Funding:
A Tourism Implementation committee has been formed. (Town Managers/Mayors, Rebecca Segal from Hospital, Terry Hines from RHI Legacy, Brad Teague from School Systems and Steve Garrison). This body will serve as the committee to provide recommendations to the TDA Board for funding. The TDA Board has approved the initial resolution for funding this fiscal year. In the November 2018 TDA Board Meeting, the TDA voted to hire Destination by Design to partner with the TDA and Municipalities to coordinate the implementation and funding of the Tourism Master Plan.

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. The TDA will continue to work with the County Revenue and Finance Department to ensure all occupancy tax collections are recorded.

Implement TDA Marketing Plan:
The TDA continues to maximize the TDA Marketing Plan to grow Tourism in Rutherford County. The TDA plans to place more emphasis on digital marketing, which includes hosting a number of well-respected bloggers like Love Meg, and Isabella and Penelope (seen in pictures below). The TDA website, since the redesign last year, continues to outperform previous years. The TDA will continue to seek new and innovative marketing ideas for the future.

Develop Hospitality Program:
The TDA purchased and implemented A2D Tourism Awareness Program. The program is available to all county citizens on the TDA website. The program educates the community on Rutherford County Tourism assets and benefits.

Grow Community Programs/Events:
The TDA has approved and funded 15 grants for a total of $36,790 to date. There are two grants that have been approved for $4,000, but their events have not been completed yet or the funding has not been delivered yet. The TDA continues to review grant requests as they are submitted.

Maximize Rutherford County’s benefit to WEG:
The TDA partnered with Rutherford County communities and the Tryon International Equestrian Center, to gain the most economic impact from the World Equestrian Games. The TDA was able to secure the Vacation Guide on the TIEC property during WEG and through the end of 2019. The TDA also partnered with the Towns to credit funds for welcome banners and flagpole banners. The TDA purchased a billboard on HWY 74.
Complete Countywide Wayfinding Program:
Wayfinding signs were installed in Lake Lure, Spindale, Rutherfordton, Chimney Rock, and Forest City in August 2018, prior to the World Equestrian Games. The remaining town’s signs will be completed by June 30th, 2019.

Rutherford County Beautification – Keep Rutherford County Beautiful:
The TDA and Jenna Bailey are working together to enhance a Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Campaign. The Committee met on October 11th and developed three subcommittees: 1) Pick-up 2) Education and Marketing 3) Administration-Policy and Funding. The committees will be in charge of developing a program of work to Keep Rutherford County Beautiful. The TDA will continue to strive to help Keep Rutherford County Beautiful. The mascot for Keep Rutherford County Beautiful is Roxi the Raccoon. Unlike most raccoons, Roxi does not like digging in trash but she likes to clean it up. Roxi cares so much about Rutherford County, that she changed the spelling of her name to Roxi with an “I” because “I care and I can make a difference”. Roxi has participated in several events across the county and she will be at many more in the coming future.
TRANSIT

- Installation of a bus shelter at Transit office and the approval of 2 additional locations and orders for 2 additional shelters to be installed at ICC below the Student Center and on Main St at the Courthouse in Rutherfordton.
- Installation of Wi-Fi Jetpacks in all Transit vehicles to enhance our passenger’s use of Transit.
- Installation of integrated Wheelchair Lift safety gates in all wheelchair accessible vans and LTV’s to enhance the safety of our passengers during the boarding and unloading of passengers in wheelchairs.
- NC Tracks claims submitted for Medicaid transportation have been 100% payable. Plus, staff worked to verify that we can now bill Medicaid for different passengers even if they have the same address.
- Staff also worked to create a mechanism to track and gauge the amount of empty (no passengers on board) miles and hours in an effort to improve efficiency. Plus, all routes have been updated for efficiency in order to increase capacity and add passengers.
- Implemented a 2nd bus temporarily on the Deviated Fixed free route to run during the middle of the day during 1st six months of the year. The additional bus and the continuation of this service being provided for Free has continued to provide stronger ridership numbers for this service and has led us to move forward with a permanent implementation of a 2nd bus on the Deviated Fixed route to run all day. This will begin in early 2019.
- 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. We marketed this service on a very busy highway billboard.
  - Completed installation of secured access entry by security card for all exterior doors in the Transit facility.
  - Offered transportation services to all county residents to go grocery shopping 5 days/week free.
  - Operations Manager obtained Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity (P.A.S.S.) training certification. This allows Operations Manager to teach this training.
  - Transit drivers have driven 250,000 miles (6 months) accident/incident free. No at-fault accidents or incidents.
  - Was able to provide across the board pay raises to all drivers full and part time.
  - Received five (5) new Ford Transit vans and one (1) 25’ LTV through a NCDOT grant.
Year End Statistics:

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VETERAN SERVICES

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

- Staff assisted veterans with filing new claims and applying for increases on existing claims. This year alone, these efforts resulted in an additional $1.5 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.
- Resa Thompson became certified as a CVSO in April. Thank you Resa for working hard to better serve our veterans.
- In February, Congressman Patrick McHenry visited our office to discuss veteran issues. The Congressman was very interested in our veterans’ issues. We work very closely with his office in obtaining additional assistance for our veterans.
- We had our lobby chairs recovered. We think they look great!! Also, we got a new sign for our lobby to better guide veterans to the Vet Center and the VSO.
- Staff continue to assist 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 third year of our Community Partnership Program. Held a drawing for tickets to the Panthers/Dolphins game in August.
- Continued to have our monthly social for veterans (Coffee and Conversation). Each month we have a special guest to address needs and concerns that our veterans have.
- Staff attended required State training to keep certifications up to date.
- 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 2017-2018 partners.
- Resa attended the Leadership Training offered at ICC in October/November.
- In August Susan meet with Representatives from Senator Thom Tillis and Rep. Patrick McHenry’s offices to discuss veteran issues.
  - Also, in August, Susan attended a town hall meeting held at Isothermal Community College Foundation, hosted by Congressman Patrick McHenry. The Congressman met with some veterans to discuss issues that were of concern.
- 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 13th. Veterans were served a variety of yummy food and given a Christmas treat bag.