

WNCbridge.org
P.O. Box 1315
Arden, NC 28704
828.277.4815

Crossings

the newsletter of WNC Bridge Foundation

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

Changing, Learning, Growing



THE WORK CONTINUES

Working harder than ever amid the challenging circumstances facing Western North Carolina, non-profit organizations, volunteers, and WNC Bridge Foundation continue the vital work of connecting our communities to a healthier future to create lasting change through local partnerships.

In this issue, you will learn how improving food security for WNC residents is a driving force for many local agencies. Keep reading to discover how interactions between students and their

academic support specialist are unlocking potential in one Jackson County school.

We have changed, learned, and grown a lot since last spring, with each of us seeing the world from a new perspective. But as always, it's our shared value of helping our neighbors that continues to foster our region's resilience.

Sincerely,

SCOTT W. BUCHANAN
President & CEO, WNC Bridge Foundation

46% OF NC CHILDREN ARE FACING CHALLENGES THAT CAN IMPACT THEIR EDUCATION*

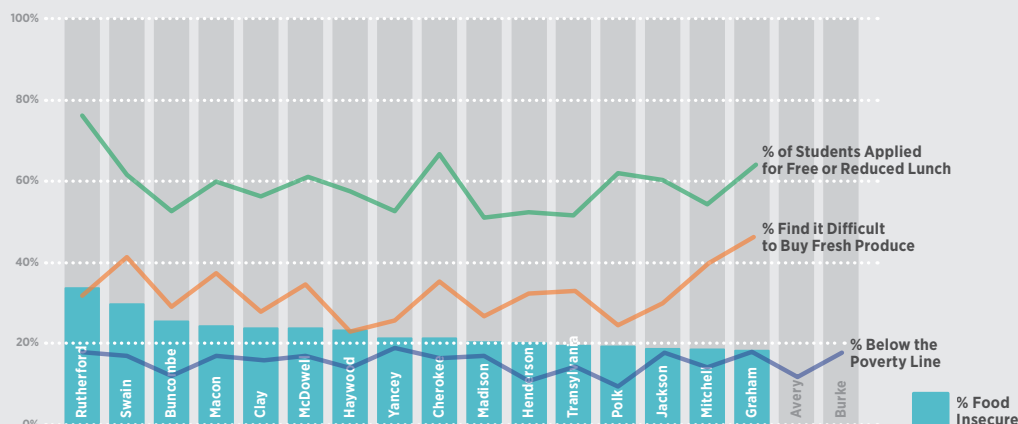


- LIVE IN LOW INCOME HOMES
- LACK PROPER NUTRITION
- FACE PERSONAL TRAUMA
- CONTEND WITH HOMELESSNESS
- COPE WITH HEALTH ISSUES

*COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS NORTH CAROLINA

FOOD SECURITY IN WNC

Food security in the region has been at dangerous levels for the past three consecutive years. Factors indicating food challenges range from students qualifying for free and reduced lunch at school to the number of regional residents who repeatedly find it difficult to buy fresh produce. Data condensed from the American Community Survey.



Protecting Seniors

MEALS ON WHEELS KEEPS ROLLING IN WNC

When COVID-19 hit, millions of older adults found themselves more vulnerable and in need of a way to access nutritious food safely. Meals on Wheels (MOW) and its volunteers rose to the challenge of helping keep older adults fed, safe, and in their homes. WNC Bridge Foundation supported several local chapters, including those in Buncombe and Haywood Counties.

“Thank you so much for providing consistent meals for my 89-year-old mother throughout the pandemic. Our family truly appreciates Meals on Wheels.”

—MOW BUNCOMBE

Meals on Wheels provides home-delivered, hot, nutritious lunchtime meals Monday-Friday to homebound seniors with limited financial, social, and physical resources. The organization serves as a safety net for this particularly vulnerable population, focusing on increasing food security, improving nutrition, alleviating isolation, and promoting independence.

Meals on Wheels of Asheville Buncombe County currently serves 450 homebound seniors a hot, nutritious meal each



BELINDA MOSS CONTINUED AS A VOLUNTEER WITH MOW BUNCOMBE COUNTY TO DELIVER MEALS DURING THE PANDEMIC.

COMPARED TO
LAST YEAR, MOW
BUNCOMBE IS SERVING
100 ADDITIONAL
SENIORS, NEARLY
17,600 MORE MEALS,
AND INCREASED
MEAL DELIVERY
ROUTES FROM
38 TO 40.

weekday. An IMPACT Grant from WNC Bridge Foundation allowed MOW Buncombe to purchase food to prepare 8,000 meals helping the organization meet the nutritional needs of homebound seniors in Buncombe County.

Haywood County Meals on Wheels is using its IMPACT Grant funding to quickly serve seniors who have recently been discharged from either the hospital, rehabilitation, nursing



**STEFFIE DUGINSKE (CENTER) WITH VOLUNTEERS
JUDY NELSON (LEFT) AND SUSAN BROOKS (RIGHT)**
MOW HAYWOOD COUNTY ARCHIVAL PHOTO

“Receiving a grant to support seniors leaving a clinical setting has allowed Haywood County Meals on Wheels to quickly help those who need meal support; allowing them to return to their own home to recover during a critical time and not have to worry about food.”

—STEFFIE DUGINSKE; PROGRAM SUPERVISOR
HAYWOOD COUNTY MEALS ON WHEELS

facility, or are receiving in-home aid due to immediate critical health challenges. “Many of our volunteers are seniors themselves with hearts that go on for miles, and volunteering for MOW is a way to stay engaged in their community,”

notes program supervisor, Steffie Duginske. “Staff, volunteers, and the community at large treat MOW recipients like family. They go above and beyond to take care of each person’s unique needs as much as possible.” For example,

MOW Haywood took special measures to help recipients and volunteers navigate the COVID-19 vaccination process. Seasonally, different community groups donate locally grown food from their gardens that get used in the meals. Recipients receive birthday cards and handmade flower bouquets from garden clubs, showing that for many, Meals on Wheels is more than just a meal.



**BUNCOMBE COUNTY MEALS ON WHEELS, VOLUNTEER JIM CARO
PREPARING TO MAKE FOOD DELIVERIES.** ARCHIVAL PHOTO

“The effects of malnutrition and isolation are a growing concern for our aging population. Our IMPACT Grant from WNC Bridge provided a CRITICAL resource of funding for a very vulnerable population of seniors, especially during the pandemic.”

—DEBBIE SPROUSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MOW BUNCOMBE

Strong, Local Food Systems

TRACTOR IS INCREASING ACCESS TO FRESH, HEALTHY FOOD

IN 2020 TRACTOR STAFF
WORKED WITH LOCAL
FARMERS TO MOVE
39 TONS OF PRODUCE
TO FOOD PANTRIES.

LEFT TO RIGHT: MICHAEL GRAF,
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, SIERRA
BRYANT, FARM MANAGER,
BECCA SMITH, SALES & PROGRAM
MANAGER, and ANDREW (DRU)
ZUCCHINO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ARCHIVAL PHOTO

TRACTOR Food & Farms, a rural food-hub located in Yancey County, is determined to increase local food access by uniting communities with their local producers. Their innovative programs address barriers that perpetuate food insecurity, providing local families access to the fresh, nutritious food produced in their communities while establishing an equitable local food economy for producers.

A 2020 IMPACT Grant from WNC Bridge Foundation has allowed TRACTOR to increase

their facility and distribution capacity. “A significant barrier for local families, food pantries, and producers is transportation and distribution logistics,” explains Dru Zucchini, Executive Director at TRACTOR. “With support from WNC Bridge Foundation, TRACTOR will expand their Clinical Referral and Healthy Harvest Programs to reach four additional WNC counties in 2021.” The four additional counties include Mitchell, Avery, Madison, and Buncombe counties. The Clinical Referral program provides



“To catch the eye of a foundation so dedicated and engaged to health and wellness in WNC has given us a new confidence in the work we are doing. Some of the most nutritious and delicious

fruits, vegetables, meats and food products are grown and made right here in WNC. I know that together we can open the door to make sure that every single person in WNC enjoys

access to healthy food while also creating viable, equitable markets for the farmers and producers on the ground.”

— DRU ZUCCHINO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TRACTOR FOOD & FARMS

IN 2020 TRACTOR'S CLINICAL REFERRAL PROGRAM SERVED 226 WNC FAMILIES EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY.



WNC families experiencing food insecurity or diet-related illness a bag of fresh, locally sourced produce once a week for 18 weeks. TRACTOR's Healthy Harvest Program continues to source and deliver local produce to food pantries across WNC.

The IMPACT Grant also allows TRACTOR to expand their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program within the same counties,

offering nutritious local food shares to people around WNC. "Working intimately with local producers within the thin margins of agriculture, flexibility is key when procuring local food for local families. Each farm, food pantry, and family is unique, and we pride ourselves on being a community resource for all when it comes to local agriculture and food's relationship to public health," Zucchini notes. "We would like

to thank WNC Bridge Foundation for their support, recognizing the importance of general operating funds that this grant provided. Food hubs like ours might feel burdened by the administration and implementation of grants, often restricting our valuable infrastructure to the community as a whole. TRACTOR Food & Farms serves a diverse set of community members and systems, and WNC Bridge Foundation made significant efforts to provide the flexibility needed to serve those folks."



PRODUCE FROM LOCAL FARMERS IS DISTRIBUTED TO FAMILIES AND FOOD PANTRIES IN WNC COUNTIES.

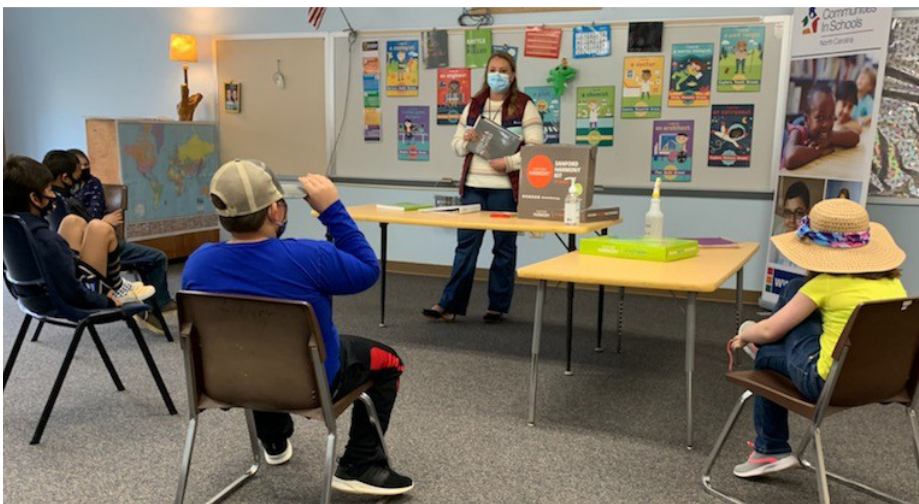
"My consumption of fruits and vegetables has increased. This has been wonderful for us. We thank you more than you will ever realize. My husband and I have a hard time with his health and money, so this has helped a lot."

—DEBORAH, CLINICAL REFERRAL PARTICIPANT

Unlocking Potential

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN JACKSON COUNTY

Communities In Schools of North Carolina in Jackson County's mission is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. In Jackson County, 1 in 4 children under the age of 18 lives in poverty. Challenges outside the classroom can often stand in the way of success inside the classroom. Communities In Schools (CIS) goes "all in" using a comprehensive approach tailored to individual student needs, situations, talents, and abilities.



CIS STUDENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST, MEGAN, WORKING WITH HER STUDENTS IN JACKSON COUNTY



MEGAN NEW, CIS STUDENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST

CIS's Student Support Specialist, Megan New, works directly inside Smokey Mountain Elementary School, serving students in grades K-8. By building one-on-one relationships and wrapping students in support and resources they need, her work empowers children to succeed at school and in life.

A 2020 IMPACT Grant from WNC Bridge Foundation positioned CIS to support 333 students at Smokey Mountain Elementary School in Whitter, NC. "The grant gave us the

"Ms. Megan gives a space to talk about anything I am feeling and helps me work towards my goals."

—MORGAN, 6TH GRADER AT SMOKEY MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY

ability to adapt our interventions to support students in-person and online," said Nevin Daryani, Director at CIS. "We also kept our work focused on three core areas; Reconnect, Reengage, and Recovery." This approach involved CIS reconnecting with students and parents who had

"Thanks to WNC Bridge, I was able to continue my work of building relationships with my students and strengthening their academic and social emotional growth. I see their progress firsthand and provide the additional support they need to continue to grow and achieve in life."

—MEGAN NEW, STUDENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST

not been in the school building for 7+ months, re-engaging their families to address immediate needs, and helping students recover by providing social emotional supports to address isolation and trauma experienced throughout the pandemic.

Building solid relationships while focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion practices with their students, families, schools, and partners makes Communities In

Schools a unique resource in Jackson County. Daryani explains, “We believe transformative relationships are vital to unlocking a student’s potential. We succeed by including in our strategies, ingraining in our culture, and reflecting on our behaviors, principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a result, we can break down primary and systemic barriers to create and sustain equitable outcomes.”



“The support received from WNC Bridge Foundation provided the opportunity for Communities In Schools of North Carolina in Jackson County to support students and families during the global pandemic. We were able to partner with our school community to secure basic needs, direct parents to community resources and provide crucial social emotional supports to both children and adults.”

—NEVIN DARYANI, DIRECTOR

 **WNC Bridge Foundation**
2123 Hendersonville Road, Arden, North Carolina 28704

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An Attainable Dream

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES FUND PROVIDES NEEDED ASSISTANCE



While most kids his age are out riding their bikes, Levi has for most of his young life had to use a gait or stroller to step outside—a result of his limited trunk mobility, which stems from living with spastic quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy. The idea of riding his very own bike someday seemed to be an unattainable dream for Levi.

Thanks to Levi's physical therapist, Brittany, reaching out to WNC Bridge Foundation, we were able to outfit the young boy with a brand-new trike through our *Children's Services Fund* program. This trike allows Levi the freedom to ride along with his friends and serves to assist in his ability to learn additional

“Levi loves to ride his tricycle. It allows him to be just like every other kid, while also building strength in his legs.”

—LAURA, LEVI'S MOM

skills such as balancing and lower limb and trunk strengthening. Levi can even ride to visit nearby family members now with the help of his new tricycle.

Through our donors' generosity to the *Children's Services Fund*, WNC Bridge Foundation can make dreams like Levi's a reality for children across our region. To learn more, visit WNCbridge.org.

Emerging Need Recalibrates Two Key Funds

CHILDREN'S SERVICES FUND INCREASES CAPACITY, ALLOWING YOU'RE SPECIAL FUND TO FOCUS ON ADULTS

WNC Bridge Foundation's *Children's Services Fund* recently experienced a renewed sense of purpose due to increased requests from area case managers and clinicians seeking to improve children's lives in Western North Carolina.

The *Children's Services Fund* supports children under the age of 18 who are born with or have developed neurological or developmental disorders and often have their own specific needs for specialized equipment, medical care, or home improvements.

Our *You're Special Fund* can now solely focus on helping adults remain safe and independent in their homes by funding medications, safety equipment, and other essentials not covered by another source.

2021 Drums & Dragons

OUR MOST INNOVATIVE RACE YET!

With four years of Drums & Dragons under our belt, WNC Bridge Foundation is offering various ways to get involved for our 5th Anniversary fundraiser. Options include participating virtually, joining in a hybrid/training format, or showing up as an in-person competitor later this summer.

This year, Drums & Dragons will be using a peer-to-peer fundraising site, Charity Footprints, to offer our participants the unique opportunity to race in a way that gives them joy and peace of mind.



VIRTUAL OPTION

Not yet feeling comfortable with crowds? No problem! Sign-up for our virtual-only event and use your fitness watch or a free, downloadable app to track your activities and win bragging rights and prizes!

Whether you prefer to paddle a boat or a board, run or walk a 5K, swim, or cycle, there is an activity waiting for you to raise funds to support our three participating non-profits!

An affordable (under \$50) registration donation allows virtual participants to move at their own pace over the six weeks leading up to race day. Those signing up for the LIVE race will be able to hone their paddling skills or work on fitness goals to prepare for the race.

BACK IN THE BOAT OPTION

Perhaps you are like 80% of the folks we surveyed who expect to be up for a back-in-the-boat competition by late August. Registration is just \$99 and includes both a seat-in-a-boat on race day and participation in all of the virtual activities.

Fundraising on all levels is highly encouraged, and awards will be given for Top Individual/Team Fundraiser, Greatest Team Spirit, and many more categories!

Don't have your own boat to paddle? No worries! Drums & Dragons organizers plan to partner with area parks and boat outfitters to offer reduced daily rental rates so paddlers will be able to compete at a reasonable cost.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

MONDAY, JUNE 7

Registration for 2021 Drums & Dragons opens! Peer-to-Peer Fundraising, Individual & Team Registration and Formation Begins!

MONDAY, JULY 12

Virtual & Hybrid 6-week event and training opportunity commences (runs until 8/23)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 28

LIVE racing at Lake Julian Park in Arden!

100% OF PROCEEDS RAISED WILL GO TO:

ST. GERARD HOUSE to provide evidence-based treatment for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other behavioral health needs

IRENE WORTHAM CENTER to assist children and adults with developmental disabilities

MOUNTAINCARE to provide respite for Adult Caregivers who look after their loved ones

BECOME A SPONSOR

For questions about the event or how to become a sponsor with monetary or in-kind donations visit DRUMSANDDRAGONS.ORG

OR contact **Angelica Archer**, WNC Bridge Foundation

PHONE: 828.777.2827

EMAIL: aarcher@wncbridge.org

House With a Heart

RATHBUN HOUSE PROVIDES COMFORT TO CAREGIVERS

Since its opening in 1994, the Rathbun House has provided a homelike setting for out-of-town families and caregivers accompanying a patient who is receiving medical care or treatment at an Asheville area healthcare facility. Rathbun is the only hospitality house in Western North Carolina and is a non-profit establishment that operates on love, support, comfort, volunteerism, and monetary gifts. Whether you live

in Franklin, NC, or Austin, TX, people from across the country have and continue to benefit from this "House with a Heart."

In February of 2019, WNC Bridge Foundation assumed ownership and stewardship of Rathbun House. The Foundation is responsible for supporting the house's annual operations and upkeep and relies heavily on donors' generosity to help maintain this special community treasure. 100% of funds donated to Rathbun House go toward paying for its round-the-clock staff, utilities, upkeep, and day-to-day operational needs.

For more than 26 years, Rathbun House has provided lodging to guests of all ages and demographics. In 2019 alone, 3,744 guests were provided a safe place to stay. Of those, 115 were the parents



of infants being treated at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Mission Hospital.

NICU babies are in an especially precarious state. Many are born prematurely or confront significant health challenges. Parents often need to stay longer than the free, 14-day lodging provided to them. When that happens, families can remain for a subsidized rate far below that of a typical hotel room cost. Gifts to Rathbun House from its generous donors are crucial to assisting in the ongoing support of this beloved House with a Heart.

VIEW A SHORT FILM
ABOUT RATHBUN HOUSE
AND ITS MISSION AT
RATHBUNHOUSE.ORG



Retail News

INCREASED VOLUME OF DONATIONS AND CLIENTS PROVIDE IMPORTANT FUNDING

WNC Bridge's Estate Sales & Services and Thrift Stores continue to be a significant source of funding, even with COVID-19 limitations. The success of retail operations is due to a core group of dedicated volunteers and staff, as well as customers and supporters.



ESTATE SALE STAFF PAUL ADAMS AND LINDA FRANKL READY TO START AN IN-HOME PACK-UP

ROBUST ESTATE SALES

As folks move forward after a period of putting plans on hold, Estate Sale volume is approaching pre-COVID-19 numbers. Staff and volunteers are busier than ever with in-home pack-ups, moving items into the showroom, cleaning and arranging furniture, generating client inventories, greeting customers on sales days, and running the cash registers.

INCREASE IN THRIFT STORE DONATIONS

Events of the past year have spurred folks to turn their attention to their homes—sorting through closets, attics, and garages. As a result, our thrift stores have seen a significant increase in donations. It's all-hands-on-deck for staff and volunteers who are all pitching in to move, sort, clean, price, and stock items on shelves.

Increased donations definitely offer a shopping bonanza to our customers, and allows us to turn donations into treasures that turn into cash to support our causes.



VOLUNTEER MITCHELL HARTIS KEEPS ON TOP OF THRIFT STORE DONATIONS.

VOLUNTEERS ARE OUR CORE

Volunteers make our mission possible. Many have been with WNC Bridge Foundation for years. Now is a particularly happy time as we welcome back those members of our volunteer family who are returning after being vaccinated.

YOUR PURCHASE POWER

100% of proceeds from our retail operations support the Foundation's five community fundraising initiatives: *WNC Greatest Needs Fund, You're Special Fund, Children's Services Fund, Health Scholarships, and Rathbun House.*

FOUR WAYS TO SUPPORT RETAIL OPERATIONS

CONSIDER ESTATE SALE SERVICES

Whether you are downsizing, moving, settling an estate, or eliminating clutter, Estate Sales & Services can ease stress of home transitions.

Call 828.575.2509 to arrange a free in-home or contact-free consultation.

SHOP THE ESTATE SALES

Each bi-weekly sale is different, offering something for every taste and budget.

THURSDAY-SATURDAY | 10am-4pm

Go to WNCbridge.org for sale information and to sign up for sale notifications.

SUPPORT OUR THRIFT STORES

SHOP! Housewares, furniture, clothing, accessories, and more are restocked daily and bargain-priced.

Biltmore | 75 FAIRVIEW ROAD

Monday-Saturday | 10am-4pm

Weaverville | 285 NORTH MAIN ST.

Tuesday-Saturday | 10am-4pm

DONATE! Accepting gently-used household items and furniture at each thrift store's drop-off areas.

Donation hours Monday-Friday, 10-4

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

WNC Bridge Thrift Stores and Estate Sales are upbeat, positive environments to volunteer.

Call 828.575.2509 or go to the Volunteer link at WNCbridge.org.

Special June Estate Sale

We again team up with the Asheville Symphony Guild for a three-day joint sale June 3-5. Items donated by Guild supporters will benefit the Guild, sold alongside Estate Sale items benefiting the Foundation. This collaboration has been financially beneficial for both the Foundation and the Guild.



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SPRING/SUMMER 2021

CONTACT US

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THRIFT STORES

Biltmore Village

75 Fairview Road
Asheville, North Carolina 28803

Weaverville

285 North Main Street
Weaverville, North Carolina 28787

**Thrift store and donation
information** 828.575.2509

ESTATE SALES & SERVICES

Information 828.575.2509

In-home consultations extension 100

Email shop@WNCbridge.org

Volunteer with Estate Sales and Thrift Stores

Get information at WNCbridge.org **or call**
828.274.8206

*WNC Bridge Thrift Stores and Estate Sales
support the mission of WNC Bridge Foundation.*

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