
JACKSON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE N.C.

May 1, 2025

Erica Bullock, Chair, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

773 West Main Street

Sylva, N.C. 28779

Dear Erica and the Board of Directors,

It is with a great deal of emotion that I am submitting my resignation as Assistant Director of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce today (Thursday, May 1, 2025), effective at the end of our July 4 fireworks and concert event on Friday, July 4, 2025.

It has been the most rewarding professional experience of my life to serve as your Assistant Director. I cannot thank the board and our Executive Director Julie Donaldson enough for believing in me at a time when I was exhausted from 15 years as a newspaper editor. Your trust and confidence led to 11 years and one month of some of the most memorable accomplishments of my career. I am awfully proud of the many positive things we made happen together.

We brought 11 years of Fourth of July fireworks back to Sylva after a short hiatus; we established Jackson County as the N.C. Trout Capital; grew Concerts on the Creek into its 16th season as one of the top six outdoor outdoor concert events in the U.S.; kept a membership of over 400 members despite an ever-evolving economy and a worldwide pandemic; created a popular festival for fishing, music and craft beer; established the annual Friends Night Out event; served as the Main Street Sylva Directors for a year; enhanced our STIR Business After Hours events; created an annual Christmas holiday concert and fireworks event; grew our annual Chamber Challenge golf fundraising event into its 33rd season; and established an annual Open House March Madness two-day event.

We brought the advertising sales and production of the annual Our Town community guide and chamber membership directory in-house and created the "Eating Out in Jackson County" dining guide, which has become one of, if not the most popular products our visitors enjoy. These steps led to increased revenue for the chamber and prevented us from having to "farm out" advertising and graphic design to another company for costly fees. Our social media activity has absolutely skyrocketed over the last 11 years. We reconfigured the interior foot traffic flow of the visitor center, and our printed media materials, banners, flyers, posters, online event promotions and videos have flourished tremendously. Last year, we organized a fundraising effort to create a new outdoor paver patio area for our visitors after celebrating the chamber's 100th anniversary.

Over this time, I've also had the pleasure of serving actively on the Greening Up the Mountains organizing committee for 11 years, acting as the emcee of the festival for about 10 years; sitting on the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for a

year, serving as a part-time Jackson County Public Information Officer for a year during the Covid pandemic, and served as a Town of Webster Commissioner for four years.

I am very lucky to have worked with some exceptional staff members over the past 11 years and have enjoyed growing our chamber alongside our many ambassadors and board members who have rotated in and out over this time. This chamber runs best as a collective unit and we've had the best team I've ever been around.

This experience will forever be remembered as the place I found my future path alongside the love of my life and best friend Julie. I truly believe everything happens for a reason and I'm extremely blessed and grateful to have found my forever soulmate during this process.

I know our board will do a thorough search to find the right person to fill the void this creates. I trust you'll do an excellent job selecting someone to lead this chamber onward and upward. I look forward to seeing its growth and how it will continue to evolve through challenging times.

I want to assure you that I am always a phone call, text or email away from providing any guidance whatsoever to make this transition easier for everyone involved.

Sincerely,

Kelly Donaldson

Assistant Director, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce

Bcc: Julie Donaldson, Executive Director

Kelly Donaldson personal/home contact information

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