

From Forgotten to Flourishing: How the Fair Bluff Senior Center Became a Beacon of Hope

In the small town of Fair Bluff, North Carolina—a community still carrying the scars of Hurricanes Matthew and Florence—something remarkable has taken root.

What was once known as “the forgotten center” has become a place where laughter echoes daily, friendships are rebuilt, and older adults are rediscovering joy, purpose, and belonging.

The Fair Bluff Senior Center, now named the **2026 Ann Johnson Senior Center of the Year**, tells a story far greater than growth—it tells a story of *resilience*.

Just a short time ago, the center struggled to stay alive. Attendance was minimal. Many seniors had been displaced, disconnected, or simply stopped coming. The building stood, but the sense of community had faded. But slowly, with intention, compassion, and an unwavering belief in the value of every individual, something began to change. Relationships were rebuilt—one conversation at a time. Programs were created not just to fill a calendar, but to fill a need. Seniors were not just invited back—they were *welcomed home*.

Today, the center is alive in every sense of the word.

Each day, older adults walk through the doors not just for activities, but for connection. They come for movement, creativity, learning—but most importantly, they come for each other. Whether it’s worshipping in the daily Bible Study class, sharing stories during Morning Mingle, crafting something beautiful with their hands, or simply sitting together in fellowship—there is a renewed sense of life within these walls.

For many, this center has become more than a place—it has become a lifeline.

In a town of just over 700 residents, where many are still rebuilding what was lost, the impact is deeply personal. It’s seen in the smiles of seniors who once felt forgotten. It’s heard in the laughter that now fills the rooms. It’s felt in the quiet but powerful understanding that they are not alone.

Signature events like the “Watermelon Social” have reconnected seniors to traditions they once loved but could no longer safely access—bringing celebration back into their lives in a way that is inclusive, thoughtful, and rooted in community pride.

But perhaps the most meaningful transformation cannot be measured in numbers or programs.

It is the restoration of dignity.

It is the rebuilding of confidence.

It is the simple, powerful reminder that aging does not mean being left behind.

The Fair Bluff Senior Center stands today as a beacon of what is possible—even in the smallest of towns—when compassion leads, and community follows.

And at the heart of it all are the seniors themselves—their strength, their stories, and their unwavering spirit.

This award is not just a recognition of a center.

It is a celebration of a community that refused to be forgotten—and chose, instead, to rise.