



Feed Fannin News

One Community, One Spirit

Feed Fannin, Inc.

www.feedfannin.org

706-946-1001

Spring 2026

New Chair, New Directors for 2026

Feed Fannin elected a new chair at its Annual Meeting in February after Ron Ciochon needed to step down to care for his wife, Mary Kay Britzius, during a health crisis. Britzius, who has been a valuable member of the organization’s Board of Directors for years, is already missed and her healing is on everyone’s minds. Ron will remain a member of the board, attending meetings as often as possible. He was lauded for his six years leading the organization.

Members elected Andy Livingston to take Ron’s place. Andy has volunteered at the Fannin County Family Connection Food Pantry, along with his wife, Peggy Caldwell, for three years, and has been an active Feed Fannin board member for the past year and a half. They also volunteer at Freedom for Fido.



Andy Livingston

Ron Ciochon

“Helping others in need is a passion for me,” he said in submitting his name as candidate for the position of chair. “I pride myself as a relationship builder, a skill I developed during a 30-year career as a safety professional and a project manager. I will give 100% to promote the Feed Fannin mission.”

Continued on. p. 2

Campaign Funded Nearly 11,900 Holiday Meals

The 2025 Holiday Meals Campaign kept many Feed Fannin volunteers busy late last year. Consulting with community partners and suppliers began in August to determine availability and need. Volunteers began accumulating staple goods that

were needed, fresh produce was procured before distribution, dates for distribution were set up with community partners and accounting was done by our treasurer.

Distribution to community partners was as follows:

Fannin County Family Connection Food Pantry received 908 spiral cut hams for Thanksgiving which totaled 8,606.93 pounds.

First Fruits of Fannin received 40 spiral cut hams, 40 turkey breasts, a pallet of staple goods obtained from Chattanooga Food Bank and farm-fresh produce from Old Dial Road Farm which totaled 2,036.13 pounds.

Continued on. p. 2



These stalwart Feed Fannin volunteers packed 55 boxes of food in December that were delivered to local seniors participating in the Meals on Wheels program. The food was purchased with funds raised during the Holiday Meals Campaign.

Holiday Meals continued from p. 1

Good Samaritan Thanksgiving Open

Table received 14 whole turkeys, 60 turkey breasts, 400 pounds of fresh sweet potatoes and other staple goods totaling 1,133.16 pounds.

North Georgia Mountain Crisis Center received three deliveries, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's which included six spiral cut hams, eight

turkey breasts, fresh produce and staple goods which totaled 268.34 pounds.



Heidi, with North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network, collects food from Feed Fannin

Eema's Kitchen received seven spiral cut hams, seven turkey breasts, staple goods and fresh produce totaling 214.5 pounds.

Mountain Education Students (20 of them) received 20 spiral cut hams, fresh produce and staple items for a total of 559.25 pounds.

Faith Presbyterian Church-Senior

Ministry received 360 1-lb canned Hostess hams and staple goods with a total weight of 1,013.34 pounds.

Faith Presbyterian Church-Unsheltered Meals

Ministry received three turkey breasts and staple items for a total of 61 pounds.

North Court Apartments low-income disabled residents, who are clients of the Food Pantry and receive a box of food items each month, received, in addition to their regular box, turkey breasts, stovetop stuffing mix and cranberry sauce for a total of 64 pounds.

Meals on Wheels clients, in addition to their regular supplemental food box, received in November and December a one-pound Hostess ham for a total of 110 pounds.

First United Methodist Church of Copperhill

Monthly Community Meal received 10 spiral-cut hams and 10 turkey breasts for a total of 175 pounds.

Total poundage for the 2025 Holiday Meals



The First Fruits truck is loaded with hams, turkeys and staple goods to provide hot holiday meals to those in need through its mobile kitchen.

is 14,242.15 pounds, which is equivalent to 11,868 meals.

The 2025 Holiday Meals Campaign was a great success due to the very generous donors who believe in our mission to provide food to those in need in our community. Many thanks to you all! ❀

By Priscilla Cashman, Vice Chair for Food Purchases and Programs

New Leadership continued from p. 1

Also during the Annual Meeting, three Feed Fannin volunteers were elected to the Board of Directors: **Curt Hinnant**, who has serviced small garden machinery and worked on special projects as a garden volunteer and also helps transport all the food collected during the Holiday Meals Campaign from place to place; **Jim Monahan**, who has volunteered with Feed Fannin for years in a number of capacities, including farm maintenance and helping with events such as the annual Soap Box Derby. He also works at the food pantry two days a week; and **Diane Tortis**, a loyal garden volunteer who also packs boxes for Feed Fannin's contribution to the Meals on Wheels program and helps represent Feed Fannin at events such as the annual field day for elementary school students at 6 Ponds Farm and Arts in the Park. ❀

Food Pantry and Food-Related Community Outreach

Pantry Report

By Priscilla Cashman, Vice Chair for Food Purchases and Programs

Feed Fannin grew, procured or purchased over 367,087.83 pounds of canned and staple goods, fresh produce, frozen food items, meats and holiday hams and turkeys in 2025. This was the equivalent of 305,906.53 meals to help relieve food insecurity in our community through the Fannin County Family Connection Food Pantry, First Fruits Fannin, Faith Presbyterian Food Ministries, Eema's Kitchen, the Good Samaritan Thanksgiving Open Table, Mountain Education Students, North Georgia Mountain Crisis Center and other community partners.

A total of 10,920 dozen eggs and 9,970 gallons of milk were provided to the Food Pantry and First Fruits Fannin for distribution to families, children and individuals in need in our community.

More than 13,540 pounds of fresh produce was grown, procured or purchased for the Food Pantry, Snack in a Backpack Summer Meals, First Fruits Fannin and other community outreach groups.

In 2025, Feed Fannin purchased over 10,870 pounds of canned and staple goods directly from the Chattanooga Food Bank for the benefit of our community partners, Meals on Wheels clients, North Court Apartments residents and other special projects.

Each month, Feed Fannin sourced and packed supplemental boxes weighing approximately 15 pounds for Meals on Wheels clients with staple and canned

goods suitable for seniors who aren't able to cook for themselves. A total of 657 boxes were packed in 2025. These boxes, together with small frozen meals, are delivered by Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers.

Also, once a month, large boxes weighing approximately 40 pounds, were packed by Feed Fannin volunteers for disabled clients living at North Court Apartments with canned goods, staples, frozen meat, bread, milk, eggs and fresh produce. These boxes are picked up and delivered to the residents by St. Luke's Men's Club. A total of 153 boxes were packed and delivered in 2025.

As needed and requested, small supplemental boxes, similar to the Meals on Wheels boxes, were delivered to Pruitt Hospice. The nursing staff took them to patients in need. In all, 27 of these boxes were packed and delivered in 2025.

Last year was a busy and fulfilling year for Feed Fannin. We would have been unable to do this important work without our generous donors and our faithful volunteers, and we are so grateful to everyone for anything and everything you did. ❀



Congratulations to our 2026 Scholarship Winners!



On April 24, the Feed Fannin Scholarship Committee met to review the scholarship applications received from graduating seniors of Fannin County High School. Members of the committee are Kelly Maniscalco, Diane Tortis, Peggy Caldwell, Jim Hatten, Jane Kimzey and Carlos and Carol Martel.

The committee selected three applicants from Fannin County High School to receive \$1,500 scholarships each as they begin

their studies for Fall Semester 2026. Committee and Feed Fannin board member Jane Kimzey presented the awards at the school's awards ceremony at the Performing Arts Center on May 18.

The three winners of the scholarships this year are: **Kendall Clore**, **Hollyanna Greene**, and **Nicholas Tutterrow**. Kendall will pursue a degree in Elementary Education at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton. Hollyanna will also pursue a degree in Elementary Education at the University of North Georgia in Blue Ridge. Nicholas will

study to become a Diesel Technician for agricultural and large equipment at Universal Technical Institute in Smyrna.

This is the sixth year Feed Fannin has awarded scholarships at Fannin County High School. Criteria for receiving the scholarships include plans to pursue degrees or certificates in agriculture, agribusiness, environmental sciences, nutrition and food sciences, horticulture, animal science, veterinary medicine, farm management, ag equipment technology and other fields related to agriculture. Degrees in Education are also included as part of our support of schools in the community. ❁



(l-r) Greene, Tutterrow and Clore are shown with Scholarship Committee member and Feed Fannin board member Jane Kimzey, who presented them with scholarships for \$1,500 each.

By Carol Martel
Co-Chair of the Feed Fannin Scholarship Committee

Research Garden Relocated to Feed Fannin Farm

Origins and Development

The Feed Fannin/Barbara Ferer Research & Development Garden began in August 2018 at the former site of Fannin County Family Connection in Blue Ridge. The garden was made possible by a grant from The George Link Jr. Charitable Trust. The inaugural project adopted the “Mittleider method,” aiming to achieve higher yields with less water and in smaller spaces compared to traditional gardening approaches.

Relocation and Evolution of Gardening Methods

In 2020, when Family Connection moved to its current location on Industrial Park Drive in Blue Ridge, Feed Fannin volunteers relocated the Mittleider Garden as well. The cultivation of vegetables using the Mittleider method continued until 2023. At that point, the original sand and sawdust method transitioned to an organic approach. This new method incorporated several raised beds, utilizing soil and amendments, and research continued with various plantings, soil amendments and techniques.

Bringing the Garden Home: The 2026 Move

In early 2026, Family Connection announced plans to expand their facility, which necessitated repurposing the research garden area utilized since 2020 to accommodate their new development. In response, detailed plans and a proposal for relocating the Research and Demonstration Garden to Feed Fannin’s Ada Street farm — where the organization’s other interests are based — were developed and submitted to the Feed Fannin Board of Directors by Kathy Beck, vice chair of Farm, Facilities, and Agricultural Education. These plans received unanimous approval from the board. Since 2014, the Fannin County School Board has generously leased the Ada Street property to Feed Fannin.



Students from Fannin County Middle School help move plants from the old research garden on Community Service Day.



Kenny Queen at work.



Raised beds made using donated skid tracks.

Special thanks are extended to Feed Fannin friend and Young Farmer Association’s President, Kenny Queen, who donated his grading services and helped secure skid tracks to use as raised beds for the property. Many of the materials from the past research garden such as soil, gravel, boards, fencing, and signage from the previous location were salvaged and integrated into the new garden design or saved for other uses on the farm. Volunteers from Feed Fannin, along with students from Fannin County Middle and High schools, contributed their efforts during Community Service Day to help with moving materials.

Continued on. p. 6

Farm/Garden Report continued from p. 5

Future Research and Gardening Approaches

Looking ahead, research will focus on planting heirloom seeds and plant varieties from local farmers and testing varieties not previously grown in the garden. The garden will utilize bush varieties and climbers planted in growing bags, placed to use fencing for space-saving and improved airflow. Disease-resistant varieties and companion planting techniques, such as placing herbs near tomatoes and marigolds near beans, will be prioritized. No chemical additives will be used.

A pollinator garden featuring flowers like zinnia, cleome, cosmos, yarrow and herbs such as basil and dill are being established to attract beneficial insects. Organic sprays made from garlic and neem oil will be used for pest control. Crop rotation will be practiced throughout the garden, with meticulous records kept on planting dates, issues encountered, and the quantity of produce harvested and donated.

Feed Fannin will uphold its tradition of hosting FFA students and other groups for hands-on work and educational demonstrations. Collaboration with the Master Gardeners and Young Farmers Groups will continue, supporting initiatives that align with the Feed Fannin mission and encouraging community education.

Excitement and Continuity

An Open Garden event is being planned for mid-summer, once the garden has been established. Invitations will be extended to various community groups and media to celebrate and participate in the ongoing success of the garden. Stay tuned for more information to come about the event.



There is a sense of excitement as the new garden takes shape. The installation of fencing and a beehive aims to attract bees and butterflies and enhance the area's beauty. All elements of the new garden design and diverse plantings are coming together, ensuring that the legacy of the Barbara Ferer Research and Development Garden will endure. ❁

By Kathy Beck, Vice Chair
for Farm, Facilities & Ag Education

Ben Davis and Kathy Beck with the work behind them



At left, volunteers Ben and Brandy Dennis put down weed barrier fabric at the new research garden.



FFA students from Fannin High School spread gravel on top of the weed barrier fabric.

Mid-year Update: Growth, Partnerships, Community Impact

Farm/Garden Report

By Kathy Beck, Vice Chair for Farm, Facilities and Agricultural Education



As we approach the midpoint of 2026, Feed Fannin extends heartfelt thanks to the Fannin County Board of Education for their continued support. The school board leases us 762 Ada Street, home to our Research and Community

Garden and the Feed Fannin farm, our most valued asset and operations center.

Growth in Community Engagement

The year 2025 was marked not only by the successful cultivation of produce but also by the purchase of locally grown and sourced produce with 13,549 lbs. of fresh produce donated to the food pantry and other community partners.

In addition to growing and providing produce, we also grew by significant development in our knowledge and support of local Georgia farmers, as well as community members involved in agriculture.

Feed Fannin remains dedicated to building strong partnerships with local organizations and expanding our educational outreach. We are committed to empowering youth with valuable knowledge and skills, both within schools and throughout the wider community, while promoting agriculture — Georgia’s top industry — by serving on advisory boards, engaging in Young Farmers Association events, and supporting community gatherings. We host groups, provide lunches, instruct in mobile classrooms, and lead school field trip activities.

Volunteers mentor FFA students, assist with awards banquets, read to students in classrooms to promote Ag Literacy Week and support agricultural education locally. Each outreach effort benefits both recipients and participants involved in our mission.

Spring Volunteer Initiatives, Partnerships

Early spring brought an outpouring of volunteer support from numerous individuals and groups. Students from Fannin County Middle School and Fannin County High School participated in community service workdays, assisting Feed Fannin with distributing soil and gravel in our research and demonstration garden relocation and planting tomato and pepper plants (see Page 5).

Additionally, North Georgia Mission Lodge welcomed 13 adults and youth from Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church in Duluth, Ga., to the Ada Street Farm. Volunteers dedicated their spring break to a mission trip. Their efforts included weeding and spreading mushroom compost in the garden’s planting areas. We are deeply grateful for North Georgia Mission Lodge’s ongoing outreach, with several more visits planned for this summer and fall. Their impact is valued and immeasurable.

The Men’s Group from Faith Presbyterian Church provided essential repairs to our shed and is planning to construct a retaining wall at the farm property. We sincerely thank them for their hard work and generosity.

Feed Fannin volunteers replaced the faucet at the produce washing table and installed, checked, and serviced hoses to ensure optimal operation in anticipation of a potentially dry summer.

Considerable preparation is required before planting can begin. By the time this newsletter reaches you, most planting will be complete, and we hope for a successful growing season with special thanks to local DNR trapper **Bill Turpin**, who volunteered his time and expertise to help relocate some groundhogs that devastated our cantaloupe crop in 2025.



Continued on. p. 8

Farm/Garden Report continued from p. 7

Working in the garden brings joy and tranquility and is a wellness oasis. It is our Gelassenheit.

Celebrating Agricultural Achievements, Events

Spring was filled with agricultural opportunities, events and awards. On Jan. 30, Feed Fannin board members attended the Fannin County Young Farmers (FCYF) Awards Night, where they honored and awarded **Jake and Martha Williams** as the 2025-26 Fannin County Young Farmers Farm Family of the Year, and **Seth Davis** as the 2025-26 Young Ag Professional of the Year. Congratulations to these deserving recipients for their significant contributions to our agricultural community.

Feed Fannin volunteers also attended the FCYF 3rd Annual Blessing of the Seeds & Farms, Gardens, Fields & Herds, held at CATE Farms on March 20.

Supporting Youth in Agriculture

Feed Fannin leaders mentored several FFA members in preparation for the FFA Creed Speaking Leadership Competition. Congratulations to **Melissa Acevedo-Montoya** for winning the area competition and advancing to the state level, and to **Hailey Stewart** for winning the Georgia State FFA Creed competition in April. Hailey recently recited the Creed at the Fannin County Middle School Banquet, where she was recognized as the 2025-2026 FFA President. Feed Fannin agricultural volunteers were honored to attend this event. We are proud of all students who participated in the competition and commend their efforts.

On May 1, Feed Fannin volunteers instructed

58 third graders from Blue Ridge Elementary. On May 7, 45 fourth and fifth grade scientific investigation students from all three Fannin

County Elementary schools attended a field day at 6 Ponds Farm, hosted by Dr. Gilda Lyons. Students enjoyed hands-on activities such as fossil digging/identification, mineral identification, fishing, painting barn quilts, and designing their own hand-painted necklaces. The activities helped students realize the importance of agri-culture.

The Fannin County High School FFA Banquet took place on May 12, with Feed Fannin board members in attendance to receive a certificate of appreciation and special Distinguished Service Award. We are humbled and honored to receive this recognition and the support we receive from the community.

On May 13, first block FFA Fannin County High School students visited the Feed Fannin farm, where they learned and practiced the proper techniques for planting tomato and pepper plants. We value these visits and plan every available opportunity to share the farm and spread gardening knowledge with the next generation while welcoming their assistance.

On May 12, Feed Fannin board members visited the Fannin County Extension Office and presented tuition support to Fannin County 4-H Club leaders, enabling 14 students to attend 4-H camp this summer. This initiative was partially funded by an anonymous donor's generous contribution. Additionally, Feed Fannin will provide 4-H tuition to four Polk County students. These contributions ensure that students can access enriching camp



Kathly Beck and Priscilla Cashman present Seth Davis with the Young Ag Professional of the Year Award.



Continued on. p. 9

Farm/Garden Report continued from p. 8



Board members present a check providing tuition for 14 students to attend 4-H camp this summer. An anonymous donor has contributed \$4,000 to this initiative!

experiences, aligning with Georgia 4-H's mission to equip youth with knowledge, life skills and positive attitudes for future success. This hands-on approach resonates with Feed Fannin's mission of promoting education and self-sufficiency.

Feed Fannin also provides school garden grants to each of the five Fannin County schools. This year, Copper Basin Elementary in nearby Polk County, Tenn., will also receive a Feed Fannin grant for

greenhouse restoration. Dr. Ginger Montgomery of Fannin County Schools expressed gratitude for the community's investment in students, noting that "these resources enable hands-on learning opportunities that foster growth and engagement in agriculture." Look for photos of the greenhouse renovation in our Fall newsletter.

Highlighting Women in Agriculture

On May 15, Fannin County Young Farmers hosted their fourth annual Women in Ag lunch at The Folk Collaborative in McCaysville, attended by several Feed Fannin ladies. Dr. Gilda Lyons was honored as the FCYF Woman in Ag for this year. The event featured guest speaker Anna Strickland of Harper & Mary Strategies, a woman-owned consulting firm specializing in the design of vibrant, pollinator-friendly green spaces that support work-life harmony.

Expanding Outreach: Snack Summer Meals



For the fifth consecutive year, Feed Fannin is partnering with Snack in a Backpack to support the eight-week Snack Summer Meals program. Over the past four years, Feed

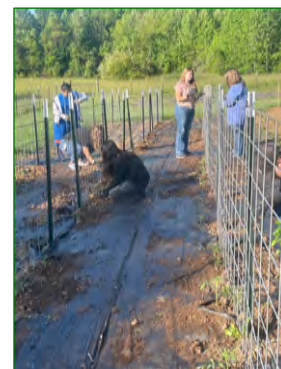
Fannin has provided 23,255 lbs. of fresh produce, including 7,005 lbs. in 2025 alone. This year, our support will expand to include payment of invoices for snack items in addition to supplying fresh

produce. As part of this initiative, Feed Fannin will purchase 500 lbs. of Vidalia onions from Fannin County Young Farmers to support their fundraiser, with the onions distributed to families with children during the Snack Summer Meals program.

Feed Fannin Celebrates Milestone

Feed Fannin proudly celebrates its 17th anniversary this year. This milestone highlights our enduring dedication to partnering with local agencies, supporting educational opportunities and maintaining our growing operations.

Guided by our motto, "One Community, One Spirit," we continuously strive to foster unity and collaboration. Together, we accomplish more, and our journey is marked by a shared commitment to hard work and strengthened by the unwavering support and generosity of our valued partners and donors. The trust placed in Feed Fannin is deeply appreciated, and we look forward to continuing this journey as a united community.



FFA students from FCHS plant tomato and pepper plants at the farm on Community Service Day.

Ongoing Mission and Appreciation

As we reflect on our work and look ahead, we remain grateful for the community that makes this mission possible.

- Feed Fannin remains steadfast in its mission to provide for those in need, promote education and empower our community.
- We focus on helping individuals and families build greater self-sufficiency.
- Your continued support is essential to advancing our goals and strengthening our community.
- You can support our mission by volunteering at the farm, helping at events, or making a financial donation (see back page for donation information). ❀



We Thank Our Wonderful Donors

Feed Fannin has been blessed to receive several generous donations recently that will be used to fund our initiatives to feed those in need. In addition to the anonymous donors who contributed to our Holiday Meals Campaign and to our tuition support for students wishing to attend 4-H summer camps (see photo, p. 9), we received a total of \$8,500 from Tri-State Electric Membership Corporation's Operation Round UP

program (photo at above left shows Glenn Harbison, chair of the Tri-State committee, presenting the initial donation of \$5,000), \$5,000 from the Fannin County Empty Stocking Thrift Store (photo at left), and \$3,000 from Faith Presbyterian Church.



Also making much-needed donations to Feed Fannin were Post 6570 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Blue Ridge (photo above right shows Post Commander Bob Bradley presenting the check to Feed Fannin board members) and the staff of the Toccoa Riverside Restaurant.

We are so grateful for your generosity and your support of our mission!

Please Make a Gift to Feed Fannin Today

Your generosity during the past few challenging years made it possible for our all-volunteer organization to help more people in more ways than ever before. Feed Fannin is 100% funded through private donations.

To continue our work, we ask that you again give generously. We are expanding our outreach to help feed more people as we have done in new and innovative ways since 2021 by partnering with service and faith-based organizations to help distribute food we grow and food we purchase to those in need. We appreciate your support.

You may use the form on the right to make your donation or go online at feedfannin.org/donate.



Stay in Touch!

Andy Livingston, chair
 PO Box 1085, Blue Ridge, GA 30513
 Phone: 706-946-1001
 Website: feedfannin.org
 Email: Feedfannin@feedfannin.org
 Like and follow us on Facebook
[facebook.com/Feed-Fannin](https://www.facebook.com/Feed-Fannin)

Yes, I Want to Help!

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.