



Feed Fannin News

One Community, One Spirit

Feed Fannin, Inc.

www.feedfannin.org

706-946-1001

Spring 2024

Feed Fannin Celebrating its 15th Anniversary

Farm/Garden Report

By Kathy Beck, Farm & Facilities Manager
and Vice Chair of Ag Education

The year 2024 marks my 10th year of volunteer service at the Feed Fannin Farm and work in the garden. It is also the year that Feed Fannin celebrates its 15th anniversary as an all-volunteer, non-profit organization committed to helping feed the hungry in our community. A lot has happened in 15 years, and we are blessed to have continued support from the community and donors as we have grown the organization. Our commitment on this anniversary year is to continue to extend and expand our outreach programs in the community.

Looking back on the past 10 years of life on the farm, I am reminded of all the garden volunteers who have come my way, and that I have been privileged to meet and teach a few farm skills, and also the adventures we have all experienced working and learning together.



Kathy Beck and other garden volunteers prepare the farm for planting under the supervision of Jethro the dog

Some volunteers put in time in the early days of getting gardening established in Feed Fannin's organization before I came, but are no longer active in the organization due to various reasons. Some volunteers were only active for a season but came

Continued on. p. 2



Volunteers Stay Busy Around the Pantry

Feed Fannin pantry volunteers were busy these past months! We purchased and delivered 800 delicious spiral cut hams in November (see photo at upper left) for Family Connection Food Pantry (FCFP) clients during the holidays. December brought the delivery of 1,500 jars of peanut butter to the FCFP for clients in need. Volunteers delivered lunch and snack items in January to University of North Georgia students' "Lunch in a Crunch" food closet.

Food boxes for Meals on Wheels were packed on a cold February morning (see photo at lower left). Over 50 boxes are packed by volunteers every month for this program!



Continued on. p. 2

Spring Farm/Garden Report continued

just at the time they were needed to fill a void that someone else had left. Farming is hard work, and I have learned that it is not for everyone. There are also the farm volunteers who have endured the test of time and have worked 1-10 years and a rare few who have volunteered in excess of 10 years.

Some volunteers assist with sowing, weeding and harvesting; a few as groundskeepers or a few who help with equipment maintenance or special projects. There are only a handful of about 15 people who actively work in these farm positions. I have spoken to a few potential new volunteers in the past weeks who may join in the fun and work of life at the farm.

I would be remiss not to mention gratitude to the friends and supporters such as Six Ponds Farm owner, Dr. Gilda Lyon and Father Louis Guerin as well as Quinn's Nursery who over the years who have grown and provided plant starts and donated them to Feed Fannin. We have had several groups such as Faith Garden at Faith Presbyterian Church and other individuals who plant a garden or grew a row at home and donated produce to be distributed at the food pantry.

Others have donated tools, equipment or time and skills. A new friend of Feed Fannin recently donated funds specifically to allow for the purchase of a new tiller. It will come in handy as our old one has given its life over the past 12 years.

It does take a village and the support of the community to keep our all-volunteer organization going and growing.

Recently a few preliminary projects have started to get the garden ready for planting. It is mid- May as I write this article and planting is just beginning. By the time you read this, planting should be complete.

This year we will not plant sweet potatoes to give the soil a rest. We will plant pole beans which we have not planted for several years because of a beetle problem we had. We hope to have bountiful crops of tomatoes, zucchini and yellow squash, cucumbers, corn, okra, green beans, peppers, eggplant, cantaloupes, and herbs.

The farm has 22 raised beds that are available to rent by members of the community, and they are all under contract for the year.

It's been a busy Spring! I attended the Blessing of the Farms breakfast event held at Mercier's Orchards and awards banquets for FFA middle and high school students where Feed Fannin was recognized as a sponsor and supporter; participated in two elementary school ag educational field days at Six Ponds Farm along with two other Feed Fannin volunteers where we taught almost 150 students from West Fannin and Blue Ridge elementary schools how to make biodegradable origami pots from newsprint. Each student made two pots and put vegetable plants in them to take home and grow. ❀



Pantry Activities continued

In April, volunteers bagged fresh produce for North Court Apartments, a low-income complex in Blue Ridge. The produce, along with milk, eggs, bread, at least a pound of meat as well as other food items, are boxed by volunteers to be delivered each month.

Just a handful of hearty and fun-loving volunteers cheerfully do this work each month. We would love to welcome new folks willing to donate an hour or two of time each month. Call 706-946-1001 to sign up or ask questions. ❀



Feed Fannin pantry volunteers pack supplemental food boxes for distribution by Meals on Wheels

2024 FF Scholarships Awarded to High School Grads

On April 24, the Feed Fannin Scholarship Committee met to review the applications received from graduating seniors of Fannin County and Copper Basin high schools. Members of the committee are: Kelly Maniscalco, Diane Tortis, Sue Blakeman, and Carlos and Carol Martel.

The committee selected two applicants from Copper Basin and one from Fannin to receive \$1,000 scholarships each as they begin their studies for Fall Semester 2024.

The three winners of the scholarships this year are, **Stephanie Kirk** from Fannin County High School, and **Kira Hyatt** and **Bethany Weaver** from Copper Basin High School. Stephanie will pursue a degree in Nutrition and Food Sciences at Georgia Southern University. Kira and Bethany will attend Cleveland State Community College to pursue studies in the field of veterinary medicine.



Martel with Kirk

This is the fourth year Feed Fannin has awarded scholarships at Fannin County High School and the third year at Copper Basin High School.

When the Feed Fannin scholarships were first started, our plan was to support students pursuing degrees in agriculture. That was then expanded to include



Martel with Hyatt (left) and Weaver

students planning to pursue degrees in education. Since that time, we have broadened the criteria to include environmental sciences, nutrition and food sciences, horticulture, veterinary medicine and farm management – all fields related to agriculture.

Congratulations to our awardees! We wish them much success in their studies. 🌸

By Carol Martel, co-chair
Feed Fannin Scholarship Committee

Walk for Feed Fannin in June!

Walk Against Hunger at Blue Ridge Methodist Church (behind the Post Office) on Saturday, June 15, 9-11 am. Entry fee per person: a jar of peanut butter and jelly for donation to Feed Fannin.



Kids to get Meals Again This Summer

This summer marks the third year that Feed Fannin has partnered with Snack in a Backpack Summer Meals Program. The free Summer Meals Program for Fannin children in need ages 17 and under is sponsored by Faith Presbyterian Church, Fannin County Family

Connection, Feed Fannin, Snack in a Backpack, and St. Luke's Anglican Church.

For eight weeks (June 6-July 25), Feed Fannin will purchase locally sourced produce from local farmers and vendors to include with other shelf-stable pantry items that will go to feed families with children. Last summer, more than 380 children and their families were served each week and more than 47,500 meals were provided. Feed Fannin expects to provide 5,000-6,000 lbs. of fresh produce during the eight-week

Continued on. back page

Former Board Member Jim Yacavone Remembered

Longtime Feed Fannin volunteer Jim Yacavone passed away suddenly last October at his home in Florida, where he and his wife, Meredith, had moved after he retired earlier in 2023 from two years as Chair of the Fannin County Family Connections Board of Directors. Feed Fannin's Kathy Beck memorialized Yacavone in the following post on our organization's Facebook page.

Today we honor the life of Jim Yacavone. For many years, Jim blessed the community of Blue Ridge and Fannin County. You may have known Jim through his work in the community garden as a garden volunteer or as Emcee at the Bowls of Hope fundraiser or as a board member for Feed Fannin.

You may recall working a community gardening project with Jim or his leadership with the North Georgia Master Gardeners. Many worked alongside Jim as a pantry volunteer on Wednesdays or served with him on the board of Family Connection.

Perhaps you were in the congregation or member of the Praise Team where Jim played bass guitar on Sunday morning in worship and blessed you with his musical talents. Maybe you were in the neighborhood band formed of four friends who met each Wednesday afternoon at 3 pm to play some country, blues or gospel tunes and listen to Jim speak afterward of his love and pride for his family or the big fish he caught, or the one that got away.

Jim was a great debater of most topics including local and political issues. Sometimes you would agree with him and sometimes you did not. But you could always say what you thought with Jim and he would always give you his opinion.

However you knew him, we at Feed Fannin knew Jim as a friend and champion for helping those struggling with food insecurity in our community, and our loss is great. I challenge you to live your life to the fullest doing what you love and try to make a difference in the lives around you. That's what Jim did! Thanks for the memories, Jim!



Jim (in blue) at the pantry



Jim (in hat) as emcee of Feed Fannin's Bowls of Hope fundraiser



Jim (in black) playing bass guitar at his church



At the farm

Converted Pantry Garden Getting Ready for Summer

Feed Fannin volunteer Sue Blakeman became the caretaker for the Barbara Ferer Research and Demonstration Garden located at Fannin County Family Connection in the Spring of 2023. It is commonly referred to as “the pantry garden” because of its location.

What began as a Mittleider process of sand and sawdust has evolved into an organic method of several raised beds with soil and amendments, and research has continued with different plantings and techniques being used. Last year’s conversion to soil produced a bountiful crop of vegetables and flowering herbs and flowers for pollinators.

Over the winter and early spring this year, Sue has been busy getting the pantry garden ready for planting. First, the old mulch on the pathways had deteriorated into 80% worm castings, so it was troweled and shoveled out, then sifted to separate the remaining chips from the ‘soil’ and added to the beds. Also added were some decomposing leaves, compost (made from kitchen scraps, chicken house debris, and more leaves), and a



Summer 2023

Spring prep 2024

locally made organic fertilizer containing mycorrhiza. All the worms that were in the mulch were also added.

The plan is to add small gravel to the pathway to deter weeds. Some of the unsifted soil/mulch was mounded around the perimeter inside the fence, and many marigolds from last year’s garden have self-seeded in these pollinator beds.

A grateful shout out to the Cashmans — to BZ, who built two flower boxes to contain the mounds, and another to Priscilla, who brought them to be painted. They will be installed as soon as the rain pauses long enough! Food Pantry volunteer Jack kindly sawed some pallet boards to build more boxes, and then helped purchase some plants to get a jump start on spring — cabbage, broccoli, brussel sprouts, and cauliflower; and he helped plant them! Thanks, Jack!

Additional plants have been donated and will be added for the summer when the cool season plants are harvested and more space becomes available. 🌸

Food Assistance by the Numbers — Our Impact in 2023

Feed Fannin strives to make an impact by providing food — grown by us and our partner gardens, plus items purchased and donated — to families in need of food assistance in our community. In 2023, we grew, produced or procured:

More than 363,346 pounds of staple goods, canned goods, fresh produce, frozen food items, eggs, milk, hams and turkeys

This is the equivalent of 302,788 meals that helped feed the hungry in our community

11,700 dozen eggs, 9,756 gallons of milk and 1,057 turkeys and hams donated for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays

Make a Gift to Feed Fannin

Your name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Would you like to receive information about Feed Fannin by email? Y____ N____

Amount of gift donation: \$ _____

Need a tax receipt? Y____ N____

Please make checks payable to:
Feed Fannin, Inc.

Mail form and donation to:

Feed Fannin
PO Box 1085
Blue Ridge, GA 30513

Your gift is greatly appreciated!

Our Mission

Working together to educate and encourage our community towards self-sufficiency while providing food for those in need.



The Fannin County High School FFA Chapter recognized the contributions of Feed Fannin during the school's 2024 Scholarship and Awards Ceremony on May 16.

Summer Meals Program continued

program. The cost to provide pantry items for the eight weeks is around \$30,000.

If you would like to consider helping with packing or delivery, make a financial donation, or have questions, please contact www.snackinabackpack.org or www.feedfannin.org. Together we can help fight hunger in our community this summer. Thanks in advance for your support! ❀



Kathy Beck 'Woman of the Year in Agriculture'

Kathy Beck, who serves as Feed Fannin's Vice Chair of Farm and Facilities and Agriculture Education, was honored at a luncheon at Inola in April as Woman of the Year in Agriculture by the Fannin County Young Farmers Association (FCYFA).

Beck has been involved with FCYFA since its beginning and participates in Ag Literacy Day in the schools each year. She attends FFA and Young Farmer banquets and sponsors continuing education events that support and promote Ag Awareness. She also has served on the Fannin County Ag Council Advisory Committee. ❀