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***Foothills Regional Commission is Honored with   
2025 Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations***

# **July 22, 2025 –** Foothills Regional Commission based in Rutherfordton, NC, has recently been recognized with a 2025 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the Ageless Innovation Program.

Foothills Regional Commission’s Ageless Innovation program is a collaborative initiative between the Commission, the local senior center, and a local high school robotics team, focused on bridging the digital divide for older adults. The program promotes digital inclusion by teaching seniors essential digital literacy skills that enhance their independence and support aging in place. Launched in September 2024, the program began when the Commission introduced the robotics team to the senior center and arranged for a demonstration of their robot. Following the enthusiastic response, the Commission helped coordinate ongoing visits and has supported each session by guiding the team on technology and apps particularly useful for seniors. Since then, the robotics team has assisted more than 150 seniors with practical tech skills such as adjusting font sizes, using calendars, setting alarms, and making video calls. They are also developing structured classes around popular and beneficial mobile applications.

Presented annually, the [NADO Impact Awards](https://www.nado.org/2025impactawards/) honor regional development organizations and their partners for strengthening communities, building regional resilience, and enhancing local economies through innovative approaches to economic and community development. NADO is a Washington, DC-based membership association of regional development organizations that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies. Learn more about NADO at [www.nado.org](http://www.nado.org).

This year’s cohort included 90 impactful projects led by 79 organizations across 24 states. These award-winning efforts will be recognized during [NADO’s 2025 Annual Training Conference](https://www.nado.org/2025atc/), held this coming October in Salt Lake City, Utah. All selected projects are featured in an interactive StoryMap that showcases summaries, images, and key partners. The map is available at [www.nado.org/2025impactawards/](http://www.nado.org/2025impactawards/).

“The Impact Awards are an annual reminder of the creativity and commitment that regional development organizations bring to their communities,” said 2024-2025 NADO President Rick Hunsaker, Executive Director of the Region XII Council of Governments in Iowa. “This year’s awardees show how local and regional partnerships, driven by vision and collaboration, can lead to lasting positive change across our country.”

“We’re thrilled to have received the NADO award. We proudly share this accomplishment with our incredible partners – The Rutherford County Senior Center and the Rutherford County Schools Robotics team, the Omegabytes,” said Danielle Williams, Family Caregiver Support Program manager for FRC. “This collaboration has been both fun and meaningful, and we’re excited to see the program continue to grow and thrive.” For more information, contact Danielle Williams at dwilliams@frcnc.gov.

“There are often varying levels of excitement surrounding community programs, but the efforts of our young robotics team have far exceeded expectations. Their dedication has redefined how we view the relationship between the youth and the senior adults in our community. This initiative is so special because the youth continue to ask how they can further support our senior adults and have inquired about ways to help homebound elders as well. This genuine compassion has been a powerful reminder that our elders are truly in good hands with the next generation. This collaboration has allowed seniors to mentor youth while the Omegabytes share their tech knowledge to help bridge the digital divide,” says Clarke Poole, FRC’s Senior Tarheel Legislator. “It’s a beautiful example of mutual respect, learning, and connection across generations. We’re incredibly proud that this unique and meaningful partnership has been recognized with a NADO award. This honor highlights just how impactful and inspiring this intergeneration collaboration has been and will continue to be.”

Foothills Regional Commission (FRC) includes Cleveland, McDowell, Polk and Rutherford Counties and the municipal governments within those counties. FRC serves its members and their citizens by fostering regional collaboration through providing professional and technical expertise in the areas of economic, community, and workforce development, as well as aging, housing and transportation planning.