

**2023 Year-End Rural Roundup**



**From** Team New Rural Project <info@newruralproject.org>  
**To** Steve Johnston <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>  
**Reply-To** <info@newruralproject.org>  
**Date** 2023-12-20 12:22



Dear Steve,

As 2023 nears a close, we reflect on the vision that Helen Probst Mills and I had when we co-founded New Rural Project in April 2021. We believed that our work had to begin and end with listening to rural folks. We believed that civic and electoral education along with connecting the dots between those two things and their lives was critical to empowering folks to turn out to vote.

**The proof of those beliefs shined brightly with over 11 wins in the November municipal elections by some fabulous friends of NRP in our focus counties.** These winners have done so many great things with NRP: 1) led or participated in our Barbershop and Beauty Salon Conversations, 2) worked with NRP on staff, and/or 3) partnered with NRP for many fabulous community events. We are only just beginning!

The 2024 elections are coming soon and we know that democracy from the local to the national level is on the line. NRP needs your help more than ever to ensure maximum participation civically and electorally from local to state to the federal level of our rural friends and neighbors.

**New Rural Project will be closed from December 18, 2023 until January 2, 2024 for us to rest and recharge.**

As always, thank you for your continued support.

With gratitude,

Cynthia Wallace & the entire NRP Team

**Donate \$25 or more to help us start strong in 2024!**

**LISTENING**

**Union and Anson Counties**

Post election, on November 9, we held our canvasser close-out session and appreciation dinner where we listened to our canvassers as they shared their thoughts about their experience this election cycle. Our partner Leon Gatewood, CEO of the HOLLA! Center was so excited about the election results, he even was our DJ for the night! The input we received from them will prove invaluable as we begin to work on our 2024 voter outreach strategy, including suggestions regarding how to improve our canvasser recruitment process.

Below are some of the comments that our canvassers shared with us:

- "I really enjoyed it - I got to talk with a variety of people"
- "It was nice meeting new people."
- "Giving people information about the voter photo ID law was important."
- "Enjoyed canvassing and helping to train new canvassers."



**UPCOMING**

**2024 Barbershop & Beauty Salon Conversations Preview**

2023 was a fabulous year as we expanded our Barbershop Conversations: **Fruitful African American Discussions on Empowerment (F.A.D.E.)** program in an additional county. Even more exciting was the launch of our Beauty Salon Conversation series **C.U.R.L.S. (Cultivating Unified Relationships with Ladies for Success)!**

In the coming year, we are excited to build and strengthen our existing relationships with the barbers and hair stylists serving our communities. We look forward to continuing our F.A.D.E. discussions with more young (18-40ish) and "young at heart" Black men at additional barbershops in new focus counties. We also plan to expand our C.U.R.L.S. program to counties that have already experienced the power of F.A.D.E. programs like Scotland and Hoke counties. Our program seeks to empower all of our attendees to become Civic Ambassadors.

We can't wait to chat, chew, chop it up and spill more tea in 2024!

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Wadesboro "Election Day Community Celebration"**

On Election Day, November 7, NRP joined with the HOLLA! Center, Black Voters Matter, local groups Anson Men of Action and the Anson MLK Committee, and various church groups for an Election Day Celebration at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Wadesboro. As Anson County only had Election Day voting, it was important for us to share election information while we talked with folks about the importance of voting and representation in government.







### Municipal Election Wins

As mentioned above, New Rural Project canvassed, phonebanked, texted, sent mailers, and did community events to voters in three municipalities in Union County (Marshville & Monroe) and Anson County (Wadesboro). We can't stop talking about the fact that these efforts in rural North Carolina helped voters put the representation back in representative government by electing four Black candidates to majority-white municipal councils in the city of Monroe and the town of Wadesboro which are demographically majority-minority municipalities.

Marshville was also able to hold on to two of their three Black city council women. We believe that NRP's success in explaining to voters what was on the ballot and what was at stake played a role in these electoral successes.



Winners in Monroe included Surluta Anthony – NRP's Canvasser Lead for Union County in 2022 and Franco McGee, who are both returning to the Monroe City Council after losing re-election in 2021. First-time candidate Garrett Snuggs – chair of NRP's first Barbershop Conversations: Fruitful African American Discussions on Empowerment (F.A.D.E.) outreach program in Anson County – soared to victory as the top-performing Wadesboro Town Council candidate. He is joined by JoAnn Bennett, who placed second in the tally. Other friends of NRP who won are pictured here as well!

### OTHER UPDATES

#### Organize NC End-of-Year Celebration

On December 4 - 5, Nisea and Cynthia attended the inaugural *Organize NC End-of-Year Celebration* at the beautiful Haw River State Park in Browns Summit, NC. They joined in celebrating the Organize NC Fellows and their supervisors (including Nisea) who participated in the Ignite Supervisory Program. Folks shared what they learned as we deepened our partnerships and our movement ecosystem heading into the important 2024 elections!



### NRP In the News



In the last few months of the year, New Rural Project and NRP Board Chair, Doug Wilson, were featured in a few news stories. Below are a couple of the stories, but please go to the [In The News](#) section of our website to see more of the coverage. As a result of NRP's committed work in uplifting rural voices, a [New York Times article](#) on November 21 featured a quote from Cynthia about what NRP is hearing on the ground.

**CAPITAL TONIGHT** - On December 5, Cynthia appeared in a panel on Capital Tonight on Spectrum News. The conversation delved into a vital component of North Carolina's electorate – our rural voters. She stressed that to secure the support of rural voters of color, candidates must earnestly invest in the issues that resonate with these pivotal members of our community and spend quality time in the community listening to them.





### Important Dates for North Carolina's March 2024 Primary Election

With new district maps and new election laws coming from our legislators in Raleigh, in 2024 it will be more important than ever to ensure that we expand our work to ensure all rural North Carolinians are **Ready To Vote**. Go to the [North Carolina State Board of Elections website](#) to see what's on the North Carolina ballot for the 2024 primary election and more!



As always, thank you for being on our team and we hope you have a safe, joyful, and healthy holiday season and start of the New Year!

**Team New Rural Project**

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New Rural Project  
PO Box 77424  
Charlotte, NC 28271  
United States

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