



Eastern Carolina Council • P0 Box 1717 • 233 Middle St. Ste. 300 • New Bern, NC 28563
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SUMMER NEWSLETTER

JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

ECC MISSION STATEMENT

The Eastern Carolina Council's mission is to improve the region's quality of life by providing human, planning and economic development services to local governments and area residents by leveraging resources and collaborating regionally.

ECC VISION STATEMENT

Eastern Carolina Council's vision is to be the recognized resource leading and engaging local governments, citizens and stakeholders in an innovative collaborative manner to meet changing needs while enhancing and promoting a vibrant region.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

DATE	EVENT/MEETING	TIME
7/28/2026	DERPO-TAV	10:00 AM
7/28/2026	Onslow Co CIT officers training on Senior Issues, Dementia, and Caregiver Crisis	
August 11th - 12th, 2026	Grant Writing Workshop	9:00 AM - 4:00 PM 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM

August 19th - 20th, 2026	State Ombudsman Association Meeting & State Training	
September	National Senior Center Month	
9/10/2026	Executive Committee Board	6:30 PM

AREA AGENCY on AGING (AAA)

Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) were formally established in 1973 as part of the reauthorization of the federal Older Americans Act.

They were created to serve as regional organizations dedicated to helping older adults maintain their independence and dignity at home.

Area Agency's on Aging are designated by the North Carolina Division of Aging to address the needs and concerns of all older people at the regional and local levels.

The foundational role of AAAs is to provide local information and referral/assistance to help consumers find aging and other home and community-based services.

AAAs help clients match services and solutions to their individual needs, enabling consumers to age in place with increased health, safety, and independence.

AAA Mission Statement:

The Eastern Carolina Council Area Agency on Aging will advocate, plan, develop, and support a comprehensive system of quality services designed to attain and preserve quality of life, health, and independence of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers.

AAA Vision Statement:

Older adults and their families will be valued and supported by there community.

Operation Fan Heat Relief

Operation Fan Heat Relief is a seasonal assistance program designed to help older adults and individuals with disabilities remain safe and healthy during North Carolina's hottest summer months. Through partnerships with utility providers and the North Carolina Division of Aging, the program provides fans and, when eligible, air conditioners to individuals whose health and well-being may be at risk due to extreme heat. The program serves adults aged 60 and older, as well as individuals with disabilities, who have limited financial resources and living conditions that make them especially vulnerable during periods of high temperatures. By providing access to cooling equipment, Operation Fan Heat Relief helps reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses, enhances comfort and safety, and supports individuals in maintaining a healthier home environment throughout the summer season. In addition to improving quality of life, the program

helps older adults and individuals with disabilities remain independent in their homes while reducing the potential health risks associated with prolonged exposure to extreme heat.

For further information and eligibility requirements, contact your local Senior Center.

National Elder Abuse Awareness Day - June 15th, 2026

Each year, June 15th is recognized as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), and in North Carolina, the period from Mother's Day through Father's Day is designated as Elder Abuse Awareness Month. In observance of these initiatives, Eastern Carolina Council Area Agency on Aging (ECCAAA) staff participated in a variety of outreach activities to educate residents, community members, and professionals about elder abuse prevention and available resources. Activities included Elder Abuse Awareness walks, health fairs, a Fraud Symposium, and community presentations throughout the region. Staff distributed educational materials at events in Carteret, Craven, Greene, Jones, and Wayne Counties and participated in awareness walks in New Bern and Havelock cities and Duplin, Greene and Lenoir Counties. Walk participants learned about elder abuse through signs displaying facts, statistics, and prevention messages along designated routes.

ECCAAA staff also participated in a Fraud Symposium in Wayne County that focused on common scams targeting older adults, warning signs of financial exploitation, and strategies for protecting personal and financial information.

Additionally, Angelia Pridgen, Lead Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman, delivered educational presentations in Greene, Duplin, Onslow, and Wayne Counties on recognizing, preventing, and reporting elder abuse. Through these outreach efforts, ECCAAA continues to raise awareness, promote prevention, and advocate for the safety, dignity, and well-being of older adults throughout the region.

Bingocize Evidence-Based Programming

Bingocize combines exercise and health education with the familiar and engaging game of Bingo. The program is designed to help older adults improve physical fitness, reduce fall risks, increase health knowledge, and encourage social engagement in a fun and interactive setting. Participants play Bingo while also stretching, completing balance activities, and participating in range-of-motion exercises. Participants also receive education on nutrition, fall prevention, medication safety, physical activity, and chronic disease management.

ECCAAA would like to highlight Onslow County Senior Services for their commitment to providing such a valuable program. Onslow County Senior Services launched its Bingocize program in July 2021 and has successfully completed twelve classes serving more than three hundred participants. The program continues to grow and thrive within the community. Lisa Railing-Mobley, one of the program's four instructors, brings exceptional enthusiasm, positivity, and energy to each class, helping create a welcoming and motivating environment for participants. Today, Onslow County's Bingocize program has a waiting list, highlighting its strong community interest and continued success. Bingocize is currently offered in Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Greene, and Onslow County.

For further information on Bingocize programming, please contact your local senior center.

Provider Highlights

Duplin County Senior Services Breakfast Program,
More Than a Meal, A Lifeline

The Duplin County Senior Center Breakfast Program has become one of the center's most meaningful initiatives, providing older adults with nutritious breakfast options while fostering connection, community, and support. Originally launched with funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the program continues to make a lasting impact on the lives of local seniors. In August 2023, the senior center began offering breakfast items to seniors through ARPA funding made available following the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, the funding supported grocery pickup events and the distribution of quick breakfast items alongside fresh produce. As staff listened to seniors' needs, they discovered that access to breakfast was a growing concern for many participants. "Many seniors living on fixed incomes face difficult choices between food and other essential expenses," explained Melisa Brown, Senior Center Director. "As grocery costs continue to rise, nutritious breakfast foods such as fresh fruit and healthy staples have become increasingly difficult for some seniors to afford." The need became even more apparent when congregate nutrition sites were consolidated. Many seniors relied on transportation services to attend the center and often arrived without having eaten breakfast.

To better understand the community's needs, the center conducted surveys and gathered feedback from participants. Seniors expressed a desire for breakfast foods during the week and on weekends, leading staff to carefully research vendors and pricing to maximize the impact of available funding. Since its launch, the breakfast program has become about much more than food. "The socialization aspect and the friendships that have developed during the breakfast opportunity happen with coffee and conversations, which is priceless," Melisa shared.

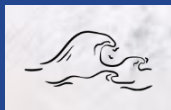
What begins with a cup of coffee and a simple meal often grows into meaningful relationships. Some seniors now meet outside of senior center for hours for activities and outings together. One particularly inspiring example is a group of widowed participants who found renewed purpose through friendships formed during breakfast gatherings and now volunteer regularly at the center. The program has also introduced participants to healthier food options. One senior shared that she had never tried some of the whole-grain products, cereals, and yogurt varieties offered through the program. For staff, some of the most rewarding moments are seeing seniors step off transportation vans and head straight toward the breakfast area, smiling as they enjoy coffee, juice, fruit, and conversation.

Although ARPA funding has ended, today the program continues thanks to the dedication of staff, volunteers, community supporters, and even the seniors themselves. As grant funds dwindled, participants often contributed items such as bananas, orange juice, pastries, and bagels to help keep the breakfast table stocked. "Knowing the difference, it makes in their lives motivated us to keep going," Melisa said. Maintaining the program has required creativity and persistence. While the variety of offerings has been scaled back since its early days, breakfast has remained available every morning since 2023. Staff members coordinate deliveries, purchases, set up, and clean up each day to ensure seniors continue to have access to a welcoming start to their morning.

The future of the program looks promising. The center recently received a \$7,800 grant through the ECU Duplin Health Community Benefit Grant Program for its initiative, Rise & Thrive: Supporting Senior Wellness, One Breakfast at a Time. The funding will help continue efforts to reduce food insecurity and promote wellness among older adults.

Looking ahead, the director hopes breakfast services may one day receive sustainable funding similar to congregate meal programs, allowing even more seniors, including homebound older adults, to benefit from nutritious breakfast options and fresh produce. Melisa Brown's message to the community is equally powerful: "The investment in this program is more than just purchasing breakfast items. Providing a quick, nutritious breakfast in addition to the daily lunch service helps reduce food insecurity and eases the physical and financial strain experienced by participants. Together, we are supporting overall wellness, encouraging consistent program participation, and promoting a healthier, more stable start to each day." For the seniors who attend, the breakfast program represents something even deeper. "It is a lifeline for a forgotten generation. It is more

than cereal, juice, coffee, and toast, it is building community and connections, one conversation at a time."



Ombudsman

YOUR VOICE-YOUR ADVOCATE-YOUR OMBUDSMAN

The North Carolina Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program's mission is to protect residents' rights and improve the quality of care and life for residents in long term care facilities.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program's mandated responsibilities from the Older Americans Act are to:

- Advocate for Residents
- Investigate Concerns
- Mediate Disputes
- Monitor Long Term Care Facilities
- Provide Information about Long Term Care
- Promote Elder Abuse Awareness
- Educate the Public
- Manage the Community Advisory Committee Volunteers



ECCEAAA 2026 SARA JO JACKSON AWARD

Each year, ECCEAAA presents the Sara Jo Jackson Award to a Community Advisory Committee member who demonstrates exceptional dedication to residents of long-term care facilities and the community. On April 24, 2026, ECCEAAA proudly recognized Mr. Malcolm Batts of the Duplin Adult Care Community Advisory Committee as the 2026 recipient. Since 2014, Mr. Batts has served Duplin County with compassion, integrity, and unwavering commitment. His outstanding advocacy and service have made a lasting impact on residents and the community, exemplifying the spirit of the Sara Jo Jackson Award. Congratulations to Mr. Batts on this well-deserved recognition and for his years of service in advocating for individuals in long-term care settings.

Volunteer Opportunities

The Ombudsman program is currently seeking volunteers to join the Community Advisory Committee. CACs are the backbone of our Long-Term Care Ombudsman program. Volunteers serve the residents of long-term care facilities within each county. The committees hold legislative authority to monitor the Residents' Bill of Rights, promote community involvement and cooperation with the homes, provide public education pertaining to long term care issues, and assist residents in grievance resolution.

CAC members work to ensure quality care for people residing in long-term care facilities.

If you would like the ECCAAA Ombudsman to provide a presentation on CAC volunteerism for an organization or in your community, contact an Ombudsman listed below:

Angelia Pridgen
252-638-3185 ext. 3007
apridgen@eccog.org

Lauren Latshaw
252-638-3185 ext. 3010
llatshaw@eccog.org



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-CEDS

One of the functions that we carry out as part of that role is to create the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region.

[2025 Annual Update to the 2023-2027 CEDS](#)

[2025 RESOLUTION to the 2023-2027 CEDS](#)

As the Economic Development District (EDD), ECC can also assist communities and organizations in applying for EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs.

ECC Serves as the Local Development District (LDD) for Our 9-County Region for the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

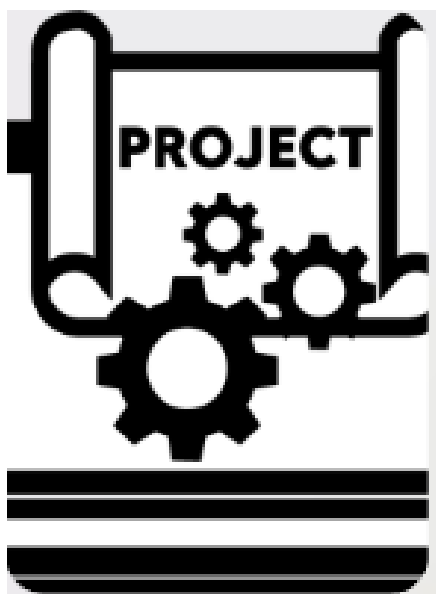
The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC), is an economic development partnership agency of the federal government and seven state governments.

ECC is the designated Local Development District (LDD) representative for the Southeastern Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) and assists local governments apply for SCRC funds.

For more information about economic development, U.S. Economic Development Administration (US EDA), or Southeastern Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC), contact ECC Interim Executive Director, David Rosado at 252-638-3185, ext. 3013



LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES



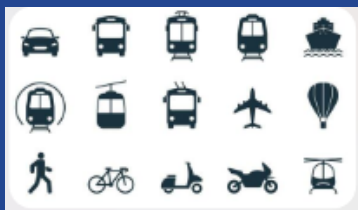
Community Planning Services

ECC's Planning Department offers a variety of land use planning services in the nine-county region. Planning staff advises local governments on current planning issues such as zoning, annexation, ordinance revisions and related land-use issues. Staff also draws on expertise in such areas as the environment, transportation and strategic planning to assist local governments as requested. This work includes:

- Ordinance Development and Updates (such as 160D Updates, UDOs, Zoning, Subdivision, Historic Preservation, Public Nuisances, Minimum Housing, Flood Damage Prevention, and other codes)
- Plans (such as Comprehensive, Land Use, Bicycle/Pedestrian)
- Performing Administrative Services such as Zoning Enforcement and Planning Board / Board of Adjustment meeting support, primarily for municipalities with limited staff
- Planning Board / Board of Adjustment Training
- GIS Mapping

Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO)

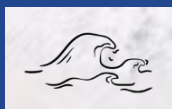
Eastern Carolina Council is the lead planning agency for the Down East Rural Transportation Planning Organization (DERPO)



DERPO Serves:

- Carteret County
- Jones County
- Pamlico County

For more information about Community Planning Services or the Rural Transportation Planning Organization, contact, Carlton Gideon at 252-638-3185, ext. 3018



ECC Members & Representatives

Carteret County

Town of Atlantic Beach - John O'Daniel
Town of Beaufort - Paula Gillikin
Town of Bogue - Barbara Owens
Town of Emerald Isle - Alesia Sanderson
Town of Indian Beach - Ryan Kelley
Town of Morehead City William Taylor
Town of Peletier - Bea Cunningham

Craven County

Town of Bridgeton - Paul Tremblay
Town of Dover - Randy Mitchell
Town of River Bend - Patty Leonard
Town of Trent Woods - Shane Turney
Town of Vanceboro - Todd McMillen

Duplin County

Town of Beulaville - Hutch Jones
Town of Calypso - Rubylene Lambert
Town of Greenevers - Diane Brown
Town of Kenansville - Linda Tyson
Town of Magnolia - Charles Banks
Town of Rose Hill - Angela Smith
Town of Teachey - Patrick Williams

Greene County

Town of Snow Hill - Lorraine Washington
Town of Walstonburg - Pending

Jones County

Jones County - Frank Emory
Town of Maysville - Janet Baker
Town of Pollocksville - Maria Robles

Lenoir County

Town of Grifton - Dylan Haman
City of Kinston - Pending
Town of Pink Hill - Pending

Onslow County

City of Jacksonville - Cindy Edwards
Town of North Topsail Beach - Pending
Town of Richlands - McKinley Smith
Town of Surf City - Trudy Solomon
Town of Swansboro - Tamara Pieratti

Pamlico County

Pamlico County - Edward Riggs, Jr.
Town of Alliance - Linda Marshall
Town of Grantsboro - Kristie Mitchell
Town of Mesic - Lois Credle
Town of Minnesott Beach - Carol DeMoranville
Town of Oriental - Paul Jordan II

Wayne County

Town of Eureka - Pending
Town of Fremont - Wayne Jackson
Town of Pikeville - Pending
Village of Walnut Creek - Robert Parchman



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