

Spring 2025 Rural Roundup



From Team New Rural Project <info@newruralproject.org>
To Steve Johnston <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <info@newruralproject.org>
Date 2025-03-27 14:30

The New Rural Project's
Rural Roundup
Monthly Newsletter

Dear Steve,

We kicked off 2025 by joining the community in a series of Martin Luther King, Jr. events. This year's MLK, Jr. Day observance on January 20 also coincided with the inauguration of a new president. As concerning events unfold at the state and federal level, it is easy to feel disheartened, as if all our efforts aren't making the progress we hoped for. But as Dr. King emphasized during the civil rights movement, the path to justice is long and fraught with challenges, but it is a journey we can and must take together. NRP plans to stay in the fight with resiliency in the face of adversity because our rural neighbors need us.

PLEASE HELP US FIGHT FOR RURAL NC!

It is also important to find joy along the way. To stay fueled for the fight ahead, let's find moments to recharge and take care of ourselves. Whether it's doing a Lego set or a jigsaw puzzle, taking a trip, listening to that one playlist that gets you to dance the darkness away, or simply embracing small success, hold on to those sparks of joy. It is essential to sustain us as we continue this important work.

As we hold on to joy through this challenging year, let's remain vigilant and continue to speak up and speak out against the injustices happening around us.

With gratitude,

Cynthia L. Wallace
Executive Director
New Rural Project



P.S. Our 4th birthday is coming up on April 6!

CELEBRATE EARLY BY BECOMING A MONTHLY SUSTAINER OR MAKING A ONE-TIME DONATION!

LISTENING

C.U.R.L.S. (Cultivating Unified Relationships with Ladies for Success) made it to Richmond County! We are excited to bring our **Beauty Salon Conversations to Hamlet, North Carolina at First Impressions Hair Designs for three Sunday sessions (March 23, 30, and April 6)**. We are grateful to host salon owner and co-chair **Lois Jones**, along with co-chair **Tonya Green!**



Our first session took place on Sunday, March 23. Our very own **Policy & Programs Director Caroline Sumpter** (center), who is also Mayor Pro Tem of Red Springs, NC, moderated a conversation with **Councilwoman Angeline K. David** (left) and **Richmond County Board of Elections Member Crystal Morrison** (right).

The participants at the salon contributed to the lively discussion about civics at the local level. Thank you to our amazing ladies for fostering a fruitful and thought-provoking discussion! Our next sessions will be on **March 30** and **April 6**, where the topics will be **Entrepreneurship** and **Health, Stress, and Wellness**.



If you or someone you know live in Richmond County (especially women 18 - 40ish), sign up or share the [registration link!](#)

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



On February 13, we launched our first **Urgent Conversation** session around the **North Carolina Supreme Court Race** and **Jefferson Griffin's challenge of over 60,000 ballots**. Moderated by **Executive Director Cynthia Wallace**, our expert panelists included **Democracy NC's Policy Director Katelin Kaiser**, **Common Cause NC's Campaigns Manager Gino Nuzzolillo**, and **Union County Board of Elections Chair Cynthia Singleton**.

The conversation took a deep dive into Griffin's legal challenge and how it undermines North Carolinian's constitutional right to vote. We are grateful to all who joined in on the conversation live! You can find our Urgent Conversation on [YouTube here](#).

Be on the lookout for our next **Urgent Conversation** coming up in May as we discuss protecting education for rural North Carolina!



We have also been participating in a series of on-the-ground efforts to spread the word about this issue. On **February 21**, **Executive Director Cynthia Wallace** and **Program Assistant Kia Smith** attended rallies on Griffin's challenge led by **Common Cause NC**. We were incredibly proud of our many neighbors who stood in solidarity to express their outrage over the threat to their voting rights.



ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENT

We're over **100 days** past the 2024 election and the North Carolina Supreme Court Race is *still going on*. Jefferson Griffin's challenge of over 60,000 ballots poses a real threat to the outcomes of future elections and could undermine the voice of the many North Carolinians who legally and fairly cast their ballots in the 2024 Supreme Court Election. What is even more troubling is **his challenge disproportionately questions the ballots of black and brown residents**, ~3600 of whom are in our focus counties.



Organizing Director **Nisea Moses** led our team's participation in phone banking with **Carolina Federation** to make those on the Griffin List aware of their ballot being challenged and give them the tools to fix it. **[Keep your eye out for New Rural Project-led phone banking opportunities by following our Mobilize page.](#)**

We urge you to continue to share **[The Griffin List Tool](#)** with anyone you know, even if they are not on the list. If you recognize anyone on the list, please let them know their vote is being challenged, and ask them to contact their county board of elections to understand why they are on the list.

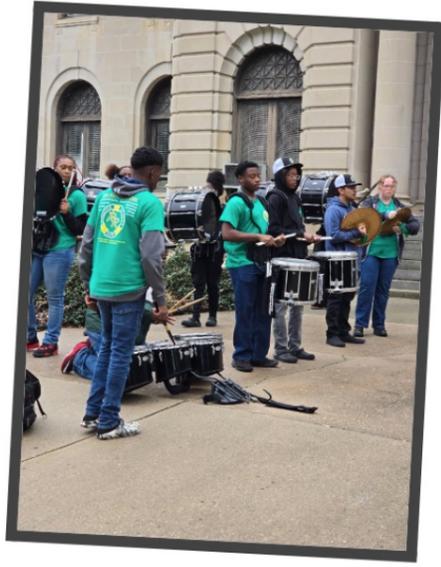
OTHER UPDATES

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebrations

In January, we popped out for **Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend** for some community events! On **January 17**, **Organizing Director Nisea Moses**, **Organizer Jarvis Peguese**, and **Program Assistant Kia Smith** attended the **Dr. MLK Jazzy Day Event** at the **HOLLA! Center** in Morven, NC. The event boasted some great live jazz tunes featuring performances from local talent.



On **January 18**, in addition to the team members above, NRP team members **Eric Reeves**, Communications Associate, **Caroline Sumpter**, Program & Policy Director, and a few of our local volunteers participated in the **Richmond County MLK Parade** where community members were commemorated for their inspiring service to their neighborhoods and towns. Congrats to the students who were honored for their astounding MLK Day essays and artwork!



On **January 31**, **Program Assistant Kia Smith** and **Board Chair Jamie Hildreth** attended **Anson County Partnership for Children's Barn Blast**, their biggest annual fundraiser for schools and education! They represented us well as we connected with our partners and gave back to Anson County students.

On **February 22**, **Las Amigas Incorporated's** Red Springs, NC chapter hosted the **Harambee Breakfast** to honor trailblazers in the community. **Executive Director Cynthia Wallace** was the keynote speaker for the program and highlighted the overlapping focus issues between NRP and Las Amigas. **Policy & Programs Director Caroline Sumpter (a Las Amigas member)** facilitated the program, and **Program Assistant Kia Smith** attended. We thank the ladies of Las Amigas for their beautiful event and great work within the community!



Don't forget to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and subscribe to our [YouTube Channel](#) to keep up with our activities and information about what's happening in North Carolina!

Thanks for reading! We appreciate you!

Team New Rural Project

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VOLUNTEER



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