

# **ACCESS NEWS**



**DESIGNED IN-HOUSE • WRITTEN BY EMPLOYEES • PRINTED LOCALLY** 

# **Executive Director** Letter



# WARMTH SHELTER

#### Dear Community Members,

As I reflect on 2023, I am honored and humbled by the overwhelming community support ACCESS continues to receive. We should all be proud of how our community comes together to support local families, seniors, and children who need our help. The ACCESS mission is to provide food, warmth, and shelter to those most in need throughout Jackson County. With more than 70,000 people served and 213,698 independent services provided last year, your support of ACCESS has a far-reaching impact.

This year our community will receive additional funding from the state to address the issue of homelessness and eviction prevention for those who experience housing instability. This work is not only important in that it saves lives and prevents homelessness, but it also influences our community's economic vitality, thereby impacting all of us.

We are grateful for your continued support and look forward to sharing updates on our work with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

annie Anoren

CARRIE BORGEN Executive Director

#### **ACCESS NEWS BRIEFS**

#### Dutch Bros Spreading Even More Love

Dutch Bros will be spreading even more love during their 2024 Dutch Luv campaign. "This year, we are actually doing something a little different company wide. Dutch Luv will run the duration of February 1st through February 18th. \$1 from every Dutch Luv Featured Drink sold will be donated. We're excited to try something new and hope this can give customers more of an opportunity to support rather than a single day!", says Amanda Murray, Marketing Director for Dutch Bros. A special shout out to Dutch Bros for their continued commitment to fighting hunger in the Rogue Valley!

#### Senior Shoebox Delivers Holiday Joy to More Than 800 Seniors

This year's Senior Shoebox Project brought the joy of the holiday season to more than 800 local seniors. For many, it was the only gift they received for the holidays. Hundreds of generous donors wrapped thoughtfully curated shoeboxes full of gifts and close to 60 volunteers helped deliver them throughout Jackson County. Thank you to all who gave time and treasure to bring smiles to our beloved seniors in need.

#### Greystone Court Food & Fund Drive Provides More than 40,000 Meals

Thousands of residents enjoyed seeing the beautiful lights at Greystone Court this year and hundreds made donations to feed local families struggling with hunger. With the help of our giving community and NIC Industries' generous matching donation, we raised over \$10,000 in support of the ACCESS Regional Food Bank. Additionally, we collected 6,560 pounds of non-perishable food donations. Thank you to all those who gave and to the residents of Greystone Court for their continued support!

COVER PHOTO: WORK SHARP EMPLOYEES VOLUNTEER THEIR TIME AT THE ACCESS FOOD BANK

Volunteers from The Valley School of Southern Oregon

**B34A** 

VANS

**B36A** 

# **Volunteer Together!**

The Valley School of Southern Oregon wanted to give back to the community in a way both parents and students could participate.

ACCESS had just the opportunity for everyone! Since those 15 and under can volunteer with an accompanying parent or guardian, all were welcome. An astounding 67 students and parents showed up for the group pack at the ACCESS Warehouse! With all these helping hands, the group was able to pack nearly 5 pallets, that's 150 boxes of soap in 2 hours. WOW! These soaps, donated by Sappo Hill, are offered to participants at the ACCESS Food Pantries.

Thank you to all the incredible students and parents from The Valley School of Southern Oregon for significantly impacting our community.



Correction to our ACCESS Fall 2023 Newsletter: Volunteer of the Month was Jake Ramos, not Jose Ramos as published. Thank you Jake for all you do for our community!

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# **ACCESS Food Programs** What makes us different?

Feeding people, connecting our community, and bringing peace of mind is our mission at the ACCESS Food Bank. As the Regional Food Bank for Jackson County, we are uniquely positioned to accomplish this mission. Through a network of over 30 pantries, including 12 Healthy Mobile Pantry locations and five Senior-Focused Food Pantries, we can touch every corner of the county and help our food insecure neighbors gain access to fresh produce, meat, dairy, and shelf-stable food.

Thanks to the help of over 400 volunteers, many of whom have used our pantries themselves, we provide a consistent, reliable, and dignified way for people to help make sure their families have enough food throughout the month. "I come every week because I know how important it is to have this kind of support," says Lori Livingston, a former pantry participant and current manager of the Central Point Food Pantry. "It makes me happy to help and to get to know so many people!" Serving over 45,000 people a year with more than 4.5 million pounds of food is only one way we bring peace of mind to our community. In addition to our food pantries, we help other agencies throughout the area in a variety of ways. From providing food used to prepare meals for participants, to helping schools with ingredients for cooking classes, to connecting partners with other resources – and more – we are honored to be such a vital asset in Jackson County.

The ACCESS Food Bank has proudly served our community since 1981. Thank you to the myriad people and organizations who have helped us over the years and who continue to support our mission. We look forward to seeing what we will achieve together next!



A volunteer prepares for the Central Point Pantry opening



Lori Livingston, Central Point Pantry Manager, welcomes participants



Fresh Alliance bins full of items for participants

# What is the Fresh Alliance Program?

Did you know that the ACCESS Food Bank is a recycling superstar in Jackson County? Thanks to our Fresh Alliance Program, we work with local grocery stores to help keep over 1.7 million pounds of food out of landfills each year. Without this program, it would be impossible to feed the 1 in 5 people in Jackson County who need our help.

Local grocers, who must continually rotate in new stock, end up with thousands of pounds of food each week that is still perfectly edible but is at or near its sell by date. Enter the ACCESS Food Bank. Rather than throwing this food away, ACCESS sends out two Fresh Alliance drivers every workday who go to over 22 stores, retrieve the food, and bring it back to the Food Bank to be quickly distributed to over 30 pantries in the county. The partnerships we have with area stores are not only a major benefit for the environment, but they also contribute around 40% of the food provided through our pantry system. We receive a wide variety of food from our partners including fresh produce, meat, dairy, and ready-to-eat items, which are especially useful for helping our unhoused participants.

So, the next time you see an ACCESS truck pull into your favorite store's parking lot, give the driver a thumbs up for helping our neighbors and our environment at the same time. "It's nice to know I'm making a difference in so many ways," says Ricardo Pulido, who has been a Fresh Alliance driver at ACCESS for over 10 years. "Every day it's a good day's work." We completely agree!



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# **Center for Community Resilience** CCR Finds Woman and Her Dog a Home

In 2020, Meri faced the devastating loss of her home to the Almeda wildfires. With a modest insurance payout, she acquired a motorhome to refurbish and call home. After 15 months of trying to connect with programs that could help, a partnering agency, Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), connected Meri to Lauri Brownson, Housing Stabilization Case Manager at ACCESS, in late 2022.

Meri recalls, "Lauri's kind listening, her careful explanations of what kind of help she could provide, and her consistent follow through on promises she made to help, felt like a cool drink of water to my very parched soul. Through the winter of 2023 and into the spring and the summer, Lauri helped me pay the space rent for my RV and ACCESS helped some with my electric bill."

In October of 2023, Meri became eligible for an apartment in a senior and disabled complex in Phoenix. Lauri and a colleague, Janelle, helped Meri sell her RV to United Way to benefit someone else in need.

Meri recalls, "It felt like a miracle, and it still feels like a miracle that I could finally live again in a place, not in a vehicle. I'm so deeply grateful to the steady, smart, kind, and compassionate care and attention I have had from Lauri. The programs with which she is connected are truly lifesaving."



Meri Walker and her rescue dog, Josh, in their new home

# **ACCESS Furnace** Program Highlight

This winter, the Furnace Program has served **56 households** by fixing or replacing their furnace. This service keeps families warm and comfortable in the winter. With the cold winter season upon us and temperatures continuing to drop, there is a need for heat. If you or someone you know needs assistance installing or repairing a furnace, **please call: (458) 488-1363.** 

# **Homeownership Assistance Fund** Offers Hope

# What is the "HAF Program"?

The State of Oregon has allocated \$90 million statewide to assist homeowners through the Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF). ACCESS administers these funds to eligible households in Jackson County to help homeowners avoid mortgage foreclosures, delinquencies, defaults, and displacements.

# A "Forever Home" Saved

Wanda lost her husband of 35 years in late January 2021. With the end of her home's forbearance coming up and her income still down, she didn't know what to do.

Wanda reached out to ACCESS' Homeownership Program Coordinator, Rebecca, in early 2023. "I cried on her shoulder telling her my fear of becoming a homeless senior," wrote Wanda in a letter to ACCESS. Soon, Wanda was enrolled in the Homeownership Assistance Fund Program (HAF), which offered her a forgivable loan for up to \$60,000 to pay arrears and 12 months of mortgage payments moving forward, which got her caught up on her mortgage. With the help of Rebecca and the HAF Program, Wanda's home of 22 years was saved, and her future was secured.

"I'm in my forever home. I have no plans on moving; been here for 22 years, and this is where my husband and I wanted to be." -Wanda (ACCESS participant)

# **EDUCATION**

Homeownership Course 2024 Schedule: March 15, May 31, July 26 | Spanish: February 10, May 11, August 10

If you're thinking about buying your first home, navigating the process can feel overwhelming.

ACCESS offers comprehensive first-time homebuyer education that helps answer any questions you may have about the process. These classes are designed to walk you through the entire homebuying process so you know exactly what to expect and how to make educated, important financial decisions.

For more information about ACCESS homeownership education or for assistance, **please contact the ACCESS** Homeownership Center at (541) 774-4305.

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# Jackson County Exceeds All Executive Order Goals

On January 10, 2023, Governor Tina Kotek issued Executive Order 23-02 (EO 23-02), which declared a state of emergency due to homelessness. EO 23-02 provided funding to rapidly expand the state's low-barrier shelter capacity, to rehouse people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and to prevent homelessness to the greatest extent possible. Participating counties were given a deadline of January 10, 2024 to reach their established goals.

The Oregon Housing and Community Services Department delivered \$130 million in funding to seven of Oregon's Continuums of Care (CoCs) deemed emergency areas, including Jackson County, which was initially awarded \$8.8 million. On April 10th, it was announced that Jackson County would receive an additional \$1.5 million in funding to combat homelessness by providing homelessness prevention services. These funds were designated for eviction prevention interventions such as rental assistance and, in coordination with partners who are providing mediation and legal services, to support households at risk of eviction.

#### The goals originally established for Jackson County were:

- 1) Rapidly rehouse 133 unsheltered households.
- 2) Increase low-barrier emergency shelter capacity by
- creating 67 new additional shelter beds.
- 3) Provide homelessness prevention services to 385 households.

Jackson County's CoC and Multi-Agency Coordinating Committee (MAC) are thrilled to report we have far exceeded the initial goals. Due to our successful placements, in December OHCS updated our rapid rehousing goal to 200, and provided us an additional \$1.1 million dollars to continue placing unsheltered households. We have exceeded those updated goals as well. From January 10, 2023 to January 10, 2024 the following partner agencies have worked together to serve the community:

1) Rapid rehousing – 217 households rapidly rehoused by partner agencies Community Works, OHRA, and ACCESS.

2) Shelter beds – 123 shelter beds added with the help of the City of Medford, Rogue Retreat, the City of Ashland, and OHRA.

3) Eviction Prevention – 435 household evictions prevented by partner agencies Unete, Resolve, The Arc Jackson County, The Salvation Army, OHRA, and ACCESS.

We attribute the success of all our goals to invaluable street outreach and landlord engagement services.

On January 9th, 2024, Governor Kotek announced 24-02 continuation of funding, with the Executive Order. We look forward to being able to continue all the great work we have done.

#### FINAL EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBERS FOR JACKSON COUNTY



Rapidly rehoused **217 households** 



Created an additional 123 low-barrier shelter beds



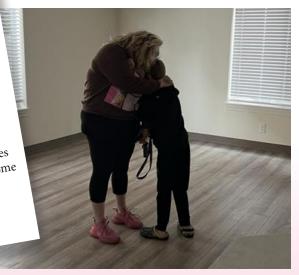
Prevented evictions for **435 households** 

# Family Housed Through Executive Order Rapid Rehousing

First off let me start this letter off with, there are absolutely no words that could be said for the gratitude I have towards you Lavonne, Karla, and the team at Lavonne has been a light at the darkest part of my life. The first time I went to ACCESS I was a mess. I had cried all morning, I was living in my car with two kids, Wondering where I can park to be safe. I had literally lost it all. I went from the ACCESS. "American Dream" life. I was in a solid relationship, I had a solid job, set schedules, cheer practice, soccer practices, pets, a home ..... routine. It all disappeared in the blink of an eye. For those that don't know, my Person was han userpreated in the online of an eye for mose that don't know, my reason wat hit by a car in front of my children and myself, as we were switching drivers. We were coming home from the children's grandpa's funeral in California. I then still had to drive myself and my kids home. I wasn't on the lease of our home for the last fiau to unive mysen and my and nome, a wash on the rease of our nome for the last 6 years. So, we had to leave. I couldn't have imagined life there without him anyways. Without realizing how hard it actually was going to be without a two-person income to find an ideal place for the kids and me. I honestly was about to lose complete hope. I was literally at what I think would be rock bottom. Working with ACCESS has been the best blessing in my life this year. I did not have hope which there for neither did my kids. That broke me. I gave my full trust to Lavonne because she made me feel safe. Like I was not alone, like it was ok to not be Getting into the Roxy was exactly the push I needed . It got to feel somewhat routine and stable again. I got to have a piece of serenity. It was a push to bigger ok, and asking for help is ok. Now, I am in the most beautiful home, with my kids and the smiles on their faces will forever be imprinted on my heart. My kids love- love, they have such gigantic things, knowing I can do it. hearts and they really do deserve the whole world. Thank you Lavonne and the ACCESS team so much for helping me give my babies what they deserve. I am forever grateful for this opportunity to have a forever home Words really can't express how thankful I am, but again, thank you. and a place to heal and start new beginnings. - A thankful ACCESS participant and mother

Family signs the lease for their new home





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# **Building Community**



ACCESS staff with Sherm's Markets and the Olsrud family after unloading 23,000 pounds of food

# Thank you to Sherm's Markets and the Olsrud Family for Helping Feed Families in Need

With support from Sherm's Markets and their customers, this year's Food for Hope Drive, which ran throughout the holidays, raised enough food and funds to feed all 560 children in our Rogue Powerpack Program for two weekends. The Rogue Powerpack Program provides nutritious, child-friendly food to elementary school children who are receiving free breakfast or lunch at school during the week but lack adequate food over the weekend. This vital program would not be possible without the generosity of local businesses like Sherm's Markets and caring community members like you.

Helping even more, Sherm's Markets and the Olsrud family made their annual donation of a full semi-truckload of 23,000 pounds of food on December 15th. This year marks the 25th anniversary of this generous donation, and the first year in our new warehouse. It's always a highlight of our year to see the big truck back up to our loading dock. We cannot thank the Olsrud family enough for the profound impact they continue to have on our community.

#### ACCESS Senior Fair is a One-Stop Resource Shop

ACCESS is holding its Annual Senior Fair on Tuesday, April 2nd from 9am – 4pm at the Medford Armory, 1701 S. Pacific Highway. The ACCESS Senior Fair features more than 80 vendor booths from healthcare providers, financial planners, senior living facilities, caregiving services, social service agencies, and other critical resources. More than 3,000 people are expected to attend. Admission is free, though we will be accepting donations to our Senior-Focused Food Pantries at this event if you would like to give.

The Senior Fair will also feature free bingo hosted by local celebrity callers from 11am – 2pm with great prizes. We can't wait to see you there!

If your business is interested in becoming a vendor or sponsor, contact the Advancement Department at donorsupport@accesshelps.org or call (458) 488-1220.

## JPCOMING EVENTS ACCESS Celebrates the 20th Anniversary of its Charity Golf Tournament

ACCESS will hold its 20th Annual Golf Tournament on Monday, June 24th at the Rogue Valley Country Club. The tournament is a scramble format and will feature a 36-team field. All proceeds support ACCESS' mission to feed, warm, and shelter those most in need throughout Jackson County.

For sponsorship information, contact Kellie Battaglia, Chief Advancement Officer, at kbattaglia@accesshelps.org or call (458) 488-1240.



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Boise Cascade team

# Work Sharp gets Creative in Support of ACCESS

Work Sharp is a cutting edge (pun intended!) Southern Oregon company with a national and international reach. They believe in building a strong workplace culture of engaging their employees in giving back to their community. Every year, Work Sharp employees research what organization they would like to support and for the past two years they have selected ACCESS. Steve Baker, Product Line Manager for Work Sharp says, "We chose to donate to ACCESS for many reasons. ACCESS' buying power to turn monetary donations into meals for our community stretches our dollars well beyond what we could do by ourselves. The diverse list of ACCESS services from food assistance, financial education, Veterans' services, and more helps our local community in so many meaningful ways."

Once they selected us as their charity of choice, they held an all-employee poll to see what ACCESS programs they would like to support, such as the food bank, housing, seniors, Veterans, etc. Their generous donation was made up of employee gifts, a generous matching donation from the Work Sharp company itself, and creative outlets such as a jar that employees had to put a quarter in every time they were late to or unprepared for a meeting. Employee gifts were then split proportionally according to their poll results. In addition to these amazing gifts, Work Sharp staff volunteered in our food bank warehouse repacking food for our pantries.

Steve continues, "As a Southern Oregonian and a Veteran, I am honored to be able to work with ACCESS and I'm grateful that Southern Oregon has such an incredible agency dedicated to helping the community. Thank you for everything you do."

Thank you to Steve for his service and to the entire Work Sharp team for their creativity and thoughtful support!







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THANK YOU Legacy SPOTLIGHT

Jim reached out to Kellie Battaglia, Chief Advancement Officer for ACCESS, to inquire about leaving his home to ACCESS in his will. He said that his home was his most valued asset and he wanted us to use the proceeds of its sale to help those in need. However, Jim did not know how to go about writing a will and, living on a fixed income, could not afford to hire an attorney, so he asked if we knew someone who could help. A longtime donor found an attorney willing to help Jim write his will bequeathing his home and car to ACCESS.

"ACCESS' assistance to me in the form of weatherization and replacement of my air-conditioning system recently



saved me a lot of grief and gave considerable relief from hardships. At my age of 78, I feel blessed that there are people and organizations such as ACCESS who deserve special praise. I survive on Social Security, have no children, and no relatives in Oregon. I live alone. My home is free of debt, I have no outstanding liabilities, and feel lucky that I can offer my home in support of the work that you all do," says Jim.

It's only because of people like Jim that ACCESS can serve more than 70,000 people annually. His thoughtfulness and foresight will leave a legacy of service to others and change lives for generations to come.

If you are interested in learning more about leaving your legacy, contact Kellie Battaglia at (458) 488-1240 or kbattaglia@accesshelps.org.



The Robert and Frances Chaney Family Foundation has been supporting children and families to live healthy and thriving lives since 2006. A supporter of ACCESS food programs for over a decade, they have had a truly profound impact on our community, providing over \$60,000 in funding. Programs they have supported include our food recovery and redistribution program, Fresh Alliance, meal-prepped healthy meals at our food pantries, youth-focused produce distribution, and our emergency food pantry network.

Their most recent funding directly supported weekend food throughout the academic year for 20 of the 560 elementary-aged students participating in the Rogue Power Pack Program—equivalent to 3,750 meals and 3,750 snacks. Childhood hunger has a detrimental impact on children's development and academic success. This program is a crucial support in uplifting our community's children to help them succeed.

Thank you to the Robert and Frances Chaney Family Foundation, whose continual partnership with ACCESS helps to ensure families within Jackson County have reliable access to the healthy food needed to thrive.

# MEET THE TEAM! LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT

We are the Landlord Engagement Team! Engaging with landlords is one major aspect of what we do, but our ultimate goal is to foster collaboration between property owners, renters, subsidy programs, and organizations like ACCESS, to streamline processes and increase the success rates of finding housing for our participants. We work hand-in-hand with the Support Services Case Management team to find housing for the participants who are receiving case management and making progress toward housing stability.

#### Our goals are to:

- Minimize the time spent searching the internet for housing opportunities.
- Streamline and enhance the preparation phase of effective housing searches.
- Mitigate any negative experiences for landlords.

Landlords are our key community partners! We can't find homes for participants without their support, and we are grateful to landlords who have open hearts and minds and give our participants a chance.

#### Our goals with landlords are:

- Introduce our services to those who aren't aware of them.
- Highlight the many ways in which our goals align with theirs.

- Provide a single point of contact for landlords who have questions or concerns with participants or other tenants.
- Build and maintain strong, long-term relationships.
- Combat stigmas often tied to assistance programs.
- Listen to landlords to address the gaps in our risk mitigation efforts and abilities.

This year, we are holding monthly Rentwell classes. These classes teach community members about tenant education, covering topics like fair housing, exploring credit, budgeting, how to be a good tenant, and how to understand and abide by a rental lease. We are always looking for volunteers in the community with expertise in these areas to be instructors. If you have any interest in teaching a section of the class, please reach out to the Landlord Engagement Team. If you or someone you know is interested in attending a class, the schedule is online at: www.accesshelps.org/education.

Feedback is always welcome and much appreciated! Please send any thoughts, ideas, or concerns to: Cole Smith at csmith@accesshelps.org or call or text (458) 225-2858.



WARMTH

SHELTER

From left to right: Tyler, Cole, Cory, Kim, and Karla

# Donors

#### Thank you to the partners and donors who make it possible for ACCESS to build community.

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#### When I donate to ACCESS, how is my money used?

ACCESS is committed to being a responsible steward of all donations and gifts. The support and trust of our donors is of utmost importance.

Unless directed to a specific program by the donor, donations received are allocated to programs serving the needs of our community: food & nutrition programs, the medical equipment program, housing programs, energy assistance programs, and wildfire relief. Many programs are funded by grant funds, with donations allowing ACCESS flexibility to meet the unique needs of our program participants. In 2023, under 10% of ACCESS expenses were overhead costs.

ACCESS earned the highest level of recognition by both Candid (formerly Guidestar) and Charity Navigator, so you can feel confident that your gift to ACCESS is going back into your community.



We want to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts to our generous community. It takes all of us coming together to help those in need. We are grateful for YOU!

"I'm am in awe of the service ACCESS provides. Never thought I would end up ever needing help with anything, but I do. Could not be more grateful. Thank you ACCESS."

-ACCESS participant

"I have appreciated the services that's ACCESS offers to the community for all families and seniors. This certainly has been big help for those like me that are on a fixed income. Thank you again for all of your help and hard work to help the community here in Medford."

-ACCESS participant



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(541) 779-6691 www.accesshelps.org 3630 Aviation Way PO Box 4666 Medford, OR 97501

# 2024 Event Schedule

ACCESS Senior Fair | 9:00am – 4:00pm | Medford Armory 1701 S. Pacific Highway, Medford Providing vital resources for seniors.

# April 2nd

May

**Community Action Month** | Nationwide effort to encourage community building and the wellbeing of all. A great time to give back to our communities!

#### 20th Annual Golf Tournament

Rogue Valley Country, Club 2660 Hillcrest Road, Medford Raising funds and awareness to support the ACCESS mission.

### June 24th

### September

**Hunger Action Month** | Nationwide effort to encourage communities to take action on hunger. Join the fight to end hunger!

**15th Annual Mayors United** | 5:30pm – 8:30pm An event of community building with our Jackson County Mayors.

### Fall 2024

## November

**Senior Shoebox** | ACCESS collects and brings gifts of care to seniors, people with disabilities, and people who are homebound in Jackson County.

**Annual Food for Hope** | Sherm's Thunderbird, Food 4 Less and ACCESS Food & Fund Drive to support the Rogue Powerpack Program

#### **Greystone Court** | 12/21 - 12/24

Greystone Court, Medford, OR 97504 The annual ACCESS Food and Fund Drive holiday light display. December

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3630 Aviation Way, PO Box 4666 Medford, OR 97501





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**Building Community in Jackson County since 1976**