



Celebrating
25
Years



Environmental
Education Center

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT



(910) 750-5876



Info@SturgeonCity.org



SturgeonCity.org

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Champion environmental and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) education, shaping the future by nurturing leaders and stewards of both the environment and the sciences.

Vision

Our vision embraces a future where Sturgeon City's environmental and STEAM education sparks transformative change. We foresee vibrant communities guided by individuals who are not just passionate environmental stewards but also innovative thinkers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.

Core Values

- 1 Educational Excellence and Innovation** Focusing on providing top-tier environmental and STEAM education while fostering a culture of curiosity and innovation.
- 2 Environmental Stewardship** Prioritizing the protection and preservation of the environment while nurturing a deep respect for the natural world.
- 3 Empowerment and Leadership Development** Empowering individuals to become leaders and agents of change, both in environmental conservation and within STEAM disciplines.
- 4 Community Collaboration and Inclusion** Actively engaging the community, promoting diversity and inclusion to inspire, support, and collaborate in achieving the organization's mission and vision.

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Community Partners,

For a quarter of a century, Sturgeon City has served as a space where curiosity takes root, science comes alive, and our community connects deeply with the environment. Following our 25th anniversary celebration last September, we want to express our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you. Your generosity, dedication, and shared vision have made 25 years of transformative hands-on learning possible.

Reflecting on where we started and how far we have come is inspiring, but our focus is firmly on the road ahead. As we step into our 26th year, that momentum is already building. We recently launched our STEAM on the Go Bus, taking Sturgeon City programs directly out into the community to reach students and families right where they are.

At the same time, we are actively looking ahead to Phase II of our center's expansion. This next major phase will allow us to deepen our impact, expand our program capacity, and welcome even more field trips, community events, and future innovators through our doors.

None of this growth happens in isolation. It happens because a community comes together to invest in education, environmental stewardship, and the next generation. Thank you for being the foundation of our past 25 years and the driving force behind our bright future.

With gratitude,

LISA MURABITO
Executive Director

2025-2026 Board of Directors

Dr. Don Herring, Chair

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Pamela Trafton, Secretary

Charles Efird, Director

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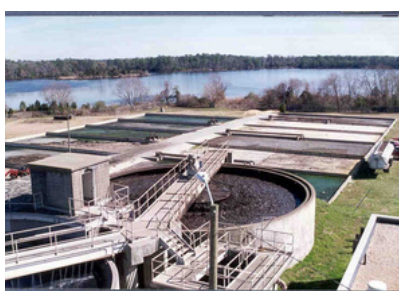
Franky Howard, Director

Dr. Jay Levine, Director

Krystal Phillips, Director

Tydrea Russell, Director

Lauren Wargo, Director



25 years of progress!



2000-2026 Program And Events Numbers

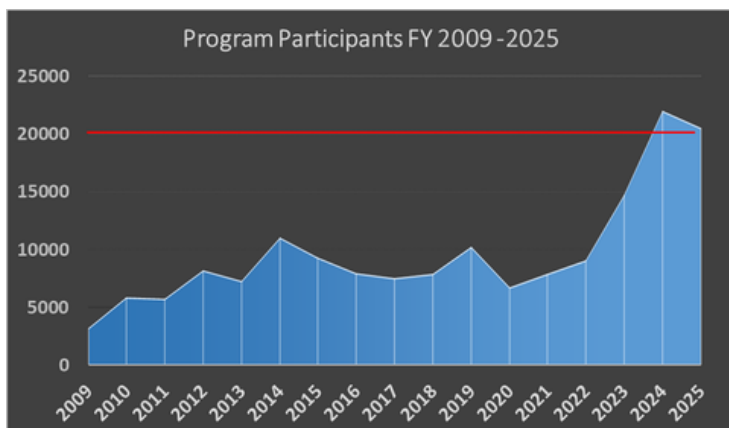
3180+

Programs and Events

185,000+

Participants

62% Increase over the last five years



*"We love the
opportunities
that Sturgeon
City brings to
our
community.
Thank you!"
- Karen Escala*



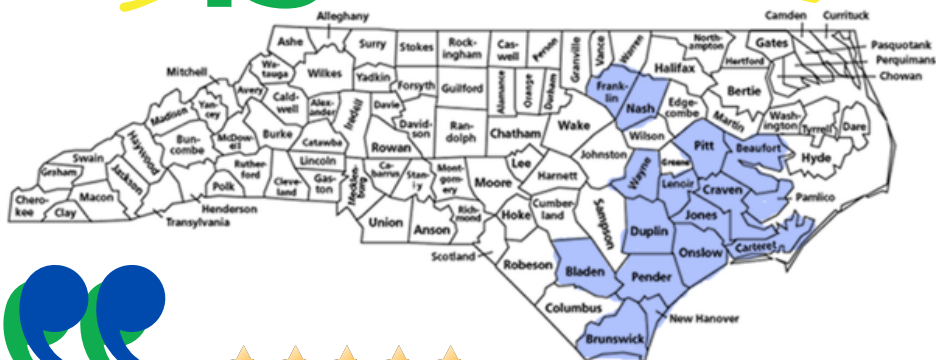


336

Programs and Events

20,459
Participants

15 Counties served
over the last 2 years



"Sturgeon City Environmental Education Center is truly a hidden gem in Jacksonville! A beautiful place to learn about nature, conservation, and local wildlife. The trails, exhibits, and programs are fun, educational, and perfect for all ages. Friendly staff and a peaceful atmosphere make this a must-visit spot in Eastern North Carolina!" - Brent Vines

July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026 Program and Events Breakdown



Field Trip

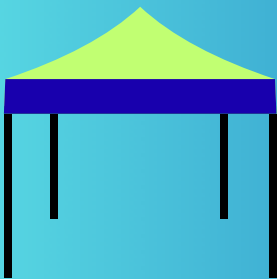
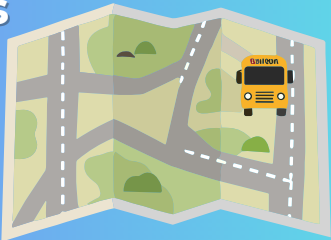
100 Field Trips

6,754 Participants

Out of County Field Trips

28 Out of County
Field Trips

1,875 Participants



Outreaches

32 Outreaches

6,565 Participants

Mission-Based Events

10 Events

2,612 Participants





Expanding Our Reach: STEAM on the Go Bus

As Sturgeon City's impact expands across the region, our Environmental Education Center has reached a pivotal milestone. While we are proud of this growth, we have hit a physical capacity limit. During peak months, our schedule is fully booked with field trips and programs, forcing us to turn away additional groups simply due to a lack of available indoor and outdoor space. To offset this challenge, we have significantly expanded our outreach efforts to bring high-quality environmental and STEAM education directly to schools that might otherwise miss out.

To power this expanded vision, Sturgeon City launched its new STEAM on the Go Bus. The bus is generously sponsored by Jagger's of Jacksonville and it was unveiled on June 26, 2026, exactly seven years after our center's building opened. The vehicle transports presentation setups, activity gear, and educators directly to school front doors. By bringing high-energy field trips straight to classrooms, "STEAM on the Go" helps bridge the gap and expand our capacity until our Phase II facility expansion is underway, ensuring our high-impact science programming reaches students even when our building is full.

Sponsored By: JAGGERS

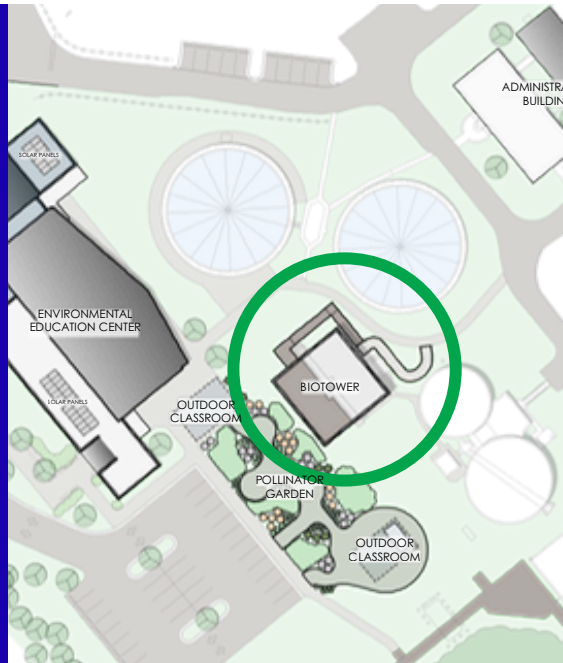


Phase II

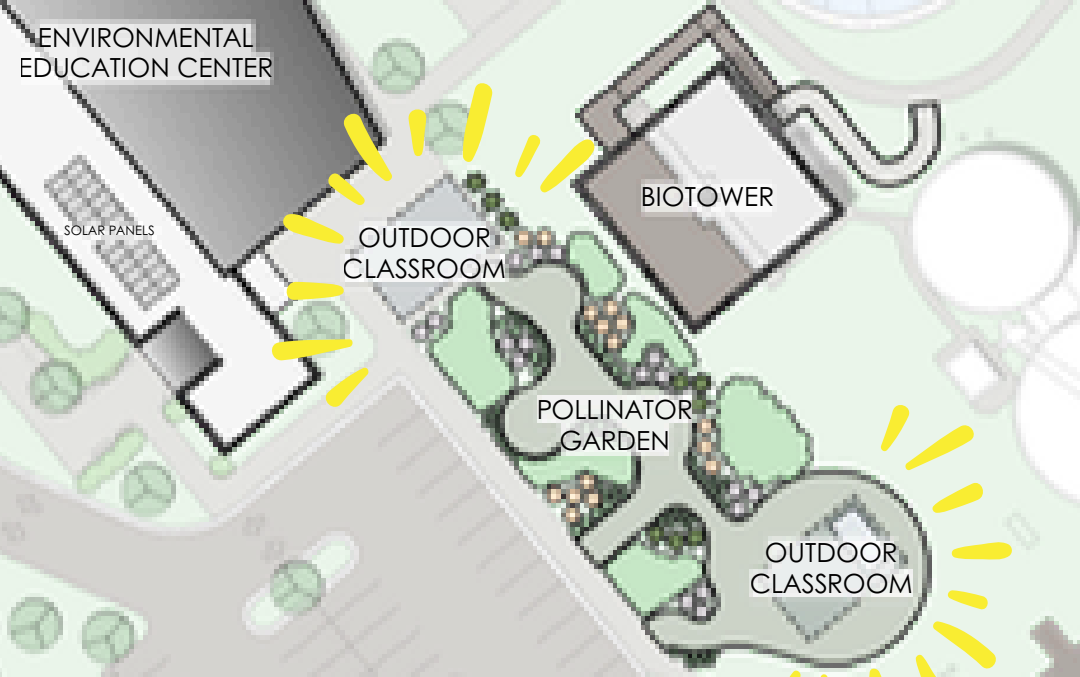
Phase II is the solution to our "good problem" of being in high demand. We are imagining a vibrant hub of discovery that expands our footprint and our impact.

Designed to welcome even more field trips, community events, and future environmental and STEAM leaders, this major project will feature two outdoor classrooms, a pollinator garden, exhibit space, a new indoor classroom, reception area, gift shop, and administrative spaces.

Transforming the iconic Biotower into an engaging open-air exhibit, a living testament to the Wilson Bay Initiative and the fascinating story of the former wastewater treatment plant's evolution into the environmental haven we know today.

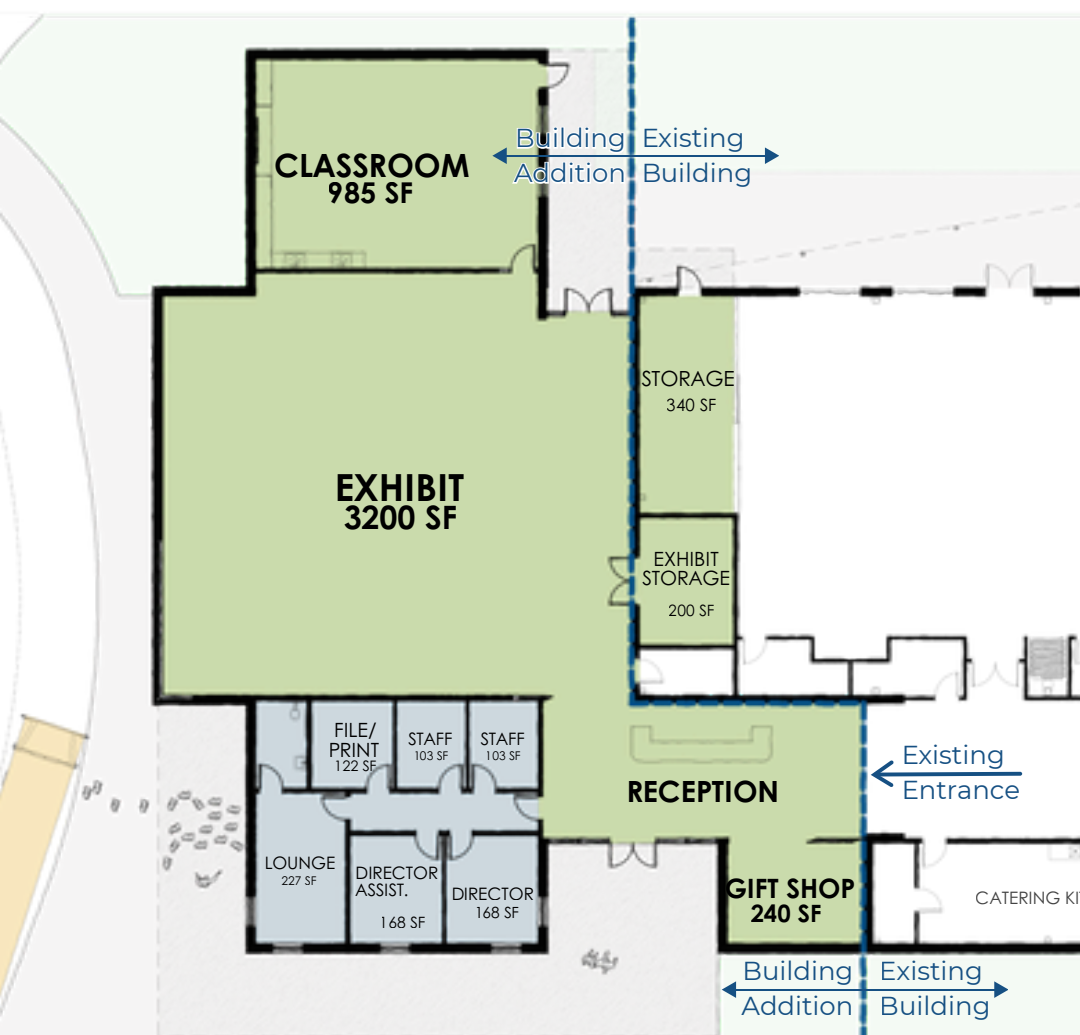


ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER



Our 'Green Time, Not Screen Time' initiative is more than just a slogan; it's a response to the mental and physical health needs of our children. Phase II provides the opportunity where students can put down the tablet and pick up a microscope, engaging with nature in a way that boosts creativity and reduces stress.





Exhibits: Local Flora and Fauna with biofacts, Coastal Ecosystem and Oysters, Fossils and Geology, Pollination, STEAM with interactive activities, and Solar Power





Stewardship for the Next 25 Years!

Phase II is an investment in impact. We are building on 25 years of proven results to ensure the next generation is even better served.



**Let's spark that
change together for
the next 25 years.**

From the Dock to Their Future: Two Sisters Carry Sturgeon City With Them



For sisters Megan and Cora, Sturgeon City has been more than a place to attend summer camp it has been a place to learn, grow, make memories, and eventually give back.

Their Sturgeon City story began as young participants in a variety of youth programs, where some of their favorite childhood memories were made outdoors. For both sisters, crabbing stands out as a special part of their experience. Megan remembers spending time on the dock toward the end of camp sessions, patiently waiting for a crab to tug on her line. Those simple summer moments became lasting memories.

Years later, the sisters returned to Sturgeon City in a new role: volunteers. Both Megan and Cora volunteered with Sturgeon City's summer camp during their junior and senior years of high school, giving them the opportunity to experience the program from a new perspective.

For Megan, volunteering brought her childhood memories full circle. She remembered spending time in the Learning Center as a camper and watching the new main building take shape over the years. Returning as a volunteer allowed her to help younger children discover science, explore the outdoors, and learn about the world around them.



Summer Camp 2014



Spooktacular 2025

"For me, being able to help the younger generation learn about science and the world around us really took me back in time from when I was a camper many years ago," Megan shared.



Cora also treasured her time volunteering at summer camp. She enjoyed working with younger campers and seeing their excitement as they learned and participated in activities. For her, volunteering was an opportunity to give back to a program that had been an important part of her own childhood.



While the sisters are pursuing different academic paths, both credit Sturgeon City with helping shape the way they see the world.

Megan plans to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she will major in Global Studies, with plans to minor in Spanish and Political Science. Her long-term goal is to attend law school and eventually work with the United Nations, developing policies that benefit communities around the world while also protecting the environment. Although she is not pursuing a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) career, Megan says her experiences at Sturgeon City gave her a lasting appreciation for the importance of environmental stewardship.



*"Crabbing at Sturgeon will forever hold a special memory and part of childhood growing up in Jacksonville."
- Megan*



"Sturgeon City sparked my love for science and motivated me to pursue STEM and engineering." - Cora



"Sturgeon gave me appreciation and awareness of how important and beautiful our planet is," she said.

Cora's experience inspired a different direction. Sturgeon City helped spark her love of science and motivated her to pursue engineering. She will attend Virginia Tech, where she plans to study engineering with an interest in aerospace engineering.

From waiting for a crab to tug on a line as young campers to helping the next generation discover their own interests, Megan and Cora represent the lasting impact of Sturgeon City's programs. Their journey is a reminder that the experiences children have today can become the memories, passions, and opportunities that shape their futures tomorrow.



"Today was absolutely amazing for our homeschool field trip. Paige was so incredibly kind and patient with the kids and SUPER knowledgeable about our subject (the solar system) and related everything in very age appropriate and easy to understand language. 10/10 highly recommend. Thank you, Jamie, for the ease of booking and planning and a huge thank you, Paige, for being an amazing teacher!!!" - Homeschool Parent

Our Event Highlights

2025 LEGO Tournament

Thank you for generous donations of LEGO Competition Boxes: Herring Farms; Rogers CPA of North Carolina, ONWASA, Tim and Tabitha Chadwick, Pamela Trafton, JOEMC, Runyon Photography, The Prep Kitch'n, Express Employment, Michelle Raynor, Sandy Dixon, Home2Suites, Divine Cover to Cover, and Dr. Jay Levine



2025 Teacher Appreciation

Thank you to for their generous donations of prizes: Hilton Garden Inn Jacksonville, NC, Holiday Day Inn Express Jacksonville, Beauty Elements, Burrito Shak, Krispy Kreme, Metro Diner, Cross Ace Hardware, Ferry Tales Youth Theater, Cracked It! Escape Games, Chicken Salad Chick, and Chick-fil-A





2025 Summer Bash



MODERN
Exterminating

MARINE
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION



Silent Auction Donors: Don and Marianne Herring, Home2Suites, Topsail Island Tour Service, Ralph Leeds of RiverDancer Photography, Altitude Trampoline Park Jacksonville, NC, Onslow Fitness, Bogue Sound Distillery, Beauty Elements, Port City Java Jacksonville, Gold's Gym of Jacksonville, Cheddar's of Jacksonville, NC, Jacksonville Ospreys, Barbara Arnett, Sonya Howes, and Beverly and Bill Barr



2025 Fall Family Bingo

Thank you to donors
for their generous
donations of prizes:
Herring Farms; Hilton
Garden Inn
Jacksonville, NC,
Beauty Elements,
Krispy Kreme, Metro
Diner, Cracked It!
Escape Games, Texas
Roadhouse, Card My
Yard, Nothing Bundt
Cake, Christy Wing
Realty, Cici's Pizza, and
Cheddar's

2025 Spooktacular

Funded in part by:



**Neighborhood Walmart
Jacksonville**

Thank you to our amazing
partners who attended:
Dr. Anuradha N. Arcot, Aurora
Fossil Museum, Boys & Girls
Clubs of Southeastern NC,
Hammocks Beach State Park,
Karen Beasley Sea Turtle
Rescue and Rehabilitation
Center, NC Aquarium at Pine
Knoll Shores, Onslow County
Library, Onslow County
Museum and Environmental
Education Center, Onslow
County Parks & Recreation,
Onslow County Sheriff,
Onslow Memorial Hospital,
and Wild at Heart Wildlife
Sanctuary



2025 Wizard School After Dark



2025 Jolly Jamboree



2026 Spring Family Bingo

Presenting Sponsor:



Thank you to our generous donors for the prizes:

Herring Farms;
Hilton Garden Inn
Jacksonville, NC,
Nothing Bundt Cake
Jacksonville, and
Chicken Salad Chick



2026 She Innovates: Women in STEM

Sponsored By:



Dr. Carol Johnston



Thank you to our 2026 Women in STEM professional presenters: Sam Athey, PhD, Dr. Anuradha N. Arcot, MD, Stephanie Bailey, Kimberly Belfer, Sabrina Benitez, Jessica S. Bobo, CPA, Mina Bradway, Mary Brandle, Sara E. Campbell, Erika Chacon, Amity Croft, Tabitha Ernst-Chadwick, Grace Ewoldt, Melanie Foster, Jessica Gardner, Michaela Gonta, Amanda Hierl, Kristen Jacobs, Dr. Carol Johnston MD, Jamie Justice, Julia Laine, Kirsten Larsen, Riley Lewis, Amanda Makinson, Stacie Miles, Brooke Miller, Veronica Miller, Emilee Morrison, Christine Nelson, Margaret Norman, Ashley Potter, Lauren Quinton, Autumn Rubio, Dr. Lisa Try, Amy Wangerin, Dr. Stephanie Wangerin Dameworth, Shannon D. Weaver, Montanna Weitzel, Paige Williams, Amanda Wilson, and Lindsey York

2026 Forensic Night After Dark



Thank you to our partners: Onslow County Sheriff, Jacksonville Police Department, Jacksonville Fire Department, and Coastal Carolina Community College.



2026 Earth Day Celebration and Craft Fair

Sponsored By:



sam's club 
Jacksonville Sam's Club #6573



"I genuinely love this area and consider it one of Jacksonville's hidden gems. I've attended the Earth Day celebrations here a couple of times and have always enjoyed the experience they're well-organized and a great way to engage with the community." - Meghan Sanchez



Sturgeon City Environmental Education Center Event Space Rentals

103

Rentals

12,345

Attendees

994

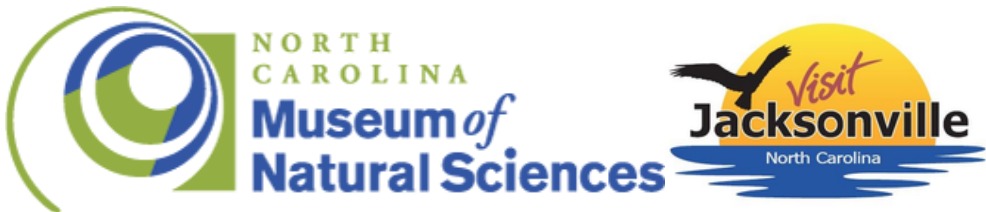
Hotel room nights

*Rentals from July 1, 2025
- June 30, 2026*



*"Wonderful atmosphere employees helpful and friendly.
Great place for parties, galas, wedding receptions or
any social engagements." - Ingrid Littlejohn*

2025-2026 Donors



**DUKE
ENERGY®**

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United Way of Onslow County



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elements
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Walmart
Foundation



Bubba's
33



2025-2026 Donors

This list represents gifts given from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 and includes in-kind and memorial gifts.

17 Blue

Altitude Trampoline Park Jacksonville, NC

Mrs. Ximena and Mr. Alvaro Angulo

Ms. Barbara Arnett

Mrs. Beverly and Mr. Bill Barr

Beauty Elements

Black Friday Fishing Tournament

Bogue Sound Distillery

Book Bauble Shop

Bubba's 33 of Jacksonville, NC

Burrito Shak Jacksonville, NC

Card My Yard Jacksonville, NC

Mr. Tim and Mrs. Tabitha Chadwick

Cheddar's of Jacksonville, NC

Chicken Salad Chick

Chick-fil-A

Christy Wing Realty

Cici's of Jacksonville, NC

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George G. Cleveland

Cracked It Escape Games

Cross Ace Hardware

Divine Cover 2 Cover

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Mr. Darin and Mrs. Jan Farmer

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Gold's Gym of Jacksonville

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Hilton Garden Inn Jacksonville, NC

Holiday Inn Express Jacksonville, NC

Home2Suites Jacksonville, NC

Hope for the Warriors

Ms. Sonya Howes

Hubert and Evelyn Hargett Caring Community Heros

Endowment

Jacksonville Jaycees

Jacksonville Ospreys

Jacksonville Tourism Development Authority

2025-2026 Donors

Dr. Carol Johnston
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Dr. Jay and Mrs. Zena Levine
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Metro Diner of Jacksonville
Milk Road of Jacksonville, NC
Modern Exterminating, Mr. Charles and Mrs. Lea Efird
NAPA of Jacksonville
NC Council for the Arts
NC Science Museum Grant Program
New Bridge Middle School
Nothing Bundt Cake Jacksonville, NC
OceanFest
Onslow Caring Communities Foundation
Onslow County
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Mr. Fernando and Mrs. Elizabeth Schiefelbein
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Texas Roadhouse Jacksonville, NC
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Mr. Joe Thurber
Topsail Island Tour Service
Ms. Pamela Trafton
United Way of Onslow County
Ms. Esmeralda Valdez
Walmart Foundation
Dr. Stephanie Wangerin and Dr. Taylor Dameworth
Mrs. Lauren Wargo
Mr. James Wheeler
Dr. Paul and Mrs. Mary Anne Williams
Mr. Earl and Mrs. Donna Wilson

2000-2026 Donors

STURGEON CITY VISIONARIES: (\$100,000+)

- City of Jacksonville, NC
- Duke Energy Foundation
- Golden LEAF Foundation
- Jacksonville Tourism Development Authority
- Marine Federal Credit Union
- Michael A. Lazzara, NC Senator
- Modern Exterminating, Mr. Charles and Mrs. Lea Efird
- NC Dept Division of Marine Fisheries
- NC Science Museum Grant Program
- Onslow County

STURGEON CITY SOCIETY: (\$50,000 - \$99,999)

- First National Bank
- Golden Corral, Mr. Billy and Mrs. Julee Sewell
- Jones-Onslow EMC
- Martin Family Endowment
- United Way of Onslow County
- Walmart Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation



2000-2026 Donors

STURGEON CITY BENEFACTORS: (\$25,000-\$49,999)

- Anonymous
- Burroughs Wellcome Fund
- Coastal Enterprises
- Glasko Smith Kline Ribbon of Hope
- Onslow Caring Communities Foundation
- PNC Foundation
- Mr. Edwin "Eddie" Rose
- Sanders Ford
- Dr. Robert Sheegog
- SIA Group
- Truist
- Tucker Foundation
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Mr. and Mrs. Huck Venters



STURGEON CITY PATRONS: (\$10,000-\$24,999)

- Black Friday Fishing Tournament
- Brumbaugh, Mu and King, PA
- Coldwell Banker Seacoast Advantage
- First Citizens Bank
- Herring Farms
- Jagger's of Jacksonville, NC
- Mr. George and Mrs. Rosie Jones
- Mr. Ron and Mrs. Rosie Massey
- NC Council for the Arts
- OceanFest
- Parker and Associates
- Ms. Debra Ray, ABA Rental Properties
- Telus
- The McCart Family Foundation



2000-2026 Donors

STURGEON CITY STEWARDS: (\$5,000-\$9,999)

- Mr. John and Mrs. Faye Carter
- Mr. Jeff and Mrs. April Clark
- Mr. Marty and Mrs. Brenda Goldman
- Mr. Glenn Hargett and Mr. Everett Vaughn
- Kohl's Cares
- Ms. Sheila Pierce Knight
- NC Soil and Water Conservation
- Mr. John Rouse
- New River Rotary
- Norcross Wildlife Foundation
- Piney Green Electric
- In Memory of John O. Stevenson
- Mr. James Wheeler



2025-2026 Development Committee

Bill Barr, Chair

Lashea Cavers, Vice Chair

Charles Efird

Glenn Hargett

Dr. Don Herring

John Kay

Tydrea Russell





Environmental
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