

2025–2026

Annual Report



Rooted in resilience, driven by community

Reporting Period: February 2025 – February 2026

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

In the days following Hurricane Helene, Cocke County faced challenges that tested the strength and resilience of our entire community. What has unfolded since then is a powerful example of what coordinated, community-driven recovery can accomplish.



Laurie "Spring" Duckett
Executive Director

Formed in early 2025 using proven disaster recovery models and VOAD-aligned guidance, the Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group has focused on helping households stabilize, restoring safe access to residential properties, and advancing critical home repair and rebuilding projects. Recovery is not only about rebuilding structures — it is about helping families regain stability, safety, and hope.

This progress has been made possible through strong collaboration across local volunteers, faith communities, nonprofit partners, government agencies, and national disaster organizations. We are especially grateful to the East Tennessee Foundation, United Way of East Tennessee Highlands, the American Red Cross, and our many on-the-ground partners whose support continues to sustain recovery efforts in Cocke County.

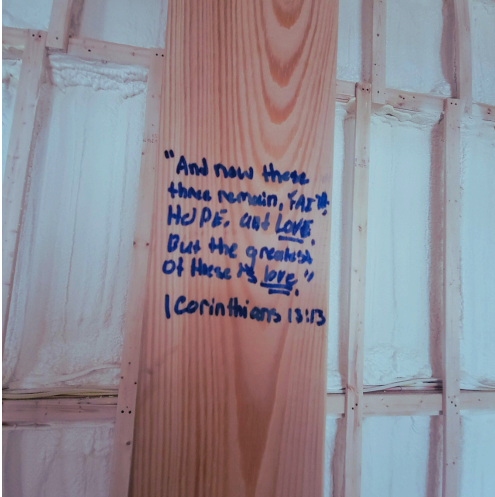
While meaningful progress has been made, important work remains. In the year ahead, the LTRG will continue advancing repairs and rebuilds while strengthening the systems that support long-term community resilience.

It is an honor to serve alongside so many dedicated partners and community members. Cocke County's recovery story continues to be defined not by the disaster itself, but by the collective commitment to move forward together.

With a grateful heart,

Laurie "Spring" Duckett

Executive Director, Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group



OUR MISSION, VALUES & WHO WE ARE

Mission

Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group's mission is to help disaster survivors in our community rebuild their homes and lives by coordinating resources through citizens, businesses, nonprofits, government and faith-based organizations.

Values

Firmly rooted in VOAD principles - **Communication, collaboration, coordination, and cooperation** - the Cocke County LTRG advances recovery through unified community effort.

Who We Are

The Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group was formally established in early 2025 in response to the widespread impacts of Hurricane Helene. Built using proven long-term recovery models and guidance from experienced regional and national disaster partners, the LTRG was created to coordinate resources and support households on the path to recovery. VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) is a national network of nonprofit and voluntary organizations that coordinate their efforts to deliver more effective disaster relief and recovery services to communities affected by disaster. Rather than each group operating in isolation, VOAD members work together through shared communication and collaboration — reducing duplication and filling gaps in response and recovery.

Like many community-based long-term recovery groups, Cocke County LTRG has combined established best practices with on-the-ground learning to develop systems that reflect both national standards and the unique needs of Cocke County. From the beginning, the organization has prioritized strong partnerships, survivor-centered processes, and transparent coordination across sectors.

Today, the Cocke County LTRG serves as a central coordinating body for long-term disaster recovery in the county, working alongside local, regional, state, and national partners to help families rebuild safely and sustainably.



LTRG partner teams at work supporting home repair and stabilization across Cocke County

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Board of Directors

Chair	Dr. Rich Lloyd — First Baptist Church of Newport TN; Kiwanis Club of Newport
Vice Chair	George Barton — Cocke County Partnership
Secretary	Rev. Marta Cogburn — First United Methodist Church of Newport TN
Treasurer	Brad Tapscott — Certified Financial Planner
Attorney-at-Law	John Reis — Church of the Good Shepherd
Member	Brother Mike Hensley — East Tennessee Baptist Association
Member	Tom Stephens — Outback Land Services
Member	Deborah Bahr — Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee
Member	Steve Tucker — Information Technology Engineer



Operational Leadership

Executive Director	Laurie "Spring" Duckett — Strategic leadership, partner coordination, grant oversight, and operational management.
Construction Manager	Charlie Sawyer — Construction planning, site coordination, and rebuild/repair project execution with partners and volunteer teams.
Volunteer & Comms Lead	LaTisha "Frost" Raulston-Sloderbeck — Volunteer engagement, mission team logistics, and public communications.

The organization gratefully acknowledges interim leadership from Michelle Lane (Interim Executive Director, Jan–Apr 2025) and Jillian Gorrell (Interim Volunteer Coordinator, Jan–May 2025).

COMMITTEES

Finance Committee

Supports financial stewardship, resource development, and coordination of grants, donations, and other funding sources. The Finance Chair works in close coordination with the Executive Director to maintain strong fiscal oversight.

Construction Committee

Established to support coordination and oversight of rebuilding activities. As partner capacity and the full-time Construction Manager role expanded during the reporting period, most construction coordination shifted to direct case management and partner workflows. The committee remains available to convene as needed.

Case Management Committee

Maintains the framework for confidential case review and referral in accordance with local, state, and federal guidelines. While day-to-day coordination is carried out through the disaster case management team and partner agencies, this committee structure remains in place to support future disaster operations.

Volunteer Coordination Committee

Led by the Volunteer Coordinator, this committee supports planning for the effective use of volunteer groups and unaffiliated volunteers, including coordination of housing and deployment to meet priority community needs. Communications functions are closely integrated within this role.

Public Relations Committee

Originally established to support media outreach and public awareness. During this reporting period, these functions have been carried out operationally by the Executive Director and Volunteer Coordinator, with the committee structure remaining available as needed.

Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee

Actively supports survivors experiencing emotional or spiritual impacts from the disaster and connects individuals with appropriate counseling and care resources within the community. During this reporting period, the McNabb Center has been a highly engaged partner in this work, providing outreach, one-on-one counseling, and group support options without financial barriers.

Natural Resources Committee

Provides subject-matter awareness related to environmental and natural resource considerations affecting recovery. The committee structure remains available to convene as needed.

Unmet Needs Committee

Actively reviews verified survivor cases referred through the case management process and coordinates partner resources to address unmet recovery needs. This committee includes representatives from multiple organizations contributing financial assistance, materials, and other resources as available.

The Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group was established using proven long-term recovery models and VOAD-aligned guidance shared by experienced disaster recovery partners. As with most community-based LTRGs, our structure continues to evolve through practical experience, ongoing learning, and careful attention to what best fits the needs and capacity of our community.

RECOVERY IMPACT AT A GLANCE

500+

Individuals Impacted

75+

Homes Repaired or Stabilized

20+

Rebuilds Underway/Done

15,000+

Volunteer Hours

Estimated In-Kind Labor Value

\$825,000+

\$4M+ Estimated Partner Resources Activated

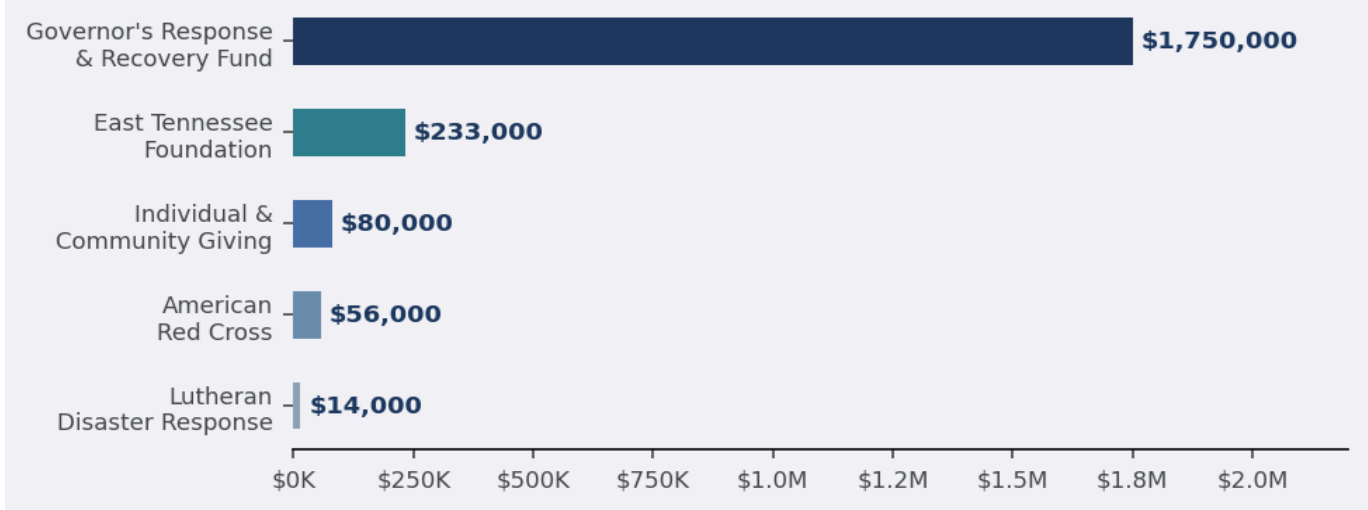
Beyond funds directly administered by the LTRG, numerous partner organizations deployed financial assistance, volunteer labor, materials, and technical expertise to support survivor recovery across Cocke County. Partner resource estimates include volunteer labor, materials, and financial assistance deployed by collaborating organizations and are conservatively calculated.

see pg 8 for full listing of partners



FUNDING OVERVIEW

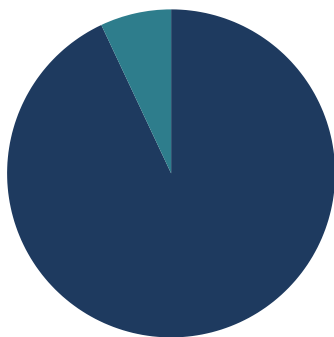
Funding Received by Source



How Funds are Deployed

Operations & Staffing

7%



Construction, Materials, & Worksites

93%

Financial figures rounded for reporting clarity. Totals reflect funds received and administered directly by the Cocke County LTRG and do not include resources deployed independently by partner organizations.

Funds at a Glance

Total Received	~\$2.1M+
Deployed to Date	~\$800,000
Committed/Remaining	~\$1.3M+

The LTRG deploys funds in phases aligned with verified survivor recovery timelines. 93% of deployed funds support direct survivor recovery through construction, materials, and site stabilization.

Governor's Response & Recovery Fund

The Tennessee Governor's Response and Recovery Fund (GRRF) supports critical disaster recovery work across Cocke County, focusing on debris removal, site stabilization, and residential property access restoration. Priority is given to survivors who are displaced, whose homes are under active repair or reconstruction, or whose recovery cannot move forward without first addressing the land — though resources also extend to properties where unsafe or inaccessible surroundings continue to affect stability and quality of life. Home repair and rebuilding efforts are supported through partner funding, volunteer coordination, and LTRG gap funding, while GRRF focuses on the site conditions that make those efforts possible. At the time of this report, GRRF-funded projects have reached more than 70 properties in Cocke County — a testament to the program's impact on our community and across East Tennessee. The LTRG is deeply grateful to Governor Bill Lee, TEMA, and the Tennessee General Assembly for their commitment to long-term disaster recovery.

KEY PARTNERS IN RECOVERY

The following organizations have played a foundational role in making recovery possible for Cocke County families. We are deeply grateful for their sustained commitment.

American Red Cross

A NATIONAL PARTNER IN DISASTER RECOVERY

The American Red Cross is a humanitarian nonprofit that prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies through the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. Founded in 1881, the organization operates under a congressional charter to provide disaster relief, support to military families, and health and safety services across the United States and around the world.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, the American Red Cross invested significant resources in East Tennessee through direct survivor assistance, partner support, and Long-Term Recovery Group funding. This sustained national investment has been a major contributor to the pace and scale of recovery in Cocke County and throughout the region.

East Tennessee Foundation

A FOUNDATION FOR REGIONAL RECOVERY

East Tennessee Foundation is a regional public charity created by and for the people of East Tennessee, where generous donors come together to strengthen the communities they call home. Established in 1986 and headquartered in Knoxville, the foundation stewards hundreds of charitable funds supporting individuals, families, businesses, and nonprofits across a 25-county region.

Guided by a vision of thriving communities powered by thoughtful giving, East Tennessee Foundation provides philanthropic leadership that turns generosity into lasting impact. During the Hurricane Helene recovery, the foundation's early and sustained support helped enable the formation and operational stability of Long-Term Recovery Groups across the region.

Sunset Gap Community Center

A CRITICAL PARTNER IN VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE SUPPORT

Sunset Gap Community Center is a longstanding Christian-based nonprofit nestled in the Great Smoky Mountains near Cosby in Cocke County. Founded in 1899 as Juniper School by the United Presbyterian Church, the organization has evolved over more than 125 years to meet the changing needs of this historically isolated Appalachian community.

During the Hurricane Helene recovery, Sunset Gap has played an especially vital role by hosting ACTS Response Team volunteer crews working with Mennonite Disaster Service and the Cocke County LTRG. These rotating teams have generated an estimated average of 1,000 volunteer labor hours per week supporting new home construction and major repair projects.

United Way of East Tennessee Highlands

REGIONAL COORDINATION AND FISCAL LEADERSHIP

United Way of East Tennessee Highlands unites people, partners, and resources to build stronger, more resilient communities across Northeast Tennessee. Grounded in the belief that communities "win by Living United," the organization focuses on long-term solutions that advance health, education, financial stability, and community resilience.

Through its role as fiscal agent and regional recovery leader, United Way of East Tennessee Highlands has provided essential infrastructure, coordination, and guidance supporting long-term recovery efforts in Cocke County and across the region. By directing resources where they are needed most, United Way continues to play a critical role in advancing sustainable disaster recovery.

COALITION OF SUPPORT

Long-term recovery in Cocke County is made possible through an extraordinary network of local, regional, state, and national partners working together to support survivors. Rooted in VOAD principles of communication, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation.

• ACTS Response Team	• FEMA	• Rural Medical Services
• American Institute of Architects	• Fischer Insurance Agency	• Salvation Army
• American Red Cross	• First Baptist Church of Newport TN	• Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee
• Appalachian Service Project	• First Presbyterian Church of Newport TN	• Second Presbyterian Church of Knoxville Tn
• Bank of Tennessee	• First Tennessee Development District	• Smoky Mountain Family Therapy
• Bishopville Baptist Church	• First United Methodist Church of Newport TN	• Society of St. Vincent de Paul
• Carson Springs Baptist Conference Center	• Founder's Forge	• Southeastern Synod ELCA
• Catholic Charities of East Tennessee	• God's Pit Crew	• Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief
• Church of the Good Shepherd	• God's Warehouse	• Sunset Gap Community Center
• City of Newport	• Grace Lutheran Church	• TEMA
• Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee	• Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church	• Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief
• Clinch Powell RC&D;	• ITDRC	• Tennessee Nonprofit Network
• Cocke County	• Layman House Moving	• Tennessee Serves (First Lady Maria Lee)
• Cocke County Chamber of Commerce	• Legal Aid of East Tennessee	• Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation
• Cocke County Cradle to Career Coalition	• Lowe's	• Tennessee VOAD
• Cocke County Emergency Management Agency	• Lutheran Disaster Response	• ToolBank USA
• Cocke County Partnership	• McNabb Center	• Trinity Baptist Church of Newport TN
• Disaster Services Corporation	• Memorial Baptist Church of Newport TN	• UMCOR
• East Tennessee Baptist Association	• Mennonite Disaster Service	• United Way of East Tennessee Highlands
• East Tennessee Development District	• Mountain Strong Sanctuary	• University of Tennessee Knoxville
• East Tennessee State University	• New Direction	• UT Extension Institute of Agriculture
• Elizabethtown Mission Team	• Newport Kiwanis Club	• Wilton Springs Hardware
• Empower Cocke County	• Newport Printing	• ZenHammer
• Experience Mission	• Newport Sand and Gravel	• 72 the Mission
• FAHE	• Operation Therapy	

Partner participation reflects collaboration during the reporting period and continues to evolve as recovery progresses.

TOGETHER, WE RISE — A RECOVERY STORY

In the late fall of 2024, regional relief group communications connected CWEET's Spring Duckett and a local family that was in need of assistance. One family member had been airlifted away from the home during the floods, the home was completely destroyed, and as winter approached, the family was sheltering in a donated pop-up camper beside the remains of their home.

Coordination by community partners began immediately to locate and acquire a donated camper to provide safer temporary shelter. When the Cocke County LTRG formally launched, the case entered disaster case management, and multiple partners began working toward a permanent solution.

Over the following months, the family purchased a small parcel of land using carefully saved assistance. The LTRG coordinated GRRF-funded site preparation, and volunteer construction partners — including Mennonite Disaster Service and Appalachian Service Project — began work on the new home.



Temporary shelter beside the destroyed home



New home construction underway

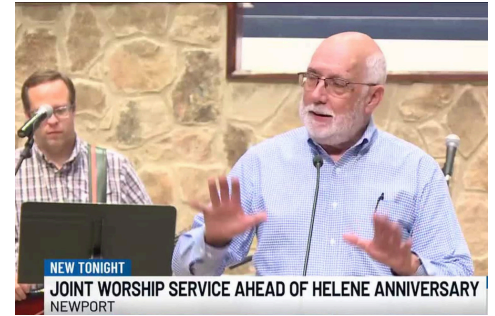
All of the VOAD cornerstones — communication, collaboration, coordination, cooperation — brought together 8–10 partner organizations for this success story over 17 months. In February 2026, this family received the keys to their new home.

This story reflects what recovery truly requires: survivor resilience, sustained partnership, and a community willing to walk alongside families for the long road home.

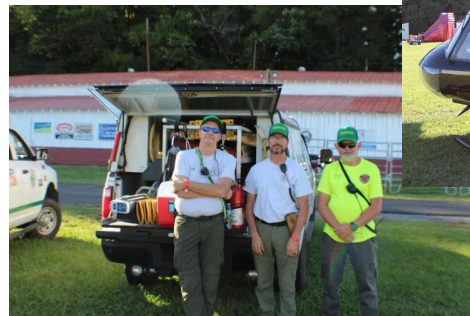
ROOTS & REINS: A COMMUNITY GATHERING

Guided by lessons from past disasters and input from experienced partners, the Cocke County LTRG recognized the importance of offering the community supportive ways to mark the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Helene.

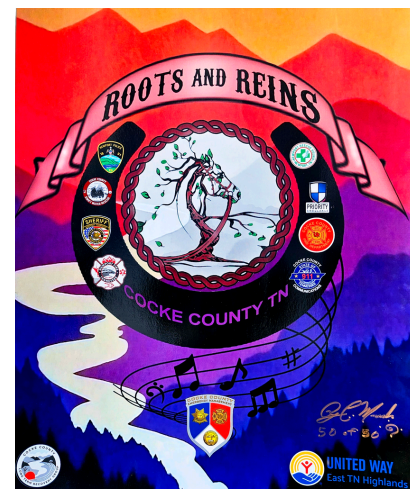
Working alongside local partners, the week of remembrance included a multi-church gathering at First Baptist Church, a formal commemoration with the City of Newport and Cocke County honoring the first emergency call of the flood, and a downtown fundraising dinner that highlighted the progress of local business recovery.



The week culminated in Roots & Reins, held September 27, 2025, at the Cocke County A&I Fairgrounds. The goal was not to celebrate the disaster anniversary, but to provide the community with a positive space for connection and healing. In partnership with Cocke County Emergency Management Agency, first responders from across the county were present and publicly honored for their service. The event featured a rodeo, live music, food, family activities, partner booths, and on-site emotional and spiritual support resources. The entirety of the day was free to all.

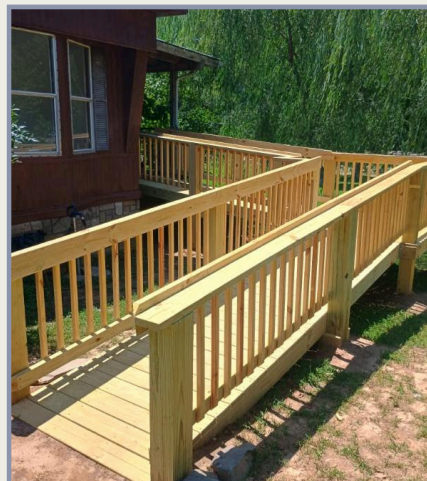


More than 1,000 community members attended, along with state officials and numerous local, regional, and national partners. Through LTRG-led sponsorships and extensive in-kind support, Roots & Reins became a powerful demonstration of the collaboration and community spirit driving long-term recovery in Cocke County. Special recognition is owed to LTRG Treasurer Brad Tapscott and Finance Committee Chair Misti Tapscott, whose dedicated planning and tireless behind-the-scenes work made the event possible.



YEAR TWO PRIORITIES: LOOKING AHEAD

- 1 Complete Ongoing Home Builds & Repairs**
 Continue supporting partner-led home construction and major repair projects already in progress while identifying and onboarding additional survivor cases still emerging.
- 2 Sustain Recovery Capacity as Volunteer Support Evolves**
 Prepare for the expected decline in large volunteer groups by strengthening local contractor capacity and identifying funding needed to maintain recovery momentum beyond the volunteer-heavy phase.
- 3 Strengthen Regional Coordination through NETN VOAD**
 Continue active leadership in the formation and growth of Northeast Tennessee VOAD to improve long-term disaster coordination, communication, and preparedness across the region.
- 4 Support Long-Term Community Recovery & Resilience**
 Advance recovery work that improves property safety, environmental stability, and community readiness for future disasters.



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The recovery journey following Hurricane Helene continues to unfold across Cocke County. While significant progress has been made, the work of rebuilding homes, restoring property access, and supporting survivors remains a long-term commitment.

The Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group is deeply grateful for the extraordinary collaboration that has made this progress possible — from survivors who have shown remarkable resilience, to volunteers who have given their time and skills, to the many local, regional, state, and national partners working side by side in this effort.

We extend special appreciation to our first responders, who served our community with courage and dedication during the storm and in the months that followed. Their continued partnership remains an essential part of our community's strength.

As we move into the next phase of recovery, the Cocke County LTRG remains firmly rooted in the VOAD principles of communication, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation. Together, we will continue the steady work of helping our neighbors recover, rebuild, and move forward.

Get Involved

General: (423) 248-2797

info@cockecountyltrg.org

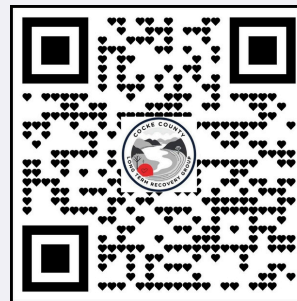
Director: director@cockecountyltrg.org

Volunteer: (423) 248-2161

volunteer@cockecountyltrg.org

Website: cockecountyltrg.org

Facebook: Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group on Facebook



Scan to visit our website & donate.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

DONATE

Your financial gift directly funds home repairs, rebuilds, and site stabilization for families in Cocke County.

Scan the QR code or visit
cockecountyltrg.org

VOLUNTEER

Skilled tradespeople, general labor volunteers, and mission teams are needed year-round to support ongoing construction and repair work.

volunteer@cockecountyltrg.org
(423) 248-2161

PARTNER WITH US

Organizations, businesses, and faith communities can join our coalition to support survivors through resources, expertise, or in-kind contributions.

director@cockecountyltrg.org
(423) 248-2797

SPREAD THE WORD

Share our mission with your network. Follow us on Facebook and help connect survivors and donors with resources.

Cocke County Long-Term Recovery Group on Facebook