

May 1, 2025

Erica Bullock, Chair, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
773 West Main Street
Sylva NC 28779

Dear Erica and the Chamber Board,

After much thought and prayer, I am submitting my resignation as the Executive Director of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce today (May 1, 2025) effective July 30, 2025, after twenty-six- and one-half years of serving as your Director.

I will be available strategically during the month of July to assist with the annual financial Review, as well as upcoming event details and training to ensure a smooth transition.

I am forever grateful for this amazing opportunity the Chamber has provided for me over the past two- and one-half decades. I have had the privilege of collaborating with wonderful board members, staff members, ambassadors, state, and county leaders. I am a better person because of this awesome opportunity.

Together we have restored a crumbling house into a National Historic Landmark and Chamber Headquarters, and one of the most recognizable structures in Jackson County. We endowed two scholarships at Western Carolina University and Southwestern Community College to assist in providing educational opportunities for the students of Jackson County. Through our partnership with the Tourism Development Authority, we created and trademarked the Nation's first Fly Fishing Trail and successfully established Jackson County as the North Carolina Trout Capital. To create economic vibrancy in downtown Sylva, we founded Concerts on the Creek, now in its 16th season, and one of the signature events in Jackson County. Through creative partnerships and the establishment of in-house chamber publications, we were able to bring back July 4th fireworks, while also securing a tract of land for the display and elevating the celebration with a concert, food trucks and family activities. Together, we have provided over \$150,000 in grant funds to deserving non-profits in Jackson County. We introduced holiday fireworks and partnered with the Town of Sylva to create an official Christmas Tree Lighting event. Over the years, we have held many events and activities during slower times of the year to bring people into the area such as our Tour de Tuck Bicycle Race, Friends Night Out, Kris Kringle Mingle, Boutique Week, Chamber Challenge Golf Tourney, Fishing Festival and more. Together we have established Jackson County as a vibrant hub in Western North Carolina.

I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as your Director representing Jackson County on the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, North Carolina Travel Industry Association, Carolinas Association of Chamber of Executives, as well as on many wonderful local boards and committees serving Dillsboro, Sylva, and Cullowhee.

Together, we have survived a rockslide on I-40, a fire in the historic district of downtown Sylva, an economic recession, bridge construction in Dillsboro, the Covid pandemic, Hurricane Helene flooding in Dillsboro, and ongoing road construction projects. We've held hands as we completed grants, applied for small business loans, and navigated numerous business and technology platforms. We learned together.

I am excited for the Chamber to secure a dynamic visionary leader to serve as its next Executive Director and assist in shaping the future of business advocacy, economic growth and community engagement in the most beautiful place on earth, Jackson County.

During this journey of a lifetime with my chamber members, staff, and board, we raised my children who have now grown into lovely adults with families of their own. I met and married my soulmate along the way, and together we are starting a new chapter in life enjoying adventures with our family and friends. We plan to watch more sunsets, get out on the lake in our kayaks, and enjoy the laughter of our grandson. We are indeed blessed.

It has truly been the privilege and pleasure of my life to serve you and Jackson County. I am humbled and honored, and I am forever appreciative of our members, the board, and this community for their support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julie Spiro Donaldson
Executive Director, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce

Julie Spiro Donaldson personal contact information
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