

# The Civic



## Birthdays

**Susan Husson** - Jan. 2

**Ann Super** - Jan. 4

**Wendy Fleming** - Jan. 13

**Wendy Yager** - Jan. 13

**Sandy McClinton** - Jan. 17

## Civitan Anniversaries

**Eileen Buscemi** - 11 yrs

**Judy Lopez** - 9 yrs

**Betty Sweeney** - 7 yrs

**Joanne Tello** - 3 yrs

**Mary Dyer** - 2 yrs



## BRINGING BACK CLERGY APPRECIATION DAY

For you veteran Civitans, you might remember our yearly salute to the Clergy of our community. It was a yearly event that went by the wayside when COVID hit. We currently have a Club Committee that is resurrecting this project, which is scheduled for **FRI., FEBRUARY 13 at 1 PM at the RCS FACILITY ON GEORGE STREET. Please put this date on your calendar and make every effort to attend – note the time and place change from our regular meeting.**

For those of you who are unfamiliar with why Civitan International celebrates a yearly Clergy Appreciation Day, you can find the whole story by googling [Civitan.org/clergy-appreciation](http://Civitan.org/clergy-appreciation). Civitans around the world continue to honor leaders of all faiths and traditions each February in respect to the men and women who lead their communities with the hearts of servants.

The Committee consists of Jim Comer (chair), Marie Leonard, Holly Lippitt, and Rev. Robert Parker. As we have done in the past, we ask our members to invite their own clergy person to attend this luncheon in their honor. Please make a personal invitation to them as soon as possible and give Maureen Comer their names so a certificate can be made out for them. Even if you don't have or invite your own clergy, it is important as a member for you to attend this meeting and here's why.

The Committee is working with Rev. Parker to invite clergy from perhaps small venues who do a lot for the people in the community but do not get much support or recognition for their work. **We are seeking perhaps eight to ten of these clergy to share what they do with our membership.** We also want the clergy invited by our members to say a few words about their work in the community. We want to honor "our own" but also want to reach out to those "who do service for others." We think you will be surprised by the "outreach" done in our community for a wide variety of folks.

La Casetta of New Bern will cater for the luncheon. The clergy's lunch will be covered by the Club with a donation from Jim Comer's "downtown Santa's pay." Members will pay for their own lunches. The menu or price has not yet been determined.

This meeting is not meant to be a religious celebration of any religion, but rather recognition and encouragement of community clergy who are selflessly helping others, quietly and without fanfare. We hope you will sign up to join us to help make this meeting a successful one. Thank you.

## CREATING YOUR OWN JOY THROUGH CIVITAN SERVICE



Chuck Bowman, Region 3 Civitan Director, sent the following message from the CI magazine. If you have not seen it, it is worth repeating it in our newsletter as we start the year 2026 with **JOY**.

Volunteering isn't always glamorous. It's early morning, late nights, planning, showing up, and doing the work because it matters. But in that work – side by side with people who care – we discover a kind of joy that can't be bought, taught, or forced. It's the joy of purpose. The joy of belonging. The joy of knowing what we do lifts someone else up.

What struck me most from this message was that: joy grows when we give ourselves away. Not in a way that drains us, but in a way connects us to something bigger. That's Civitan at its core. Every project, every meeting, every club visit is a chance to create joy – not just for the people we serve, but for ourselves. We don't join Civitan to find joy. We joined Civitan to make joy. When we do, we become the kind of leaders who inspire others to do the same.

May joy find each of you and know that you are appreciated for all you do.

# COMMUNITY AWARD – FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR – 2025



Engineer Firefighter, Michael Dunn was promoted to that position in 2024. Daily, he is responsible for all apparatus and manages all incident reports that the Department responds to. His supervisors say that he does an admirable job, is reliable, and performs his duties effectively.

Michael participates in many department activities. He is a member of the clown troop, and the Benevolence and Fire Life Safety committees. He manages social media communications. He is an active member of the USAR response team and teaches at the Academy through Craven Community College. He is highly respected for his knowledge of the department and peers often seek him out for guidance and advice. He is adaptable and is willing to help others. Michael invests a lot of time and effort in refining his skills as an Engineer.

Michael's Supervisor, Captain Nic Fortier, sums up his character with, "In addition to his superior work, Fire Engineer Dunn is well respected amongst his peers, and superior officers alike. Most importantly, he is a well-rounded Christian husband, who devotes himself to his family and faith. I couldn't think of a better recipient for this honor."

Michael comes by this devotion naturally. His father, Kevin, was a recipient of this same award from our Club 25 years ago, and he and the entire Dunn family were present at the ceremony to see this award.

Congratulations to Michael, his family, to Fire Chief Damien Locklear, and all the other brave men and women who protect our community. As always, thanks to "Miss Helen" for putting this all together again.

## DSS CHRISTMAS ANGELS FOR 2025



Our Club's tradition of buying Christmas gifts for ten children in foster care through the Department of Social Services continued this year. Chairperson Judy Lopez got the names, ages, and Wish Lists for these youngsters. Ten members of the Club volunteered to shop for them. From the Club's budget they would get reimbursed at \$150 per child. If the shopper spent more than \$150, they managed the overage.

Thank you to our members for opening their hearts (and their pocketbooks) to make a brighter Christmas for the kids!

Thanks to Judy for coordinating this program. AGAIN. Christmas Angel participants were Betty Todd, Cathy Welles, Wendy Yager, Wendy Fleming, Mary Kay Dyer, Ben St. John, Cyndi Papia, Marie and Roy Leonard, Alan Craig, and Joanne Tello.

# Tree and Wreath Sale: 2025 Summary



We had a slow start to our Black Friday opening day of our sale, which is always our biggest fundraiser of the year, so much so that we were thinking this would be the last tree and wreath sale ever! Fortunately, it turned around. We sold 175 of the 200 trees we ordered in the opening weekend. While we were hoping to be done in those 3 days, we stayed open through the following Saturday and were able to sell virtually all the trees.

In addition to the trees, we sold 84 wreaths (44 of which we made) and 232 cans of peanuts, with an **overall profit of \$11,585** going into our Charity Budget.

We are grateful to the following **29 MEMBERS** who volunteered for at least one day of the three-week period that began with the lot setup on November 17 and concluded with the lot teardown on December 9:

Tom Braaten, Eileen Buscemi, Maureen Comer, Alan Craig, Mary Kay Dyer, Larry Gold, Bob Husson, Susan Husson, Buck Irvin, Randy King, Dev Lippitt, Judy Lopez, Terry Lubsen, Al Mack, Dave McCracken, Tim McLearn, Dennis Pymm, Van Allen Rice, Renee Salvatore, Clark Saylor, Tommaso Serra, Ben St. John, Dave Super, Joanne Tello, Gary Todd, Betty Todd, Mary Traina, Lovay Wallace-Singleton, and Wendy Yager.

We were joined by member spouse Carole McCracken who, along with Dev Lippitt, led the 14-person wreath team. The profits from the wreath sale alone were in excess of \$3,000.

Our member volunteers were supported by 12 Marines who assisted with the unloading of the tree truck and 7 residents of Oxford House. The Oxford House volunteers helped with the unloading and, most importantly, provided a lot of “lumper” labor of carrying and loading trees for our customers. The relationship with Oxford House continues to be mutually beneficial.

We are also grateful for the 19 members who donated \$425 that we used to provide gift certificates in appreciation of the Oxford House volunteers.

Some pictures from the event are included with this article.

# CHRISTMAS TREE LOT



# CHRISTMAS PARTY 2025



Friday the 12th of December was an incredibly exhilarating day for our Club. We were celebrating another successful year of fundraising – tree lot and peanuts. We had just done our fifth Santa Land with the PreK children, with just one more to go. We had completed our RCS Dinner and Christmas Party with great food and presents for all the residents. And finally, we held a Christmas party at Paula's Restaurant featuring an Italian buffet of lasagna, chicken parmesan, and stuffed shells. A special dessert for everyone was homemade Christmas cookies made by Judy Lopez and deliciously displayed on our cookie Christmas tree made by Dennis Pymm. We had 45 participants, one of our largest crowds ever to attend.

President Eileen Buscemi opened the party by complimenting all our members for their hard work this past year on fundraising and service projects. She thanked them for the privilege of serving as their President. December was a busy month for the Club, and the party was a culmination of all our events and a time to celebrate the holidays and each other.

Entertainment was provided for a second year by members of the "Twin Rivers Ukulele Group." Six of their members played Christmas Carols with lyric printouts for us to sing along. It was fun and we all left with a smile on our faces and tasty food in our bellies.

We don't meet again as a group until January 9, 2026. We say goodbye to a good year, 2025, and look forward to new adventures in 2026. Now we look forward to spending time with family and friends, counting our blessings and rejoicing in the serenity of the season. A *belated* Merry Christmas to all. Good health, peace, and love in 2026! Thank you for doing all that you do during the year for our fantastic community.



# RCS DINNER AND CHRISTMAS PARTY UPDATE 2025

Thanks to all the elves and food donations that made this party a success. We had a delicious ham dinner with all the trimmings and homemade Christmas cookies for the residents. Thirty adults, including five veterans, received Christmas gifts. The five children from three different families got individual gifts donated by our members or from an outside donor. All the “kids” and some adults had their pictures taken with Santa. It was a happy evening. We want to thank the new Shelter Director, Monica Kazan, for her support and cooperation.

After this celebration on December 8<sup>th</sup>, Monica informed us that a mother with five children would be entering the Shelter in a few days – unfortunately, after the party was given. Santa Jim heard this and managed to get a gift for the mother with the assistance of Jasyn Griffin at Supporting Peace. She also donated snacks to all the kids. Santa did some shopping of his own after finding out what the recent five children – ages 6 to 12 – might find special as a gift. On December 23, Santa arrived back at the Shelter and presented wrapped gifts to all five of the new children. He also brought the snacks provided by Jasyn for all the children – by this time, ten of them. From his sack of goodies, all the children got stuffed animals from his Santa Land stash. Mom would not let the kids open their presents until Christmas morning, so they politely brought their packages back to their living quarters to open later.

I share this with you as my personal “White Envelope” Christmas gift that Jim and I have been doing for each other for many years. It is a random act of kindness or generosity to a stranger or a less fortunate person done anonymously. We find it to be one of the best Christmas traditions that we have ever been involved in. Just wanted to share this with our fellow Civitans emphasizing we ALL do this in some way or the other throughout the year. It’s a gift that we give to ourselves. Peace and love in the new year—2026!



# SANTA LAND 2025 — FIFTEEN YEARS AND STILL GOING!

The headline is CORRECT – we just finished our fifteenth year! It's been 15 years since the Club sponsored our first Santa Land. The first Santa Land hosted 80 children, and each child received a stuffed animal and a picture of themselves with Santa. It was held on the tree lot in a tent. Along the way, we moved from an outdoor venue to a trailer at one of the schools. Also along the way, we have added for each child a book, hats, scarves, and gloves. Even though our child numbers were down from about 280 last year to 240 this year, all the enthusiasm of previous years was there – for the kids, the teachers, the aides, the elves, and even Santa.

All of this has been conducted through donations and monetary support from the Club, its members, community members, friends, neighbors, and relatives. Then, of course, there are the volunteers. They make this happen every year. This year, we must thank:

\*The volunteer photographers from the Coastal Photography Club—  
Coordinator: Rick Meyer

\*The trailer decorators: Gary Todd, Judy Lopez, Wendy Fleming, Dennis Pymm, Mary Kay Dyer, Gail Reynolds, Dave Super, Mary Traina, Jim Comer, Maureen Comer

\*The elves: Wendy Fleming, Dennis Pymm, Mary Traina, Eileen Buscemi, Judy Lopez, Maureen Comer, Kathleen Klecker, Mary Kay Dyer, Wendy Yager, Dev Lippitt, Marie Leonard, Barbara Stone, Gail Reynolds

\*Operation Keep Warm Coordinator: Eileen

\*Scheduler and Chief Worry Wart: Maureen Comer

\*Assistant Chief Worry Wart: Judy Lopez

\*Pre-K Coordinator: Lois-Jean Stevens (first year), Assistant: Kimberly Boyd and their staff who had to move out of one of their trailers for two weeks at JT Barber for us to have a place to call "Santa Land"

\*And, of course, Santa Jim Comer

One special note – for the first time we visited the Farm life program in Vanceboro – the Toddler class. We saw eight children under the age of two. Only one child screamed when he saw Santa. Special treat for Santa – the teachers and aides for the class prepared cookies and milk for him. A major surprise!

We will be celebrating the holiday and then we start over again in January – preparing for Santa Land 2026. Many of our volunteers were there at the beginning. Some have joined us along the way. In either case, your volunteer hours are immeasurable, and your support has been invaluable. The journey continues.....



# NBCC EVENTS CALENDAR

**Friday, January 9:** NBCC Afternoon Meeting 11:30 am at Paula's. Business Meeting. Speakers from the Club will be giving updates on recent committee actions & fundraisers. *If you are attending this meeting, please contact Maureen Comer before Wednesday, January 7, so she can call the reservations number to the restaurant.*

**Monday, January 12:** NBCC Board of Directors Meeting at Garber Church 1 pm, Rm. 222. Officers & Board Members, please make every effort to be at this meeting.

**Monday, January 12:** RCS Shelter Dinner 5:30 pm. We still need volunteers to donate dessert, meatballs and sauce. *If you can help, please sign up at <https://signup.com/go/dUenBpr>*

**Monday, January 19:** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**Thursday, January 22:** NBCC Evening Meeting 5:30 pm at Paula's. Speaker TBA. *If you will be attending this meeting, please contact Maureen Comer before Tuesday, January 20, so she may call in the reservations number to the restaurant.*

**Friday, February 13: CLERGY APPRECIATION DAY** to be held at 1 pm at the RCS SHELTER KITCHEN, 919 GEORGE ST. CATERED BY LA CASETTA. **INVITE YOUR CLERGY AND PLEASE LET MAUREEN COMER KNOW ASAP IF YOU WILL BE ATTENDING WITH OR WITHOUT YOUR CLERGY.**



## Officers

**President:** Eileen Buscemi

**President-Elect:** Roy Leonard

**Vice President:** Open

**Secretary:** Maureen Comer

**Assistant Secretary:** Susan Husson

**Treasurer:** Van Allen Rice

**Assistant Treasurer:** Amy Willis

**Sergeant-at-Arm:** Dev Lippitt

**Education Officers:** Helen Shine & Maureen Comer

**Chaplain:** Bill Baldree

**Assistant Chaplain:** Jim Comer

## Current Board

Term Expires

Buck Irvin	2026
Randy King	2026
Clark Saylor	2026
Betty Todd	2026
Wendy Fleming	2027
Marie Leonard	2027
Judy Lopez	2027
Tommaso Serra	2027

Webmaster, Civic Editor & Social Media: Cyndi Papia

# JANUARY FACTS

**T** Together  
**E** Everyone  
**A** Achieves  
**M** More

- ♦ January is named after Janus, the Roman god of doors, gates, and transitions.
- ♦ January is National Blood Donor Month and National Tea Month in the U.S.
- ♦ Monarch butterflies overwinter in Mexico and California during January.
- ♦ Did you know the tradition of making New Year's resolutions dates back to ancient Babylon, around 4,000 years ago? Babylonians made promises to the gods to start the year on the right foot. So, our yearly quest for self-improvement has a history as epic as a dragon's tale.
- ♦ The first New Year's Eve ball drop took place in 1907 in Times Square
- ♦ The first Super Bowl was played on January 15, 1967.

## CIVITAN CREED

I AM CIVITAN: as old as life, as young as the rainbow, as endless as time.

MY HANDS do the work of the world and reach out in service to others.

MY EARS hear the cry of children and the call throughout the world for peace, guidance, progress, and unity.

MY EYES search for others to join in the fellowship and service of Civitan.

MY MOUTH utters the call to daily duty and speaks prayers in every tongue.

MY MIND teaches me respect for law and the flag of my country.

MY HEART beats for every friend, bleeds for every injury to humanity, and throbs with joy at every triumph of truth.

MY SOUL knows no fear but its own unworthiness.

MY HOPE is for a better world through Civitan.

MY MOTTO: builders of good citizenship.

MY BELIEF: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

MY PLEDGE: to practice the Golden Rule and to build upon it a better and nobler citizenship.