



OUR BEAUTIFUL STATE



KEEP NORTH CAROLINA BEAUTIFUL FALL 2026 | VOLUME 2

Celebrating Our Impact. Inspiring What's Next.

A Year of Growth, Partnerships & Progress!

What a difference a year can make!

As we reflect on another year of environmental stewardship across North Carolina, I'm incredibly encouraged by the growth of Keep North Carolina Beautiful (KNCB), the strength of our partnerships, and the increasing number of schools, communities, and volunteers we're reaching.

From expanding environmental education opportunities for students to supporting community cleanups and beautification projects, **2026 has been a year of meaningful progress and exciting momentum.**

None of this happens without our corporate partners, foundations, local affiliates, educators, and thousands of volunteers who share our commitment to a cleaner, greener, and more beautiful North Carolina.

And while we're proud of what we've accomplished, we're even more excited about what's ahead!

Kyle Prairie

Executive Director
Keep North Carolina Beautiful



KNCB by the Numbers **Our 2025–2026 Impact**



Environmental Education | WOO Grants

- **89 Applications** – Up from 28 in 2024
- **27 Schools Funded** – Up from 18 in 2024
- **\$42,000 Awarded** – Up from \$18,000 in 2024



Statewide Beautification & Community Engagement

- **Over 115,000+ lbs.** - Litter removed across North Carolina
- **Over 12,000+** - Volunteer service hours
- **Over 5,000+** - Volunteers engaged
- **Over \$120,000+** - Invested through affiliates and community partners



40th Annual Azalea Celebration

- **Nearly 5,000 azaleas** distributed
- **94 Schools, churches & nonprofits** served
- **Over 355,000 azaleas** distributed statewide in 40 years

Behind every number is a school, community, or volunteer making a meaningful difference!



Window of Opportunity (WOO) Grant Program

Growing Environmental Education, One School at a Time

Our WOO Grant Program continues to bring environmental education to life for K–12 students across North Carolina. From outdoor classrooms and pollinator habitats to vegetable gardens, recycling initiatives, and campus beautification, these grants give educators the resources to turn creative ideas into lasting learning environments.

This past cycle, KNCB awarded approximately **\$42,000 to 27 schools**, expanding opportunities for students to learn about conservation, sustainability, and environmental stewardship through hands-on experiences.

WOO Grant Spotlight: Holleman Memorial Community Healing Garden

Born from the ideas of students in the wake of Hurricane Helene and the loss of beloved school librarian Kelly Holleman, the Holleman Memorial Community Healing Garden is a powerful example of resilience, compassion, and community spirit. Through a collaboration between Ashe County Middle School and Ashe County High School, students are creating an outdoor learning environment where they can develop agricultural and environmental stewardship skills while growing fresh produce for local families in need. More than a garden, this special project honors Kelly's memory while providing a place of healing, connection, and hope for generations of students and their community.



The 2026–2027 WOO Grant application cycle is now open!

Applications are being accepted through **Friday, December 18, 2026**.

Learn more: <https://www.keepncbeautiful.org/woogrants>

WOO Grant outdoor classroom projects connect students with nature through hands-on learning, building environmental awareness and appreciation. We're grateful to the dedicated teachers across North Carolina who bring these opportunities to life.



Statewide Beautification & Community Engagement

Local Partnerships. Statewide Impact.

Cleaner communities don't happen by accident. They happen when people come together, roll up their sleeves, and get to work!

Across North Carolina, KNCB continues to support a growing network of Keep America Beautiful affiliates and community partners through financial assistance, cleanup equipment, volunteer resources, and collaborative programming.

The results speak for themselves:

5,000+ volunteers | 12,000+ service hours | 115,000+ pounds of litter removed



Beyond individual cleanup events, our goal is to strengthen local organizations and expand their capacity to lead sustainable environmental improvement efforts year after year.

Because when we invest in local communities, the impact extends far beyond a single day of service.

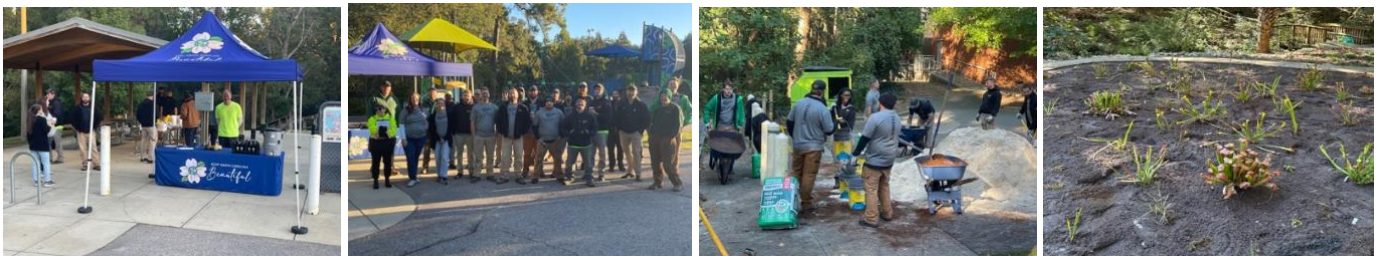
Project Spotlight: A Wildly Wonderful Day at Jaycee Park!

What happens when a wildlife management company trades its everyday responsibilities for a day of creating beautiful habitats? Something pretty special!

Recently, **20 employees from Critter Control of the Triangle** joined the dedicated Raleigh Parks team for a tremendous community beautification project at Jaycee Park. Together, these hardworking volunteers planted **more than 230 trees, shrubs, flowers, and other plants**, transforming garden areas throughout the park.

But the real gem of the day?

A beautiful new **community bog garden featuring more than 50 carnivorous plants**, including Venus flytraps, pitcher plants, and sundews! The garden will provide visitors with a unique opportunity to learn about some of North Carolina's most fascinating native plants.



This project is a wonderful example of corporate citizenship, employee engagement, and community partnership coming together to create a lasting improvement to a shared public space.



Azalea Celebration Program

Celebrating 40 Years of Beautiful Azaleas!

This fall marked the **40th Annual Azalea Celebration**, one of North Carolina's longest-running community beautification traditions.

In partnership with **WRAL and Capitol Broadcasting Company**, and more recently the Occoneetchee Council of Scouting America to assist with distribution, this beloved program has distributed **more than 355,000 azaleas** since **1986** to schools, churches, nonprofits, and community organizations throughout our state.



What began four decades ago continues to brighten public spaces, enhance community landscapes, and bring people together through a shared appreciation for North Carolina's natural beauty.

We're grateful to WRAL, Capitol Broadcasting Company, and the many volunteers and community partners who continue to make this extraordinary tradition possible.

Looking Ahead: Our Vision for 2027

Our goal is ambitious, but our mission is clear.

To continue growing KNCB's programming, partnerships, and statewide reach in an effort to meaningfully impact schools and communities across **all 100 North Carolina counties annually**.

As we look toward 2027, our priorities include:

Expanding School Grants

Increase funding and opportunities for more K–12 schools to develop hands-on environmental education projects. We would like to increase our WOO Grant Program by another 25-35% in 2027.

Growing Our Affiliate Network

Strengthen existing partnerships and recruit new affiliates, particularly in rural and underserved communities. We are looking to re-engage some dormant NC Keep America Beautiful affiliates and add new partnerships to increase our statewide network by 10-12 newly engaged affiliates by the end of 2027.

Engaging More Corporate Volunteers

Create additional opportunities for businesses and their employees to participate in meaningful cleanup, planting, and beautification projects.



Expanding Statewide Cleanup Initiatives

Encourage greater participation in coordinated cleanup and environmental stewardship efforts across North Carolina, through working within our school systems and increasing our engagement with our KAB affiliates statewide.

Building Sustainable Partnerships

Continue to develop new corporate and foundation relationships throughout North Carolina that allow us to invest more resources directly into schools and communities.

Building on nearly 60 years of environmental stewardship, KNCB is entering an exciting new chapter of growth, renewed partnerships, and greater statewide impact!

Two Great Ways to Support KNCB This Fall!

Our annual fall fundraisers are just around the corner, and we'd love to have you join us!

2nd Annual KNCB Charity Poker Tournament

Thursday, November 12th | Marbles Kids Museum, Raleigh

An unforgettable evening of cards, camaraderie, and cause-driven fun!

Enjoy friendly competition, food, drinks, great tournament prizes, and a new silent auction featuring unique items and experiences. **All skill levels welcome and you don't need to be a pro to win!**

\$150 per player - Registration closes Friday, November 6.

REGISTER HERE: <https://www.KeepNCBeautiful.org/pokertournament>

3rd Annual Bourbon & Spirits Raffle

52 Prize Packages | 80+ Bottles

All KNCB Donors of \$100 or more through Wednesday, November 11th are automatically entered into our biggest raffle yet, offering something for just about every spirits enthusiast! From exceptional, hard-to-find bourbons to premium Scotch whiskies, distinctive tequilas, and other outstanding spirits, there's something for collectors and enthusiasts alike.

Drawing: Thursday, November 12, 2026

You do not need to be present to win!

ENTER HERE: <https://www.KeepNCBeautiful.org/bourbonraffle>

Every contribution supports KNCB's environmental education and community beautification efforts across the state of North Carolina.



♥ Together, We Keep North Carolina Beautiful! ♥

As we reflect on this year's accomplishments, one thing is abundantly clear:

Our greatest strength is the people and partnerships behind our mission!

To our corporate sponsors, donors, affiliate partners, educators, volunteers, and friends, thank you for believing in what we're building and helping us make a meaningful difference across North Carolina.

We're proud of what we've accomplished together and look forward to an even more impactful 2027!

Cleaner. Greener. More Beautiful. Together.