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Dear Friends,

When I think back over my 11 years as president at Hinton Rural Life Center, I have a flood of memories . . . both good and bad. I recall baby raccoons playing in a wheelbarrow. Eagles soaring outside the Chapel windows. Thank you notes from neighbors for the home repair projects and love they received from mission teams. I remember the day our Lakeside Pavilion, while under construction, came crashing down during a storm. The time a tractor caught fire in the wood lot. My most profound memory, however, was six months into my job at Hinton. For the first time, I was facing the challenges of seasonal cash flow at an organization that was really struggling financially. The bleak reality of where we were as a business was daunting and overwhelming. I left my office to clear my head, got some sweet tea from the kitchen, then headed to the Lodge porch for some fresh air.

While I sat in one of those white rocking chairs, gazing at the calm waters of Lake Chatuge, I started a conversation with God. I wonder how many of you have sat on that same porch and begun your own dialogue with God. There's something about the serenity of that space that allows you to take a deep breath, step out of the chaos, and enter into a connection with the Creator. As my conversation continued, I realized that I would need to rely on God's guidance to secure Hinton's future. I keep a picture on my phone of my rocking-chair view that day, to remind myself of how far we've come and that God will always provide what we need, as we try to faithfully answer God's call to serve.



Now over a decade later, I am amazed at where we are. (God is good!) Our staff, volunteers, funders, and community partners have worked together to improve the quality of life for our neighbors and our guests. We continue to repair homes, supply families with firewood, and provide new clothes for children at Christmas. In addition, we host educational opportunities and have graduated 73 "community builders" from our Leadership Chatuge course. Responding to the mental health challenges of so many in our community and those who seek refuge and renewal at Hinton, we've created Sanctuary Trails and Gardens and offer Mental Health First Aid training. And over time, we've created a discipleship pathway for young people, with opportunities for them to grow in their faith and to live it out through our Confirmation retreats and curriculum, mission outreach opportunities, and leadership development.

We've come a long way since my rocking chair conversation with God, but there is still much work to do – work to continue transforming our rural Appalachian community to one in which everyone and every household can thrive, offering impactful training and support for rural/small congregations and their leaders, and providing life-and-faith-shaping experiences through our retreat and renewal ministries. I believe we are "rockin' it" at Hinton. Will you help us "Rock On"? Thank you, in advance, for making your financial gift to support Hinton Rural Life Center.

Gratefully yours,

Jacqueline Gottlieb, President and CEO