



Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center
Report to the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Board
August 2026

Visitor Center Metrics – July 2026

- **Guests Served:** 1,167
- **Phone Calls:** 131
- **Referrals:** 17,144
- **Visitor Guides Distributed:** 1,665
- **Fly Fishing Requests:** 69
- **New Members:** 6
- **Visitor Center Video Kiosk:** Our new Visitor Center Video Kiosk continues to be a hit with guests. Many thanks to Nick Breedlove and the Jackson County TDA for partnering with us on this addition. Visitors love interacting with it exploring local attractions, learning about Jackson County, and even sending information straight to their phones. Our staff has enjoyed helping guests navigate the kiosk and watching how it enhances their experience and curiosity about our community.
- **Jackson County Whittier Heritage Grounds Event Center opens:** Jackson County officials and community leaders and supporters gathered for the ribbon cutting ceremony of the “Charles R. Elders Event Center” at Whittier Heritage Grounds. Charles was a long-serving Jackson County Commissioner who worked to make life here in Jackson County a great place to live and work. He passed away in June 2025 at the age of 82, and many of his family, including his wife, Shirley, and son, Charles Dewayne Elders, and others were present to cut the ribbon. The event center, located at 271 Clearwood Drive in Whittier, is part of the newly named Whittier Heritage Grounds. The first phase was the 24,000 square-foot “Charles R. Elders Event Center,” and the second phase will be

the 44,000 square-foot open pavilion set for completion in mid-2027. A Day Out with Thomas the Train was the first event with more to come.

- **Jackson County 175th Birthday** will be celebrated September 12th from 4 to 8 p.m. at Whitter Heritage Grounds. A special historic train ride will go from Dillsboro to Whitter thanks to Chamber partner Great Smoky Mountain Railroad and County Manager Kevin King. All proceeds will go to Hometown Heroes for Hope, an effort to help young people in need be able to shop with law enforcement officers for holiday gifts. Tickets are \$18.51 for adults and Children (17 and under): \$10. Tickets can be purchased at the Visitors Center or by phone. The oldest citizen, business, church, civic group, and veteran will be recognized. Performance by Jackson County native Summer Brooke.
- **Business Celebrations** We were excited to celebrate the ribbon cutting for Carolina West Urgent Care, now open at 90 East Main Street in Sylva. We've also begun recognizing business anniversaries at 10, 20, and more years honoring the longevity and commitment of our local businesses.
- **Website Refresh** We're excited to share that the Chamber's website, mountainlovers.com, has been refreshed with a cleaner layout, updated navigation, and more intuitive access to business resources and visitor information. The new design makes it easier for residents, partners, and visitors to explore Jackson County, discover local businesses, and stay connected with Chamber programs and events.
- **NC Chamber of Commerce** made its first visit to Jackson County. Gary Salamido (President and CEO), Meredith Archie (Senior Vice President of External Affairs) and Vincent Ginski (Senior Director of Workforce Competitiveness) spoke on the NC Chamber's work promoting the best interests of businesses in NC, leading through growth, and how the economic future of North Carolina is business driven. Thank you to Jackson County Tourism Development and Authority Board President Dale Collins for joining us.

Thank you to this Board and to the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority staff for your continued partnership and commitment to making Jackson County a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. Please let us know anytime the Chamber can be of service.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Vinyard

Executive Director

Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center