

Who we are

Keep Cyastonia Beautiful Mission

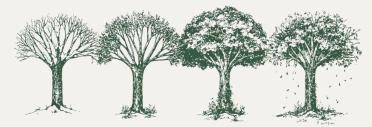
Our mission is to make the community at large knowledgeable and responsible in natural resource conservation, solid waste handling, recycling, litter abatement, and beautification.

OUR DIRECTIVES WORK THROUGH:

Heightened public awareness
Beautification of major entranceways
Tree plantings
Litter control and prevention
Public/private partnerships
State and local grant funding
Increased citizen participation

Keep Gastonia Beautiful, Inc. is an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., which is a national non-profit, public education organization dedicated to protecting natural beauty and improving waste handling practices in American communities. Keep America Beautiful, Inc. continues to educate millions of Americans on all aspects of waste handling and beautification practices, improving quality of life issues across the country.

Our major goals for the future will focus on enhancing the appearance of our community and expanding and improving our "green" efforts.



KEEP GASTONIA BEAUTIFUL, INC.

KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE







Board of Directors

KEEP GASTONIA BEAUTIFUL BOARD MEMBERS

Brad Best

Bill Blackwelder

Sam Braxton

Jim Burke

Trent Conard

Rebecca Edison

Alvin Ellison

Sandy DeMarco

Emily Ehinger

Barbara Emerson

Kristi Ferguson

Randy Gantt

Dana Harper

Kim Holder

Angie Karchmer

Nan Kirlin

Cary Rodriguez

Suzanne Simmons

Brittany Stroupe

David Stultz

Annastacia Tooke

Pam Underwood

Steven Will

Bill Young

KEEP GASTONIA BEAUTIFUL STAFF

Juliann Lehman, Administrator
Lana DuPont, Grants Manager
Jeffie Hardin, Community Engagement Coordinator
Julie Heath, Special Projects
Breanne Horne, School Specialist
Barney Huddleston, In-House Recycling Technician



Beaufiful

OFFICE

150 S. York Street Gastonia, NC 28052 704-869-6906

Committees

ART

Provides interactive opportunities for all age groups, creating excitement and interest for the community through designs and projects.

BEAUTIFICATION

Focuses on tree plantings on thoroughfares and public properties. The "Yard of the Week" program awards residents of Gastonia for their attractive landscaping.

BEE CITY USA

Oversees and promotes the protection of pollinators in our city. This committee is responsible for the education of the public through an annual event and also reports to the Xerces Society yearly on their progress.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Develops programs that recruit new volunteers and promote community partnerships. This committee serves as the liaison between civic groups and other cooperative organizations to co-sponsor efforts that fulfill Keep Gastonia Beautiful goals and objectives and build commitment. Other events include: Earth Day, Community Foundation Run, Christmas Tree Lighting, and other events.

EDUCATION

Primarily focuses on providing environmental education for public and private schools, civic clubs, churches, and neighborhoods.

FUNDRAISING

Promotes activities that will support and enhance our programming. This committee is also a means to spread our mission and have a deeper reach into the community.

LITTER/RECYCLING

Oversees litter prevention programs and recycling awareness through educational programming. Promotes local cleanups and addresses efforts in solid waste handling and litter abatement. Promotes creative solutions to solid waste handling in businesses and the community and shall encourage recycling and waste reduction activities through the promotion of the ideals of the Keep America Beautiful system.

2023 Accomplishments

FUNDRAISERS

Made a total of \$31,286.76 through our various fundraising efforts

- Black Gold Sales \$25,131
 - Started a self service station so citizens can purchase Black Gold by the bucket for those who don't have a truck or don't need an entire truck load, very successful addition
- Living Tree Tribute \$450
- City Employee Golf Tournament \$2,853.46
- Community Foundation Run \$5,420.30

INHOUSE RECYCLING STATS

• Collected **32,099 pounds/16.05 tons** of cardboard/office paper from city departments and diverted them from the landfill

SHRED DAY EVENTS

- April and November events collected **23,460 pounds/11.73 tons** of sensitive documents that were diverted out of the landfill and sent to Sonoco to be recycled.
- Goodwill yielded **5,301 pounds** of electronics diverted from the landfill to be recycled.
- **185 pounds** of medicines collected to be properly disposed of by the Controlled Substances Coalition.



Fundraisers \$31,286.76



In-House Recycling 32,099 lbs/16.05tons



Shred Events collected 23,460 lbs.

2023 Accomplishments

FARM TO TABLE

- Through a generous grant from Dominion Energy in late 2022, we rolled out an amazing program this summer that served over 460 students. This partnership was between the Gastonia Farmers Market, RAMS Kitchen, and Keep Gastonia Beautiful. Students learned where their food comes from, met with local farmers, and prepared a healthy snack with the staff of RAMS Kitchen.
 - Lessons were presented to students at Schiele Museum Camps, First Wesleyan Summer Programs, T. Jeffers Center, Erwin Center, Warlick YMCA
- Staff then created a curriculum to take to schools that aligns with the fourth grade North Carolina Curriculum.
- The final part of this grant has funded healthy, fresh and affordable food boxes to be purchased at a discount for RAMS Kitchen patrons on Thursdays. Being able to bring fresh produce directly to the Highland Neighborhood was the biggest reason to apply for this grant from Dominion Energy. The Highland Neighborhood is in a food desert and being able to provide this service and support RAMS Kitchen's mission is a great way to give back to the community.









2023 Accomplishments

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY GARDEN - 604 N. YORK

- Dedicated the Garden in honor of Gastonia's First Mid-Wife "Aunt Charlotte" McClee.
- Received a bench from Tindol Subaru that supports the mission of our garden and was made from recycled candy wrappers.
- Had groups from Gastonia Freedom School, Gaston Day School, Gaston Early College, Boy Scout Troops, and others that helped make our garden a place we can all be proud of.

Beyond gardening, it is Keep Gastonia Beautiful's hope that this corner in the Highland Community will be a continuation of the art initiative in the community, provide a space to gather for neighbors and area churches, an outdoor space to educate children from nearby schools and a place that will make the neighborhood proud.





ALL PLOTS SOLD!



OVER 2,058 VOLUNTEER HOURS SPENT IN THE GARDEN





Who is Aunt Charlotte McClee?

"Aunt" Charlotte McClee was born a Slave in South Carolina in 1846 and died in 1957, at the age of 111. She came to Gastonia in 1870 "before Gastonia was here," as Gastonia wasn't founded until 1877, and became the first midwife. She delivered hundreds of babies, both black and white and saved many women's lives. Making her way to where Main Avenue now is, it was a much different vision back then when it was "only woods and a few log cabins." In her yard, she had herbal plants she'd dry and use to heal sick people, for child birth, to make tonics, medicines and salves for pain relief. She loved flowers and loved to see wild flowers. "If I could just get out to see the flowers!" she exclaimed. "I would just like to ride along the road and see the wildflowers once more."

What a better way to acknowledge this historical woman, through a living memorial of flowers, herbs and love in a

What a better way to acknowledge this historical woman, through a living memorial of flowers, herbs and love in a community garden. Now, each year as seeds are planted, as children come to learn the art of gardening, as the folks of the Highland Community reap the goodness of the soil, they will feel the presence of "Aunt" Charlotte in this garden. She truly left a rich and lasting legacy in budding Gastonia.

New Sign Installed at Gastonia Farmers Market

This was a collaborative project between City of Gastonia, Gaston County Solid Waste, Gastonia Farmers Market, and Keep Gastonia Beautiful.

The old signage was nearly undetectable to oncoming traffic due to setbacks and dated landscaping. The key to this redesign was to create a special sense of place at this industrial looking entrance to the Farmers Market. Adding an old farm truck as the base of the sign has drawn a lot more attention and provided better visibility to the Farmers Market and Gaston County Recycling Center.

Once the truck was installed and landscaping was placed we knew the final touch would be to paint it red...then the project was officially complete!

Huge thanks to Sign Connections for allowing us to think outside the box and get this project complete.









Grants Awarded in 2023 \$10,000

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

"Storywalk Project" \$5,000

A StoryWalk® is a fun activity that engages families in literacy and getting active. Thanks to the generous grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, Keep Gastonia Beautiful staff have been able to install pages from children's book into displays along the paved lakefront path at Rankin Lake. Families have the ability to walk a short paved path and read a page of a book at each stop. Since the stands were installed we have created 6 different books and are working on more to keep the interest of those who visit Rankin Lake regularly.







Grants Awarded in 2023 \$10,000

KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL MLK JR. BLVD COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT GRANT

Word Mural at Erwin Center \$5,000

We were awarded funding through a Keep America Beautiful MLK Corridor Grant. The funding allowed us to work with local artist, Ezekiel Clay, Jr. to highlighted all the prominent people, places and things that make the Highland Community a connected neighborhood in our city through an artistic word mural.

At the heart of the Highland Community rests one of the neighborhood's most treasured amenities, the Erwin Community Center. Erwin Center has received several facility updates this year including a new parking lot, a new swimming pool and resurfaced basketball courts. Keep Gastonia Beautiful is proud of this project as it was able to bring back memories of Highland's past with a vision to inspire hope for the community's future.













Keep America Beautiful National Award Winners



One of our top accomplishments of 2023 was being honored by Keep America Beautiful at the February 2023 National Conference for our "Great Place to Bee" project which included our educational bees along Main Avenue and our 30 foot mosaic art piece made out of recycled glass.

Learn more about the project here: https://gastonianc.gov/public-art/great-place-to-bee.html







Beautification Impacts

- CATAWBA RIVERKEEPER'S LITTER GITTER AT DUHART CREEK
 - Collected 43 pounds of trash and 58.5 pounds of recycling for a total of 101.5 pounds
- OTHER WATER RELATED CLEANUPS
 - o 115.5 pounds of litter collected by 23 volunteers
- RIVERSWEEP HELD ON OCTOBER 7, 2023
 - 32 volunteers collected 986 pounds of trash out of Catawba and Avon
 Creeks
- TRINITY HANDS
 - Collected 4,003 bags of litter off the roadways
- GREAT AMERICAN CLEANUP
 - 1,636 pounds of trash cleaned up with the help of 147 people from 10
 city departments and 11 community groups.
- ADOPT A STREET
 - o 35 groups participating across the city



Water Cleanups 1,203 lbs.



Trinity
Hands
4,003 bags



GAC 1,636 lbs trash

Visuals of Beautification Impacts















Community Events

Earth Day @ Schiele
Riverfest
Beetopia
Hope Fest
Autumn Fest @ Schiele
Storywalk Event @ Rankin Lake



Community Engagement

This year we engaged with a variety of community and school groups:

Gastonia Freedom School
Gaston Day School
Gaston Early College
Laurel East Community
Gastonia Citizens Academy
Fairmont Park Neighborhood Association
Master Gardener Volunteers
Boy Scout Troop
Commissioners School of Excellence Students
First United Methodist Church
Myers Methodist
Highland Community Association



The faces of our community engagement















KGB gives back to Schools

Beautification Grants – 9 schools applied for and were awarded the 2023 School Beautification Grant. This grant gives each school \$300 toward campus beautification. Projects include enhancing school entrances, building a raised bed vegetable garden, and installing bird houses. The following schools received this grant:

·Chapel Grove Elementary
·Webb Street School
·Woodhill Elementary
·York Chester Middle School
·Piedmont Community Charter School (Elementary)
·Highland School of Technology
·Hawks Nest STEAM Academy
·Grier Middle School
·Brookside Elementary







Awarded \$2,700 in grants... KGB gives back to Gaston County Schools



Art Contests for Schools

This contest was designed to celebrate the beauty of trees and to celebrate Arbor Day! Artwork submitted were original pieces and had to include trees in the design. All winning pieces were on display at the Gaston County Library Main Branch the entire month of April to celebrate Arbor Day.

There were 50 entries from 7 schools. Our board of directors voted on a first, second, and third place in the 4 categories: K-2nd grade, 3rd – 5th grade, middle school, and high school.

Arbor Day Poster Contest



Recycled Art Contest



This contest was created to promote recycling and the reuse of materials emphasizing creativity and innovation, in line with Keep Gastonia Beautiful's mission to divert waste from landfills and promote recycling. Submissions had to be comprised of recycled/reused materials. We asked that they be creative and wow, they were!!!

There were 51 entries from 10 schools.
There were 4 grade categories: K-2, 3-5,
Middle and High School with 1st, 2nd and
3rd place winners per category. These
winning art pieces are on display at the
Gaston County Main Library for the
month of November.

Environmental Education in the Schools January -December 2023

Keep Gastonia Beautiful staff educate students on a variety of environmental topics that are tied to their NC Curriculum. At this time we mainly focus on elementary education but are looking to expanding to Middle School/High School and beyond in the future! These programs tie what they are learning in the classroom to the real world and how they can help make a cleaner, greener, more sustainable future.







4,560 students





Environmental Education in the Schools January -December 2023

Louie the Litter Bug



2,040 students

Students learned to waste less and reuse more. They became environmentally aware of what they can do in their classroom and community.

Duffy - Sea Survival



851 students 7 schools Students were read "Duffy's Lucky Escape" and learned to identify single use plastic, reduce waste, and reuse more.

Earth Bracelets



451 students 5 schools Students learned the importance of plants, soil, sun, water, and air for both animals and people and made a bracelet to remind them how to protect these resources.

Wartville Wizard



321 students 3 schools Students were read a book called the "Wartville Wizard" and were able to explain the problems of litter and how we can help reduce litter in the community.

Bee the Change



179 students 2 schools Miss Polly Nator, our bee mascot, taught students the importance of bees and how they can "Bee" the change in their community.

Environmental Education in the Schools January - December 2023

Quest for Less

178 students 1 school Students learned to understand what it means to reduce waste and investigate ways that they can create less waste in their daily lives.

How Change Happens



168 students 1 school Students learned about the different ways that change can happen in their school, neighborhoods, and throughout Gaston County. Students made a difference by doing a campus cleanup.

Farm to Table



168 students 1 school Students learned about prominent agricultural products in the 3 different North Carolina regions and their role in the economic growth of that area.

Vermicompost



122 students 2 schools Students learned to examine the importance of composting and how they can get started with creating their own compost bins at home.

Impacts of Litter



72 students 1 school Students learned to comprehend how litter harms, or impacts the environment. This lesson included an interactive presentation and short video on the impacts of littering.

New Initiatives in 2023

BAGS TO BENCHES

This is a newly formed partnership between Gaston County Solid Waste and Keep Gastonia Beautiful. TREX® sponsors local recycling programs in communities throughout the country. If we collect more than 1,000 pounds of soft film plastics and packaging in a 12-month span we will be awarded a bench. We began this partnership on 11/15/23 and by the end of December we have collected 649 pounds. We look forward to reaching our goal much earlier than anticipated and will continue to collect until our time is up. This has been an incredible partnership and we see that those who are participating are excited to have a space to properly recycle this hard to recycle item.



7 locations throughout Gaston County



649 lbs Collected from 11/15 - 12/31/23



VOTE WITH YOUR "BUTTS"

Keep Gastonia Beautiful has partnered with TerraCycle to start recycling cigarette butts. We have installed a cigarette "ballot box" so those who would typically toss their butts on the ground can now "vote" for simple things like "cats or dogs," "hot dogs or hamburgers," etc. This first test box is located at the bus station on Oakland and Main Avenue.

Did you know cigarette butts are the world's most littered item, with about 4.5 trillion cigarettes discarded each year worldwide and 9.7 billion cigarette butts discarded along roadways and waterways in the United States? And most cigarette filters are made of plastic fibers, which don't break down naturally and will persist in our environment when littered.

Removing this litter from our communities through organized cleanups is just the beginning of keeping cigarette butts out of our parks and waterways.

We hope to have amazing statistics next year to share with you!



2023 Year of the Trail Pliking Project

Definition: Picking up litter + hiking

PLIKING STAND @ CROWDERS MOUNTAIN

• Keep Gastonia Beautiful challenges you and your friends to get outside and keep our community looking clean and green!

In an effort to promote clean and green trails in Gastonia, we have placed two Pliking stands at Crowders Mountain. The Rangers and Friends of Crowders are thankful for our efforts and we have replaced the bags many times since the Spring! We hope to have more stands installed in 2024 with the assistance of an Eagle Scout.







IN THE MEDIA



Click on each picture to read the full article.



Affiliate Spotlight: Award-Winning Pollinator Art in Gastonia, NC

Author: Juliann Lehman, Keep Gastonia...

beecityusa.org

Gastonia a 'Great place to bee'

0 X = *

Keep Gastonia Beautiful received an Innovation Award from Keep America Beautiful at its national conference in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 22. Gastonia's program is one of nine awards recognized this year. The project is intended to creatively educate the community about the importance of bees and pollinators through public art.

"To have this project recognized on a national level by Keep America Beautiful as such an honor. We are excited to share why Gastonia is such a "Great Place to Bee" with citizens and visitors to our downtown," said Juliann Lehman, Keep Gastonia Beautiful administrator. Being able to combine art and recycling into the project really allowed us to showcase our mission in a meaningful

About the Bees



Featuring the theme, "Great Place to

Bee," the Keep Gastonia Beautiful staff highlight its Bee City USA affiliation by



Gastonia honors one of its first citizens

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@ WSOC TV/jun 20, 2023

My Turn: A new recycling program to begin in Gaston County

a.m. ET Nov. 12, 2023 | Updated 5:07 a.m. ET Nov. 12, 2023

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Just when you thought things couldn't get any better, things are. Gaston County Solid Waste and Recycling, together with Keep Gastonia Beautiful and Food Lion will be working with TREX to reclaim plastic bags, plastic overwrap (from cases of water or soda), dry cleaning bags, bubble wrap, plastic mailers (like the envelopes from Amazon), plastic sleeves that your Gaston Gazette comes in, clean plastic bags from the vegetables you buy at the grocery store, cereal bag liners, ice bags, clean Ziploc and other resealable bags and bread bags.

I had written and article a while back, reminding you all that these bags can be returned to some area stores. Well, we know how hard it is to remember to bring recyclables with you to the grocery





Summer program teaches Gastonia kids healthy eating from farmers, cooks

The program is being led by Keep Gastonia Beautiful, with funding from

WSOC TV Jun 29, 2023

Teaching children the process, importance of farm-to-table

Chloe Collins The Gaston Gazette



A natural gas company has funded a program to lead the conversation on conservation with local youth.

Dominion Energy has partnered with Keep Gastonia Beautiful and R.A.M.S. Kitchen to bring a summer program to Gastonia that will allow children to learn how farm-to-table eating plays a role in the environment.

More than 500 of Gaston County's children signed up for the program through summer camps with community partners including the Schiele Museum, Boys and Girls Club, T. Jeffers Recreation Center, First Wesleyan Church, Warlick YMCA, the Dream Center and the Erwin Center.



Go Gaston NC

Exploring the Gaston County Art Trail: Where Nature and Creativity Converge

As part of 2023 NC Year of the Trail a year-long celebration honoring the state's extensive network of trails, Gaston County Tourism Development has created the Gaston County Art Trail, inviting visitors to embark on an artistic journey that intertwines with the splendor of the

Wart Warttrail



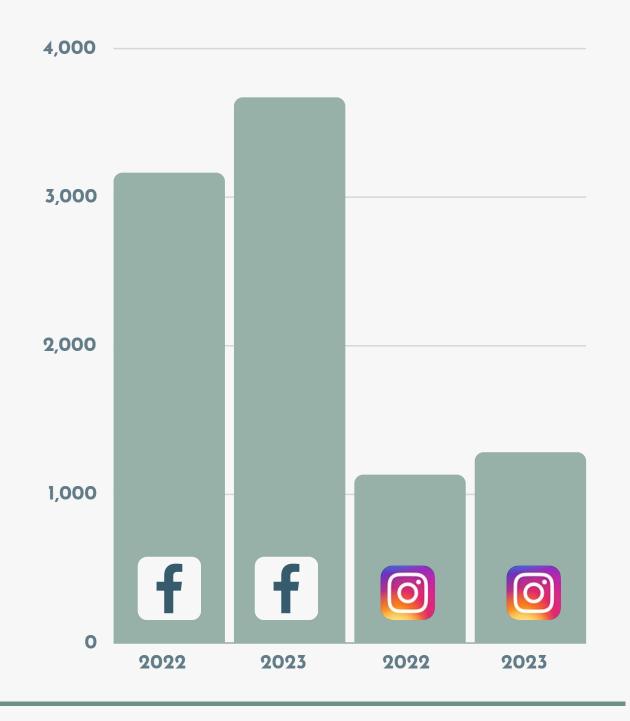
Social Media Stats

3,672

1,284

2023 Facebook Followers

2023 Instagram Followers



COST BENEFITS

2,505

Total number of Volunteer Hours

\$29.95

Value of volunteer time per hour

534*

Total number of volunteers

*Number does not take into account that some people volunteer for multiple events.

\$10,000

Grant funding received



Keep Gastonia Beautiful History

- 1977 Became an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful
- 1978 Began Yard of the Week program
- 1981 Planted Bradford Pears on Garrison Blvd
- 1982 Newspaper Recycling started at Schiele Museum
- 1984 Image Committee Originated
- 1987 First Clean Sweep Cleanup Highland Area
- 1988 First Recycling Survey sent to City Residents
- 1990 First Arbor Day Celebration in the City was held
- 1992 First board retreat/First Golf Tournament
- 1993 Began "Swat a Litterbug" program
- 1994 Curbside Recycling Residential started (voluntary)
- 1996 "Twiggy" the Talking Tree debuts for school programming
- 1997 Changed name from Clean City to Keep Gastonia Beautiful
- 1999 "Louie" the Litterbug debut for school programming
- 2000 Planted 2,000 trees around the city including Hudson Blvd area
- 2002 Recycling began at Farmer's Market location
- 2003 Fall Yard of the Week program began
- 2006 First annual tree lighting
- 2007 Bronze Statue at City Hall honored the 30th Anniversary
- 2008 Won "Cool Cities" award NC Sierra Club
- 2010 Dedicated Ghillie Dhu "Tree Spirit" art installation at former Center City Park
- 2011 Created a Facebook page
- 2011 Marbles on Main artwork installed at Garland Center
- 2013 Received \$40,000 for the Farmer's Market paving project
- 2013 Highland Community Garden started
- 2014 Held "Strike Out Litter" bowling tournament
- 2015 Railroad underpass lighting and beautification on Airline
- 2016 Maples on main, downtown tree plantings
- 2016 Battle of the Badges fundraiser between fire and police
- 2017 Celebrated 40 years as Keep America Beautiful affiliate
- 2017 Installed "Discursus" artwork at 2nd Avenue/Heritage Park
- 2018 Adopt a Street program started
- 2018 Pole Shed Addition at Farmer's Market complete
- 2018 Bee City USA Designation
- 2019 Held first "Bee City" event (Beetopia)

Keep Gastonia Beautiful History

- 2020 Bee naming contest for new bee puppet: Miss Polly Nator
- 2020 Rolled out Yard of the Week Holiday Lights edition!
- 2021 \$500 grant from Keep NC Beautiful for upgrades to Highland Community Garden
- 2021 Highland Community Garden upgraded with recycled materials and raised beds
- 2021 Received \$22,050 from Glenn Foundation for "Great Place to Bee" project
- 2021 Beetopia Mural added to the Farmers Market Entrance
- 2021 Duke Street Recycling Center Opens
- 2022 Began partnership with Catawba Riverkeepers to clean "Litter Gitter" on Duhart's Creek
- Renovated back of Farmers Market to look the back of a front porch
- 2022 Student artwork applied to 4 storm drains along Lineberger Greenway
- 2022 Ghillie Dhu relocated to Lineberger Park Greenway and dedicated to former KGB Administrator, Pat Johnson.
- 2022 Serenity mosaic column dedicated October 30, 2022
 - o "Great Place to Bee" placemaking bees completed to compliment this project
- 2022 Received \$5,000 from the Community Foundation for "Project Pollinator" to create mini meadows at the fire stations and Farmers Market.
- 2022 Received \$15,000 from Dominion Energy for "Farm to Table Cultivating Opportunity" grant with Farmers Market, KGB and Ram's Kitchen
- 2022 Awarded Innovation Award from Keep America Beautiful
- 2023 Received \$5,000 from Department of Health and Human Services to install a StoryWalk at Rankin Lake
- 2023 Received \$5,000 from Keep America Beautiful to install a word mural at Erwin
- 2023 Installed new digital sign in an old truck at the Farmers Market

Community Partnerships

Boys & Girls Club









































Gaston County Commissioners School
Gaston County Extension Office
Gaston County Solid Waste
Gaston County Library - Main Branch

Gaston County Library - Main Brai Gaston County Jaycees Gaston County Schools Gaston Early College

> Gaston Gazette Girl Scouts P2P

> > Goodwill

Hypertherm

Keep America Beautiful
LaCroix Academy for Performing Art
Master Condenser, Volunteers

Master Gardener Volunteers

Myers Memorial

Parker D Fencing

Savvy Citizen

Schiele Museum

Sonoco Recycling

Teens Changing Gaston County

Tindol Subaru

Trinity Hands

Warlick YMCA