

KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION: Bringing deep technical, evidence-based knowledge and practical experience to address local Cherokee County challenges with research-based solutions.

16,000+

RESIDENT
TOUCHPOINTS

6,441

VOLUNTEER HOURS

\$224,083

VOLUNTEER VALUE
(\$34.79/HR)

2,995

CLIENT CONTACTS
VIA VOLUNTEERS

32

NEW JOB SKILLS
ACQUIRED

1. AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

DOUGLAS CLEMENT, CED & EXTENSION AGENT

Wildfire Mitigation & WUI Protection

Protecting rural communities in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) from wildfire threats:

- **43 Residents Trained:** Educational sessions on Firescape and Firewise structural principles.
- **36 Home Assessments:** On-site risk evaluations conducted to safeguard properties.
- **50+ Homes Fortified:** Protecting over 100 residents in high-risk zones.
- **2 Recognized Communities:** Achieved national Firewise USA® recognition with Emergency Management & NC Forest Service.

Agricultural Production & Preparedness

Strengthening local farm viability, safety, and operational resilience:

- **Livestock & Food Security:** Educated 62 residents on backyard poultry, livestock, and bees; 42 attended animal purchasing workshops.
- **Producer Financials:** Guided 44 farm operators in marketing, financial planning, and management practices.
- **Biosecurity & Disaster Resilience:** Trained 31 producers on disaster mitigation (3 community resilience plans created) & 52 in biosecurity.

2. EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER (EMGV) PROGRAM REVITALIZATION & OUTREACH

Program Revitalization & Community Horticulture Leadership

Re-established the EMGV Advisory Committee after a 2-year hiatus, driving substantial community investment:

- **Volunteer Roster:** 8 Certified Master Gardeners and 15 new interns active in 2025.
- **1,600+ Volunteer Hours:** Contributed over \$25,397 in direct economic value to Cherokee County.
- **Community Projects:** Developed Native Plant Garden at Konahete Park, therapeutic gardens/activities at local nursing homes, and launched a Community Speakers Bureau.
- **Horticulture Education:** Hosted workshops in Pawpaw Tree Cultivation (37 attendees), Tree Identification (22), Home Fruit Production (18), and Shiitake Mushroom Cultivation.
- **2026 Pipeline:** Enrolled 22 residents for the 2026 Master Gardener Initial Certification series and planned the 2026 Pro Garden Series.

3. 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

SHANNON COLEMAN, 4-H AGENT

School Enrichment Expansion

Adapted to county elementary school restructuring to deliver hands-on STEM curriculum:

- **355 Youth Reached:** Integrated hands-on 4-H curriculum into 17 restructured classrooms.
- **Curriculum Units:** Provided Embryology (10 classes), Winged Wonders (10), Bees (6), Soil Solutions (2), Vermicomposting (2), and Astronomy (3).
- **Zero Cost to Schools:** All materials, equipment, and aligned standards provided free to teachers.

Active 4-H Clubs & Achievements

Four vibrant, volunteer-led community clubs meeting at the Extension Annex:

- **4-H Horse Club:** Sent 2 teams to State Horse Bowl (finished 4th & 6th); 1 senior competing on NC State Team.
- **4-H Cooking, Crafting & Community:** 7 youth attended State Presentations/Congress (2 Gold, 1 Bronze medals; \$3,000 scholarship awarded).
- **Other Active Clubs:** Bunnies, Bovines, Bees & Birds; Cherokee on the Fly (Outdoor Adventure & Fishing).

4. FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES (FCS) & LOCAL
FOODSMARLANA BAKER, FCS AGENT & LOCAL FOODS
COORDINATOR

Emergency Relief & Nutrition Security

- **Venison Donation Program:** Expanded across Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties. Donated 17 deer yielding 652 lbs of ground meat, providing **2,608 nutritious meals** across 8 food pantries.
- **Hurricane Helene Kitchen Kit Drive:** Assembled and distributed 112 complete kitchen tool kits across 6 WNC disaster-affected counties funded by Cherokee Clay Food Alliance.
- **Community Food Initiative (SNAP Pause):** Directed county-wide emergency food response, securing \$23,000 (\$12,500 Nantahala Health Foundation grant) for 6 pantries and collecting 1,600+ lbs of food. Established 2 new pantries.
- **3rd Annual Extension Food Drive:** Collected 1,938 items (1,506 lbs) serving 2,507 food-insecure individuals.

Local Food Economy & Youth Wellness

- **Local Growers' Farmstand:** Attended 89 market days across 4 area markets. Paid **\$7,378 directly to 40 local small growers**, selling 177 dozen eggs and 12,000+ lbs of fresh local produce (Cherokee Clay Food Alliance).
- **Local Food Resource Guide:** Published digital/print guide accessed **5,000+ times** in 90 days; embedded on the main Cherokee County Government website.
- **Student Weekend Wellness (SWWP):** Following Hurricane Helene warehouse losses, onboarded 6 schools into MANNA Pack program, securing weekend meals for 125 vulnerable students.

5. DIGITAL SKILLS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DANNY FERREIRA, DIGITAL SKILLS AGENT

Accessibility & Assistive Technology

Delivered tailored 1-on-1 digital literacy coaching yielding transformative outcomes:

- **Workforce Independence:** Trained a blind resident in NVDA/JAWS screen readers, enabling her to secure paid freelance work evaluating accessibility tools and live independently.
- **Historical Preservation:** Coached a local senior historian in Google Workspace, enabling independent public historical programming.
- **1-on-1 Consultations:** Delivered 180 individual technical assistance sessions county-wide.

Senior Tech & Community Outreach

Addressing digital division in Cherokee County (30%+ population over age 60):

- **Senior Planet Curriculum:** Licensed AARP/OATS curriculum; taught multi-week courses (Streaming & Smart TVs, Healthcare, Digital Safety) across libraries and senior centers.
- **Community Outreach:** Hosted 95 educational events at 14 sites reaching 284 participants. Promoted NC Digital Literacy Standards across 100+ attendees.
- **Seed Surplus Recovery:** Partnered with Master Gardeners to secure \$1,500 retail seed donation for 4 local seed banks.

SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER ECONOMIC IMPACT & REACH

2025 REPORTING YEAR

Program Area / Employee Lead	Activity Focus	Volunteer Hours	Direct Contacts	Value (\$34.79/hr)
Marlana Baker (FCS / Local Foods)	Extension Community Assoc. & Food/Nutrition	3,447 hrs	1,874	\$119,888
Shannon Coleman (4-H Youth)	4-H Clubs, Enrichment & Volunteer Leadership	1,530 hrs	880	\$53,229
Doug Clement (Ag / CED)	Master Gardeners, Advisory, Forestry, Ag	1,450 hrs	178	\$50,446
Danny Ferreira (Digital Skills)	Community Digital Development	5 hrs	3	\$174
TOTAL COUNTY EXTENSION VOLUNTEER IMPACT		6,441 hrs	2,995	\$224,083

Streamlined Direct Service Via "Agent Assist": Over 800 direct technical responses via go.ncsu.edu/agentassist

Digital Reach: 10,400+ Web Views | 4,150 Newsletter Readers